Job: A Messy Faith

Discipleship Training



Providence Baptist Church

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**Job 2:11-13** (NIV) 11 When Job’s three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. 12 When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. 13 Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.



Job

A Messy Faith

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| **Week** | **Topic** |
| 1 | **Introduction to Job: A Messy Faith** |
| 2 | **Affliction of Job**  Chapters 1 and 2 Reading and Discussion (Overview) |
| 3 | **Debates Between Job and His Three Friends**  Chapters 3-31 Reading and Discussion (Overview) |
| 4 | **Restoration of Job**  Chapters 38-42 Reading and Discussion (Overview) |
| 5 | **Paradise in Turmoil**  Insurrection; The Fall; Unseen Reality; Rescue; Eden Restored |
| 6 | **Paradise in Turmoil**  Insurrection; The Fall; Unseen Reality; Rescue; Eden Restored |
| 7 | **The Epic Struggle**  Drama in Heaven; Shock Waves on Earth; Role in the Larger Story |
| 8 | **The Epic Struggle**  Drama in Heaven; Shock Waves on Earth; Role in the Larger Story |
| 9 | **Dark Seasons and the Villain**  Fury & Fate; Strategic Attacks; Subtle Manipulation; Tactics |
| 10 | **Dark Seasons and the Villain**  Fury & Fate; Strategic Attacks; Subtle Manipulation; Tactics |
| 11 | **True Love and Distorted Love**  Epic Romance; Pure Love; Distorted Love; Deception; Intrigue |
| 12 | **True Love and Distorted Love**  Epic Romance; Pure Love; Distorted Love; Deception; Intrigue |
| 13 | **Faith—Real and Raw**  Emotions Godly; Grieving Losses, Raw Feelings of Abandonment and Betrayal; Relationships vs. Formulas |
| 14 | **Faith—Real and Raw**  Emotions Godly; Grieving Losses, Raw Feelings of Abandonment and Betrayal; Relationships vs. Formulas |
| 15 | **Redemption Revealed**  God is Wild, Unpredictable, Can’t be Controlled; Passionate, Not Perfect |
| 16 | **Redemption Revealed**  God is Wild, Unpredictable, Can’t be Controlled; Passionate, Not Perfect |
| 17 | **Light Shines Out of Darkness**  Living Redeemer; Relent to God but Never Give Up |
| 18 | **Light Shines Out of Darkness**  Living Redeemer; Relent to God but Never Give Up |

Course Description:

Job: A Messy Faith

Job’s life became a train wreck; he struggled deeply with God. Unaware of events in the unseen kingdom, he was involved in a story far bigger than he realized; Job’s story demonstrates that the life of faith is messy. Our relationship with God is not fragile; Job poured out his hurt, anger, doubts, and disappointments to God…and God loved him for it!

In this course, you will learn to wrestle with God. You will also discover that life is not about strictly reigning in sin or upholding some moral code or blessing formula, it’s about our relationship with the living God who adores us.

Lesson 1: **Introduction to Job: A Messy Faith**

**The Book of Job Outline**

**To Remember**: God stays with us through our problems  
 **Vocabulary**

* **sacrifice** - to give up something for God

**Lesson** - Job 1, 2 , & 42

Outline of story:

1. Satan challenges God and Job's faithfulness
2. Job loses belongings and family but does not blame God
   1. oxen and donkeys slain
   2. fire destroys sheep
   3. camels stolen
   4. children (7 men, 3 women) killed
3. Satan challenges God and Job again
   1. Job covered in boils
   2. wife abandons God
   3. friends come to comfort, but accuse him
4. Job asks God why. God answers, who are you to question me?
5. Job's family and belongings are restored in greater numbers than before.

**An Overview**

The Book of Job is probably the oldest book in the Bible. It contains more references to creation, the flood, and other events than any book of the Bible except Genesis. It provides more detail between the age-long conflict between God and Satan than almost any other book. Also it seems to contain more scientific detail than any other book.

