

Suffering and the Fear of the Lord

Most of us have suffered or are suffering something significant, or are close to someone who is suffering something tragic. In such times, we can be moved to ask, “Where is God? Does he even care what’s happening to me? If so, why doesn’t he intervene?” These are important and deep questions that must be handled with care. One of the books of the Bible that helps us process such questions is Job. But here’s the thing, when we come to the book of Job, we must not impose our own reasoning, but rather we must let the book speak for itself. We need to notice which questions it answers and which questions it leaves unanswered. Job is first and foremost concerned about fearing God during suffering, especially innocent suffering. And so, let’s turn to Job and consider what it shows us regarding becoming wise in the midst of our suffering.

Opening Discussion: When, if ever, have you been tempted to question God’s wisdom, goodness, or power in the midst of some kind of suffering?

Read Job 1-2

1. What do we learn about Job? How is he described (vv. 1:1-5)?
2. Initially, Job experiences the blessings that are promised in Proverbs to those who fear God (see Pr. 22:4). But there is a council in heaven that will change the course of his life. What do we learn about this council of which Job knows nothing (1:6-12)?
3. What kind of loss does Job suffer (1:13-19)?
4. How does Job respond (1:20-22)? What does this reveal about Job’s faith? What does it reveal about what he believes about God?
5. What kind of additional suffering and loss does Job experience in chapter 2? And after all of this, why does Job consider it foolish to curse God (2:9-10)?

Steve said:

If Job had cursed God, that would be the end of the story. God would have lost the wager and Satan would have been right about Job. But because Job DID fear the Lord, he responded with worship and faith. We're going to see that things will get worse for Job before they get better. He didn't get everything right, but because he feared God he moved toward him instead of running away from him. And at the end of the book Job's relationship with God was deeper and richer than at the beginning of Job.

6. What does it take to keep moving towards God when we seem to be suffering unjustly?
7. In chapters 3-37, Job and his friends debate the reason for Job's suffering. What do you know about the nature of that debate? What did the friends argue? What did Job argue?
8. How might the book of Job give us wisdom about how we walk with others who are suffering?
9. Eventually, without explaining why He has caused Job to suffer, God convinces Job that he is in no position to accuse God of being unjust. How does Job respond after the Lord instructs him (42:1-6)?
10. Like Job and his friends, we too can get in trouble with our own logic and reasoning when we or a loved one is suffering. We can be tempted to think that we would do a much better job than God in running this world. How can the book of Job help us avoid this kind of thinking, and instead stay humble and teachable and be reminded that God alone is wise?
11. What is your main takeaway from Job?