



2016 Q4 The Book of Job - Lesson 6 The Curse Causeless?

- Memory Text: “Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his maker?” Job 4:17
- This week’s lesson stresses the importance of putting ourselves both in Job’s position, and in the position of his friends who came to mourn and grieve with Job. Who here hasn’t sought to comfort and console a friend or loved one in their pain and loss? Who here has not needed the comfort and consolation of others in their own time of pain and loss? Who here doesn’t know what it’s like to try and find the right words to speak to those whose grief cuts at our own hearts as well?
- It’s difficult isn’t it? To know what to say when there really isn’t anything you can say to make it better. It’s tough to know what to do that will really *help* someone who is hurting. I think most of us tend to go with a casserole – it seems like food tends to be our default position when dealing with grief and loss. What would you have said to Job if you were his friend? What do you say to a friend who had lost 10 children, all his property, all his livestock, all his financial assets, and finally his good health?
- The last paragraph in Saturday’s lesson reads, “In fact, so much of the book of Job is taken up with the dialogue between Job and these men, as they all try to make sense of what so often seems to make no sense: the endless parade of human suffering and tragedy in a world created by a loving, powerful, and caring God...I’m not sure exactly what point they are trying to make here, but it appears referencing some of the questions answered back in Lesson 4 a couple of weeks ago when we studied about “God and Human Suffering”. ..and whether a loving God is unwilling or unable or either or both... to remove our pain and suffering, and if he did what would that mean for us and what would that say about God. This was such an amazing and powerful class taught by Dr. Jennings 2 weeks ago...if you have not seen it I highly recommend that you view the archive and we will review some points from that lesson later today.
- A quote from the book Education gives us this insight: “Unselfishness, the principle of God's kingdom, is the principle that Satan hates; its very existence he denies. From the beginning of the great controversy he has endeavored to prove God's principles of action to be selfish, and he deals in the same way with all who serve God. To disprove Satan's claim is the work of Christ and of all who bear His name. It was to give in His own life an illustration of unselfishness that Jesus came in the form of humanity. And all who accept this principle are to be workers together with Him in demonstrating it in practical life. To choose the right because it is right; to stand for truth at the cost of suffering and sacrifice—“this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord.” Isaiah 54:17... by **his patient endurance he vindicated his own character, and thus the character of Him whose representative he was. For those who love God, those who are “called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28), Bible biography has a yet higher lesson of the ministry of sorrow. “Ye are My witnesses, saith the**



Lord, that I am God” (Isaiah 43:12)—witnesses that He is good, and that goodness is supreme.

SUNDAY

The Big Questions

- Sunday’s lesson again emphasizes the incredibly important great controversy perspective revealed in the book of Job – giving us some incredible insight into this aspect of our reality and pulling back the veil to remind us just how closely connected our earthly world is with the supernatural world and the war going on all around us.
- So after the first 2 chapters of Job, we have a bunch of “talking heads” or dialogue going on between Job, his three friends, and his wife. And they are discussing the big questions...the heavy issues of life and death, pain and suffering, why do bad things happen to good people, theology, philosophy, the character of God, etc. The lesson says, “There is nothing like a calamity, either our own or that of others, to shake us out of our spiritual lethargy and get us to start asking the important questions.” Any thoughts on this? Have you found this to be true in your own lives?
- Several Bible authors seemed to grasp this concept and provided some advice about how to view tragedy and trials.
 - 1 Peter 1:6-7 – In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. Pure gold put in the fire comes out of it *proved* pure; genuine faith put through this suffering comes out *proved* genuine (MSG). Rejoice greatly in this reality, even though now, for a little while, you may suffer pain, grief, and trials of all kinds.⁷These transient difficulties are allowed to come so that your confidence and trust in God– which is infinitely more valuable than gold, for even gold purified by fire will be destroyed–may be permanently established in your character, and result in praise, glory and honor to God when Jesus Christ comes again (REM).
 - James 1:2-4 – Consider it a pure gift or count it all joy, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don’t try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way (MSG). My brothers and sisters in God’s family, I want you to rejoice and keep a positive attitude whenever you face troubles of various kinds,³because every trial exercises your trust in God–which overcomes fear and selfishness–and builds a confident, steadfast application of the Remedy.⁴And this steadfast engagement in God’s treatment must be completed so that you may be fully healed, mature, and like Christ in character–not lacking anything (REM).
 - James 1:12 –Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life (MSG). But the person who steadfastly continues in God’s treatment despite trials, difficulties or