The author of Job was indeed Job himself (19:23-24). The book is considered a masterpiece of literature. The book deals with the mystery of human suffering. Job living in the land of Uz, the greatest of all men of the east was blessed abundantly by God and then lost it all, his livestock, house, and even his family. The style of the book is viewed by a long list of religious questions.

**Quiz: Write true or false for each statement.**

1. God caused Job's suffering.
2. Job remained faithful to God.
3. All of Job's family died.
4. Job blamed God for his suffering.
5. Satan succeeded in turning Job from God.
6. God rewarded Job's faithfulness.
7. We will have troubles in our life.
8. God will sustain us if we are faithful.

**The Book of Job broken down by chapters**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | Job, righteous but calamities | [**15**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job15.html) | Eliphaz: Job you fear not God | [**29**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job29.html) | Job: defense summary |
| [**2**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job02.html) | Satan permitted to test Job | [**16**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job16.html) | Miserable comfort; cry to God | [**30**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job30.htm) | They mock me; You do not answer |
| [**3**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job03.html) | Why not death at birth?; no rest | [**17**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job17.html) | Spirit broken; where is hope? | [**31**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job31.htm) | If I have walked in falsehood |
| [**4**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job04.html) | Eliphaz: Job has sinned | [**18**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job18.html) | Bildad: Job wicked, punishment | [**32**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job32.htm) | Elihu is angry and ready to speak |
| [**5**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job05.html) | Accused of punishment by God | [**19**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job19.htm) | Faith in Redeemer | [**33**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job33.htm) | He addresses Job, mentions "soul" |
| [**6**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job06.html) | Job in misery; death coming | [**20**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job20.html) | Zophar counters Job's confidence | [**34**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job34.html) | Elihu tells friends Job is guilty |
| [**7**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job07.html) | Discouragement; desire to die | [**21**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job21.html) | Job: wicked punished in future | [**35**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job35.html) | Elihu: God doesn't hear to arrogance |
| [**8**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job08.html) | Bildad: Look to God if righteous | [**22**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job22.html) | Eliphaz: submit to God | [**36**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job36.htm) | Elihu continues to speak for God |
| [**9**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job09.html) | Job: How mortal be righteous? | [**23**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job23.html) | Job: I would appeal to God | [**37**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job37.html) | God controls nature; do you know how? |
| [**10**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job10.html) | You made me; do you care? | [**24**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job24.html) | Longing for day of justice | [**38**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job38.htm) | God questions Job from the whirlwind |
| [**11**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job11.html) | Zophar: Words unanswered | [**25**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job25.html) | Bildad: How can one be righteous? | [**39**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job39.html) | More questions |
| [**12**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job12.html) | Job: I am mocked; God is wise | [**26**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job26.html) | Job: Nature trembles before God | [**40**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job40.html) | The Lord speaks to Job from the storm |
| [**13**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job13.html) | Job says Be quiet; his prayer | [**27**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job27.html) | Job: I will be faithful to God | [**41**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job41.html) | The Lord: Can you control Leviathan? |
| [**14**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job14.htm) | Life, death, and judgment | [**28**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job28.html) | Job: meditation, nature & wisdom | [**42**](http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job42.html) | Job repents and is restored |

<http://www.bibleexplained.com/other-early/Job/job.htm>

#### Lesson 2 Affliction of Job

#### Job Chapters 1-2

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| --- |
| **Affliction of Job – Chapter 1: 1 to 2:13** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Passage | Subject |
| 1:1-5 | Description of Job |
| 1: 6 to 2:10 | Affliction of Job |
| 2:11-13 | Arrival of Job’s three friends |

Job is presented as such a good man that God boasts about him in a conversation with Satan. Satan is then given permission to test how faithful Job would be if he had to endure loss, grief, and pain. Job's friends come to bring comfort to Job, but fail miserably. After an extended series of dialogues between Job and four friends, God speaks and Job's good fortunes return. Questions about why good people like Job suffer are left unanswered, but Job's relationship with God is renewed.

The problem of human suffering and God's involvement in the pain of the world is always with us. Efforts to find the cause of suffering often lead one (as Job and his counselors) to put the blame somewhere--on self, others, God, or Satan. The book of Job asks us to look beyond blame, accept ambiguity and uncertainty, and trust God for what we cannot see or control.

**Read, Discuss and Summarize Chapters 1 and 2 of Job.**

* 1. Describe Job.
  2. What was Job’s Affliction?
  3. Did Job’s friends help or hurt his situation?

**Lesson 3 Debates Between Job and His Three Friends**

#### Job Chapters 3-31

**Read, Discuss and Summarize Chapters 3-31 of Job.**

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| --- |
| **Debates between Job and his three friends – Chapter 3 v 1 to 31 v 40** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Passage | Subject |
| 3:1 to 14:22 | First Cycle of Debate |
| 15:1 to 21:34 | Second Cycle of Debate |
| 22:1 to 31:40 | Third Cycle of Debate |

**A. First Cycle Of Speeches (3-14)**

1. Job curses the day of his birth (3)

2. Eliphaz and Job (4-7)

3. Bildad and Job (8-10)

4. Zophar and Job (11-14)

**B. Second Cycle Of Speeches (15-21)**

1. Eliphaz and Job (15-17)

2. Bildad and Job (18-19)

3. Zophar and Job (20-21)

**C. Third Cycle Of Speeches (22-31)**

1. Eliphaz and Job (22-24)

2. Bildad and Job (25-27)

3. Job’s discourse on wisdom (28)

4. Job’s defense of himself (29-31)

1. The major conflicts in which Satan engages us are battles fought within us. If we cannot control what happens to us, what must we control?
2. Job is not yet ready to accuse God, but what is he already thinking about God (3:4,23)?
3. Describe Job’s view of death (3:13-19).
4. Why was Job’s concept of death different from the Christian’s? Was Job wrong? Was the

Bible wrong? How can we reconcile these differences?

1. Are we in any position to judge Job and his feelings of despondency? Why or why not?

**Lesson 4 Restoration of Job**

#### Job Chapters 38-42

**Read, Discuss and Summarize Chapters 38-42 of Job.**

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| **Restoration of Job – Chapter 38 v 1 to 42 v 17** |

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| --- | --- |
| Passage | Subject |
| 38:1 to 40:5 | God’s first challenge to Job |
| 40:6 to 41:34 | God’s second challenge to Job |
| 42:1 to 17 | Job’s submission and restoration |

1. God challenged Job to answer His questions (38:2-5; 40:1-2). Did Job actually answer God’s questions (40:3-5)? What does he say? Will this discussion be over before Job acknowledges certain things about God (cf. 42:1-6)?
2. Did God ever tell Job why he suffered or what God’s purpose was for Job? What did He

tell Job?

1. Why was Job able to intercede for his friends?

4. At first glance, it seems that God doubled everything Job had except his children—but

how is it true that God actually had doubled the number of Job’s children too?

Lesson 5: **Paradise in Turmoil**

*Where were you when I established* [*Ps 89:11*](http://bible.lifeway.com/book.asp?ref=Ps+89%3A11)*;* [*102:25*](http://bible.lifeway.com/book.asp?ref=Ps+102%3A25)*;* [*104:5*](http://bible.lifeway.com/book.asp?ref=Ps+104%3A5) *the earth? Tell MeThe bracketed text has been added for clarity. , if you have Lit* know *understanding.   
 Who fixed its dimensions? Certainly you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?   
 What supports its foundations? Or who laid its cornerstone   
 while the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God* [*Jb 1:6*](http://bible.lifeway.com/book.asp?ref=Job+1%3A6)*;* [*2:1*](http://bible.lifeway.com/book.asp?ref=Job+2%3A1)*;* [*Gn 6:2*](http://bible.lifeway.com/book.asp?ref=Ge+6%3A2)*,*[*4*](http://bible.lifeway.com/book.asp?ref=Ge+6%3A4) *shouted for joy?* Job 38:4-7 HCSB (Holman Christian Standard Bible)

*One day the members of the heavenly court came to present themselves before the LORD, and the Accuser, Satan, came with them. “Where have you come from?” the LORD asked Satan. Satan answered the LORD, “I have been patrolling the earth, watching everything that’s going on.”* Job 1:6-7 NLT

**Opening Scene**

1. Share with the group the biggest mess you recall making as a child or adult.
2. Which of the following branding slogans would your friends and family say best describes your attitude toward messiness and why?