discomfort, will be healed and receive eternal life—as promised by God to those who love and trust him. (Remedy)

- Psalm 119:72-73 My troubles turned out all for the best – they forced me to learn from your textbook. Your teaching has taught me what is true and right (MSG).
- Thoughts about these texts...does the instruction to rejoice in trials take some getting used to...seem counterproductive? Who here has experienced that refining fire, and had their faith strengthened, their capacity for love/compassion/empathy grown, their characters matured in ways that would not have happened...***could not*** have happened if not for the trial? These events...the ones that shake us out of our spiritual lethargy and hone in our focus on the things that really matter...there's more of them coming. Isn't this what we believe is going to happen at the beginning of the time of trouble? Events so significant and so catastrophic that even the most inattentive are suddenly paying attention and asking questions. I believe these trials will provide critical opportunities for every person alive to make a judgment about God – is He trustworthy, and about themselves – do they love others more than self (they do not love their lives so much as to shrink from death, Rev. 12:11)
- One of the founders of our church refers to this as a “shaking”. Remember, how many groups will there be at the end of time? Only 2. “The Lord has faithful servants who in the shaking, testing time will be disclosed to view. There are precious ones now hidden who have not bowed the knee to Baal. They have not had the light which has been shining in a concentrated blaze upon you. But it may be under a rough and uninviting exterior the pure brightness of a genuine Christian character will be revealed. In the daytime we look toward heaven but do not see the stars. They are there, fixed in the firmament, but the eye cannot distinguish them. In the night we behold their genuine luster.—Testimonies for the Church 5:80, 81 (1882). {LDE 181.1} **On every occasion that persecution takes place, the witnesses make decisions, either for Christ or against Him. Those who show sympathy for the men wrongly condemned, who are not bitter against them, show their attachment for Christ.**—The Signs of the Times, February 20, 1901. {LDE 181.2} So she says: “Let opposition arise, let bigotry and intolerance again bear sway (hello election season), let persecution be kindled, and the half-hearted and hypocritical will waver and yield the faith; but the true Christian will stand firm as a rock, his faith stronger, his hope brighter than in days of prosperity.—The Great Controversy, 602 (1911).
- The broken ranks will be filled up by those represented by Christ as coming in at the eleventh hour. There are many with whom the Spirit of God is striving. **The time of God’s destructive judgments** (dark language – what does it mean?) is the time of mercy for those who [now] have no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched, His hand is still stretched out to save...large numbers will be admitted who in these last days hear the truth for the first time.—Letter 103, 1903



- Soon the last test is to come to all inhabitants of the earth. At that time prompt decisions will be made. Those who have been convicted under the presentation of the Word will range themselves under the bloodstained banner of Prince Emmanuel.—Testimonies for the Church 9:149
- [Optional] The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church.
- The pink box at the bottom of Sunday’s lesson says, “Have you been able to look back at former trials and seen the good that has come out of them? How do you deal with those trials that have brought nothing good?” Thoughts? My Bible says “And we know that *ALL* things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28 NKJV or in the Remedy “And we know that in *ALL* things, at *ALL* times, in *ALL* circumstances, God works for the good of his creation and for the good of all who love him. Those who have accepted God's call—to work with him according to his purpose—experience the good things that God has for them.” So are there some tragedies and trials that appear to have brought nothing good? Are there things we can do to turn that scenario around?