* Cleanliness is next to godliness (Pears’ soap)
* It beats as it sweeps as it cleans (Hoover vacuum cleaner)
* When your shoes shine so do you (Kiwi shoe polish)
* Don’t you just love being in control? (British Gas)
* You deserve a break today (McDonalds)
* Expanding possibilities...(Hewlett Packard)
* So much more to enjoy! (Pepsodent toothpaste)
* Fly now. Shovel later. (Eastern Airlines)
* Apparently space isn’t the final frontier. (SyQuest)

1. As a group, brainstorm about areas of life where we want order but have to accept the truth that they can get messed up.

**Read Aloud: Job 1:1-3**

**What’s Your Story?**

1. Take five minutes to write a description of yourself in the style of Job 1: 1-3 as if you’re the main character in a story. How would you summarize your place in the world, experiences, current relationship with God, and a few facts about yourself that make you unique?

**Behind the Scenes**

1. What are the formulas or equations people like to construct about how life works or ought to work? About how God works?
2. What are some of the themes we typically associate with the Book of Job? How about the character lessons we associate with Job?
3. What is Jesus saying about revealed and hidden truth? How might you apply this to your study of Job’s story?

**Unfolding the Larger Story**

1. How do you envision paradise in the heavens and earth “in the beginning?”
2. John 1:4 declares that life and light emanated from God. Job 38:7 talks of brilliance, job, and celebration. What does John 1:5 tell us about the power of “the light” now and its ultimate triumph over darkness?
3. According to Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, where did evil originate? What flaws led to the betrayal and insurrection?
4. What happened to the real villain in the Larger Story (Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28)? Where does he now reside?
5. In what sense do men (masculinity) and women (femininity) uniquely reflect aspects of God (verse 27)?
6. According to Genesis 1:28, what did God intend as our ultimate position? What do you think about this?
7. What could possibly motivate God to risk another betrayal in giving free will to men and women?
8. In Job 38, God spells out man’s naiveté. Why on earth would God leave Adam and Eve vulnerable to the scheming of His vicious enemy (Genesis 3)?

Lesson 6: **Paradise in Turmoil**

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**Unfolding the Larger Story**

1. I Corinthians 2: 6-8 shows cunning in God’s redemptive plan. In what ways does the gospel story demonstrate this form beginning to end?
2. According to Hebrews 10:12-14, what part of Jesus’ rescue is complete? Do you think our Priest and King is waiting passively?
3. Why do you think God restrains His justice and holiness from wiping out a fallen world? Elaborate Job 37: 22-23 and other ideas you have.
4. Why do Christ-followers have nothing to fear?

**Heartbeat of the Story**

1. How have you been personally affected by looking at the Job and reviewing the Larger Story?
2. Are there struggles and messes in which you’re engaged? If so, talk about them and how can this group encourage you to stay in the fight.

**Connecting with My Story**

**Experience**

* Read chapters 1-3 of the Book of Job
* Keep a list of specific painful events and difficult circumstances in your life.
* Note any indications, as you look back, of ways that God may have just turned the tables on the enemy and redeemed these times in your life or to help others.
* Identify any unresolved questions or issues business you have for or with God related to these tough times.

**Reflection**

* Why do my actions, habits, or reactions to painful or difficult seasons in my life reveal about my core beliefs about God or the story I’m in?
* God, from the opening scene of Job, what is it that you want others to know about you or the Larger Story that can set other’s free?