- **MONDAY**

- **When Have the Innocent Perished?**

- Job 2:11-13 describes how Job’s friends viewed his situation: Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him.¹² And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven.¹³ So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that *his* grief was very great.
- They made an appointment, they planned to come together to comfort their friend. And they were obviously stunned by what they saw as Job was unrecognizable. Then they sat silently with him, for seven days, never saying a word. This practice likely originated with the Jewish mourning ritual called “sitting *shiva* (*seven*)”, – seven days of empathy and compassion marked by mourners sitting on low stools or on the ground. The first instance mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 7:10, where it says “And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were on the earth.” This is after Noah, his family, and all the animals were already in the ark...and the Rabbis of the Talmud say that these seven days were a period of mourning for Methuselah, the oldest man who ever lived. (Thanks google)



- So they sat silently, comforting Job and mourning with him for seven days, but once Job began to speak and utter his complaints, we find out these three friends had plenty to say. Eliphaz's initial response is found in Job 4:1-11: Then Eliphaz from Teman spoke up: "Would you mind if I said something to you? Under the circumstances it's hard to keep quiet. You yourself have done this plenty of times, spoken words that clarify, encouraged those who were about to quit. Your words have put stumbling people on their feet, put fresh hope in people about to collapse. But now *you're* the one in trouble—you're hurting! You've been hit hard and you're reeling from the blow. But shouldn't your devout life give you confidence now? Shouldn't your exemplary life give you hope?"⁷⁻¹¹ "Think! Has a truly innocent person ever ended up on the scrap heap? Do genuinely upright people ever lose out in the end? It's my observation that those who plow evil and sow trouble reap evil and trouble. One breath from God and they fall apart, one blast of his anger and there's nothing left of them. The mighty lion, king of the beasts, roars mightily, but when he's toothless he's useless—No teeth, no prey—and the cubs wander off to fend for themselves. (MSG)
- As the quarterly states, if you were writing a book on grief counseling you could use the friends' initial actions in the chapter "How to Help a Grieving Soul", and then you could feature Eliphaz in the chapter titled "What NOT to Say to a Grieving Soul." The lessons says, "It's hard to imagine someone coming up to a person going through all that Job was going through and saying, basically, '*Well, you must have deserved it, because God is just, and only the wicked suffer like this.*' Sadly, is this actually so hard to imagine?"
- Eliphaz is spouting straight retribution theology here. Lots of folks still believe that if bad stuff happens to you, then you must have done something wrong...and if a *bunch* of bad stuff happens to you, then you must have done something *really* wrong! But don't forget that many of these same folks also believe that if you do everything right and check all the behavioral boxes, then prosperity will follow. The other side of the retributive justice coin is the prosperity gospel. In my experience, both of these ideas are completely flawed.
- The pink box at the bottom of Monday's lesson says "Think about a time people comforted you amid loss and pain. What did they say? How did they say it? What did you learn from that experience that could help you when you are in the position of having to comfort someone else?"

TUESDAY

A Man and His Maker

- So while Eliphaz is likely not in the running for the "Best Sympathy and Tact" award, did you notice that he did use a common personnel management technique when responding to Job's complaints. When managers have to reprimand or provide constructive criticism to employees, they often camouflage the criticism by sandwiching it between compliments. So Eliphaz gives Job props for his past ability to be an encouragement, a light, and a counselor to others...at least when



things were going well for Job. But his tone changes pretty quickly in verse 5 and it goes down from there. He also seems to read into and respond to a lot of things Job never even said.