**Extra Study**

Read Luke 8:26-39; John 17:9-18; Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 15:20-50; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-18

Lesson 7: **The Epic Struggle**

*Satan said: “Have you not put a hedge around Job and his house and all that he has, on every side?...But stretch out your hand had touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.”*

Job 1:10-11, ESV

*Suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!*

Job 1:19, NIV

**Opening Scene**

1. What in Asaph’s story reminds you of your own struggles in sorting out life, success, and godliness? In what ways can you relate to Asaph?
2. How often do you see godly people (yourself included) suffering and godless people prospering? How has this problem affected your faith in God?
3. How do you think God feels about our suffering? How do you think He feels if we complain and lament the way Asaph did in the monologue?

**What’s Your Story?**

1. As you spend some time this past week with your heart and God, what one insight about the Larger Story or the messiness of life captured your focus?

**Behind the Scenes**

1. What is real? How do you define real?
2. Consider the Larger Story and the unseen reality revealed in Job. What is our parallel to the “real world?” How many people see it?

**Unfolding the Larger Story**

1. From your reading of Job 1 and 38, who are the “sons of God”? How are they similar to Satan? How are they different?
2. What kind of access does Satan have on the earth? Why would God’s adversary show up in the heavenly council after patrolling the earth?
3. What do you make of God having an intimate, detailed awareness of Job’s life?
4. Is God picking a fight with the Accuser, using Job as His bait or target?
5. Think about your own life and walk with God. Although we all have issues, why might God point you out to His archenemy?
6. How would you rephrase or characterize the essence of Satan’s accusation in verses 9-11 about God and His relationship with Job?
7. God prohibited Satan from laying a hand on Job personally. What areas did he attack? What do you think about the complexity, power, and effectiveness displayed in his strategy?
8. If comparable tragedies happened to you, how do you think you’d react? What are some of the reasons people use to explain why tragic things happened to their lives?
9. What do Psalm 8 and 139 reveal about the wonder and glory of mankind as well as each individual? As you let these statements settle into your heart and soul, does anything surprise you?
10. Given Psalm 8 and 139 and what we’ve read of Job’s story so far, do you think Job really matters to God? What about us? How and why are we significant to God?
11. In the scheme of world events, how important was Job’s tragedy? On the other hand, how significant would you say Job’s tragedy and response was to the Larger Story and epic struggle between God and Satan?

Lesson 8: **The Epic Struggle**

*Satan said: “Have you not put a hedge around Job and his house and all that he has, on every side?...But stretch out your hand had touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.”*

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Job 1:19, NIV

**Heartbeat of the Story**

1. In Luke 12, Jesus assures us of our value to God and His deep care for us. We know Jesus died to save us, but in what personal ways has God expressed His love and appreciation for you?
2. In Isaiah 43:4, God emphasizes: “I have called you by your name.” What’s the significance of this to us?
3. Think about your current challenges and difficulties. How does accepting that you’re not the central figure in the story—that it’s not all about you—affect the way you approach life?
4. How do you feel knowing that God knows you intimately and cares deeply about you?

**Connecting with My Story**

1. Being brutally honest, in what ways have I lived as though the story is all about me? What beliefs have I carried that have fueled my response to blessings and suffering?
2. God, I’m far from perfect and my life is messy, but what is there about me that makes You proud? What gifts or weapons have You given me that make me dangerous to the enemy?

**Extra Study: Satan and Angels**

*Complete reading on pages 38 and 39 of Job: A Messy Faith*

Lesson 9: **Dark Seasons and the Villain**

*So Satan left the Lord’s presence and infected Job with incurable boils from the sole of his foot to the top of his head.* Job 2:7, HCSB

*Then Job answered: “How long will you torment me and crush me with words? You have humiliated me ten times now, and you mistreat me without shame.* Job 19:1-3, HCSB

**Opening Scene**

1. My life is most like…

* An uphill race—I’m always behind and I can’t catch up.
* An air-conditioned igloo—It seems pointless.
* Drying paint—It’s so boring I think watching paint dry would be an improvement.
* An amusement park—I guess I should feel guilty about all the fun I’m having.
* A newly frozen pond—I’m skating on thin ice and I pray it holds.
* A bowl of cherries—I haven’t chomped down on a cherry pit for a while.
* A reality show—It’s not always entertaining, but it is real.