- Eliphaz said that God is just, and so the evil that comes upon us is deserved. This belief is still shared by many – Christians and non-Christians alike. Isn't this the underlying thread of karma...and even the natural law of sowing and reaping? How is it different from those?
- One difference is found in our study of Lesson 4 from two weeks ago. In that lesson, and again I encourage you to watch the recording and read the notes, we talked about some of the many reasons why suffering, pain, and death occur on this earth...and many have no connection at all between what is sown and what is reaped.
- **Entropy**, the slow gradual decay of order that occurs because we are disconnected from God's constant full presence and care. "in the day you eat of the Tree of Knowledge, dying you will die." (Gen 2:17) Aging and the sleep death occur because of slow decay
- **Genetic defects** and disease because of entropy and the slow decay of our original design
- **Toxins and poisons** because of mutations and alterations to God's design—the changes in nature and the manufacture of chemicals and products not original to God's creation
- **Evil/selfish actions originating in people** who are selfish—Cain killing Abel
- **Evil/selfish actions inspired by Satan** upon people to hurt others—Judas betraying Christ
- **Satan and his agencies** affecting nature and causing problems—first chapter of Job
- **Good people acting to defend and protect**—Abraham rescuing Lot
- **Good people acting selfishly** and doing bad things—David murdering Uriah—which occurs because of sin in the heart not yet removed
- **People, whether good or evil, making mistakes** with no intent to help or harm, slipping and falling, auto accident because of ice etc.
- **Humans acting on God's orders**—kill all the people, women, children, cattle, etc. Why would God give such orders? Remember it was God's original plan to have the hornet and pestilence go before Israel and as the inhabitants abandoned the land the Israelites would have slowly occupied it with no killing. But the people chose to do it their way and so God gave the instructions, if you are going to kill then in order to minimize suffering, death, and traumatize the least number of people and bring peace in a world, wipe them all out and get it over with. Instead, we have had 4000 years of continual fighting, violence and war scarring every generation living in that part of the world.
- **God acting to protect**, lance, cauterize, keep open the avenue for Messiah—putting people in the grave/asleep, but they will arise again: Flood, first born of Egypt, Platoons that came to arrest Elijah
- It is fascinating how these men – Job and his friends – understood the nature and character of the true God, even before the rise of the nation of Israel. These folks were obviously meticulous writers, historians, documenters – even if no one had compiled it all into books like Moses did, they clearly were very good at passing along stories and information from one generation to the



next, and there were definitely others besides the patriarchs who knew something of the Lord, and here we see Eliphaz seeking to defend his view of the character of God, distorted though it was.

WEDNESDAY

The Foolish Taking Root

- As far as I can tell, Wednesday's lesson is saying that Eliphaz is not entirely wrong in his theology and in what he is saying that evil happens only to evil people...and then offers several Bible text examples that supposedly echo those same thoughts. So let's look at these texts and see if they reflect Eliphaz's sentiments from Job 5:
- Psalm 37:10-11: A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity. (NIV)
- Proverbs 26:2: Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest.
- Luke 1:52: He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.
- 1 Cor 3:19-21: For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness" and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile." So then, no more boasting about human leaders!
- Psalm 34:6: This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.
- Hebrews 12:5: My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.
- Hosea 6:1: Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.
- Psalm 33:18-19: But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

THURSDAY

Rush to Judgment

- The lesson states, "Much of what Eliphaz said to Job was correct...the problem wasn't so much with what he said; the problem was more the context in which he said it...the truths he was uttering just didn't apply to the specific situation."
- Quote from Education p. 146: "No truth does the Bible more clearly teach than that what we do is the result of what we are. To a great degree the experiences of life are the fruition of our own thoughts and deeds."
- MH p. 163: "Many think that they are representing the justice of God while they wholly fail of representing His tenderness and His great love. Often the ones whom they meet with sternness and



severity are under the stress of temptation. Satan is wrestling with these souls, and harsh, unsympathetic words discourage them and cause them to fall a prey to the tempter's power.”

- Even if Eliphaz had been right, and Job brought this suffering upon himself, his words were imprudent and ill-timed. Job stands as a symbol for all humanity, for we all have been caught up in the great controversy, and we all suffer in it. And we all, at some point, need compassion and sympathy, not sermonizing. Sure, there's a time and place for getting lectured. But when a man is sitting on a pile of ashes, his life ruined, his children dead, and his body full of sores—that is not the time.