Why did you say that?

1. Who are the villains and archvillains in the stories you love? What can happen when villains work undetected in secret and largely unchallenged?
2. Why would it be critical for us to acknowledge the villain and assign blame accurately in the Larger Story and in our lives?

**What’s Your Story?**

1. As you spent time this week in reflection and prayer, what did God reveal to you about your value to Him and your role in the Larger Story?
2. Were there any surprises as you studied the serpent, angels, morning star, cherub in Eden, and Satan as a roaming lion? Share your thoughts or feelings with the group.

**Behind the Scenes**

1. How largely does Satan figure into your view of the world and daily interpretation of your life?
2. After reading through Satan’s resume, how did it affect you?
3. How and why do you think the “ruler of this world” stays essentially hidden and unacknowledged in our lives?

**Unfolding the Larger Story**

1. Applying these words from Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Revelation to Satan, how do you suppose he felt and still feels about God after God cut him down, made a spectacle of him among the heavenly hosts, and sealed his destruction?
2. How do you think Satan feels about God’s creation, and especially that creation made in God’s image (imago dei)?
3. If you were on the side of evil, how would you “get to” God in a way that would actually hurt Him? How could you cause Father, Son, and Holy Spirit the most grief and pain possible while striving to avoid your impending doom?
4. What do we learn about Satan’s character, power, and battle tactics from Job 1:13-19, 1 Peter 5:8, and Ephesians 6:10-11?
5. How can we withstand the enemy’s assaults and the traumatic events in our lives like those Job experienced?
6. Why does Satan need permission from God to inflict suffering on a believer/follower (Job 1:12 and 2:6)? Considering the Larger Story, why do you think God allowed Satan’s attacks on Job?

Lesson 10: **Dark Seasons and the Villain**

*So Satan left the Lord’s presence and infected Job with incurable boils from the sole of his foot to the top of his head.* Job 2:7, HCSB

*Then Job answered: “How long will you torment me and crush me with words? You have humiliated me ten times now, and you mistreat me without shame.* Job 19:1-3, HCSB

1. Is there some truth to what Job’s friends believe? What’s the general life truth these guys are trying to blindly apply to every situation, including Job’s?
2. What do you see in the progression of Job’s responses to his friends? How do you think you would respond in Job’s place if you were enduring intense physical, emotional, and spiritual pain?
3. How did Satan use Job’s friends to wear him down and disrupt his dialog with God? What do you think the enemy was trying to accomplish in Job’s heart and mind?
4. Share a time in your life when you struggled with hopeless, defeat, discouragement, or cynicism. What do you recall believing about God and His heart toward you during this season of your life?

**Heartbeat of the Story**

1. The villain has no truth in him; lying is his native tongue and his chief tool is manipulation. At what point in Job’s life does Satan incessantly speak lies to him? When are you most susceptible to his lies and twisted half-truths?
2. What approaches can and does the Adversary use to crush our spirits? Discuss various ways he can hurt you, cause you to lose heart, and take you out of your vital role in the Larger Story?
3. Into which pivotal events in my life has the enemy launched arrows and created deeply imbedded wounds?
4. What are some of the deceptions and twisted truths that the enemy continues to whisper in my ear as difficulties come? What false beliefs have I accepted?

**Connecting with My Story**

*Complete reading on pages 54 and 55 of Job: A Messy Faith*

Lesson 11: **True Love and Distorted Love**

*Job fell to the ground and worshiped, saying: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will leave this life. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Praise the name of the Lord.*  Job 1:20-21, HCSB

*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. …I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*

Job 19:25, 27, NIV

**Opening Scene**

1. Which modern-day historical or fictional couple best exemplifies your ideal of true love? Why does this couple stand out to you?
2. Within smaller subgroups, take about five minutes to list various characteristics of “true love: and also characteristics of “distorted love.”

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| --- | --- |
| **True or Pure Love** | **Distorted Love** |
| 1. Honest | 1. Fake |
| 1. Passionate | 1. Passive |
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Gather together as a full group to discuss each subgroup’s lists. Highlight those characteristics you see as central to true or pure love.

**What’s Your Story?**

1. As you have reflected this week on the work of the Villain, did you see areas of evil influence that surprised you?
2. If you spend time with the “Extra Study,” what lesson did you learn about love, God, and you?

**Behind the Scenes**

1. In light of the Epic Romance, why do you think God brings up Job’s life and faithfulness to Satan? Given Satan’s ultimate fate, why is he even involved in this scene?
2. In Job 1:11 and 2:5, what accusation or idea is Satan trying to plant in God’s mind about Job’s love and all God’s people? What is he trying to accomplish?
3. Does the reality of Satan working to poison God’s heart and ours resonate with your experiences? How does Satan’s accusation come into play in your relationship with God?

**Unfolding the Larger Story**

1. What is true about god’s love in Bildad’s comments? What gets twisted or left out as Bildad applies his thinking to Job’s situation?
2. On the surface, Zophar’s view of God sounds fair and reasonable. What has he distorted? If God worked according to his formula, how could we reconcile pain and sorrow in our lives?
3. Does expressing anger, frustration, sorrow to God prevent us from being humble and submissive? How does stuffing our true feelings and guarding our hearts with God lead to a distorted love?

Lesson 12: **True Love and Distorted Love**

*Job fell to the ground and worshiped, saying: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will leave this life. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Praise the name of the Lord.*  Job 1:20-21, HCSB

*I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. …I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*

Job 19:25, 27, NIV

1. What does this act of “worship” during utter grief tell about Job’s relationship with God? How can Job’s love for God be genuine if he spends weeks venting anger, hurt, and disappointment to God?
2. How does Job’s view of God’s love relate to his circumstances and suffering? According to 13:15 and 19:25-27, what drives Job’s hope?
3. What does Satan stand to lose if Job’s love is true? How does our true love for God and each other defeat the Villain?
4. Compare traditional wedding vows to Blake’s poem and Job’s response in suffering. Why is it good and healthy times can’t show the strength of love like times of difficulty and sickness?
5. Why do you think we long for true love? What would happen in our hearts if we believe that true, pure love is a lie?

**Heartbeat of the Story**

1. Why would Yvaine refer to love as something “beautiful” and also “unbearable’?
2. Within smaller subgroups, take time to revisit your “true love” and “twisted love” charts. Now with more insights into love, add to or change items on your charts.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **True or Pure Love** | **Distorted Love** |
| 1. Uncontrollable | 1. Measured and careful |
| 1. Focused on the other and his/her best | 1. Focused on self and comfort |
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1. Although Job suffers, doubts, fears, struggles, and contends with God, he still dared to trust God’s heart and hope in Him. What do you think he held onto that kept him engaged?
2. Honest love that laments wounds and hurts is different from a business-like love that makes happiness and mutual benefit its center. What false beliefs or forces have encouraged you to keep your honest thoughts away from God?

**Connecting with My Story**

1. How “unbearable” is my love for God? Do I love God truly for Himself or do I love the blessings, positive feelings, and future rewards He offers?
2. Has religious experience given me a false, ever-smiling, ever blessing image of God? Do I love really love God more like Job or the three friends?

*Complete reading on pages 68 and 69 of Job: A Messy Faith*

Lesson 13: **Faith—Real and Raw**

*Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.”* Job 11:7, NIV

*If I have sinned, what have I done to You, Watcher of mankind? Why have You made me Your target, so that I have become a burden to You?* Job 7:20, HCSB

*If only I knew how to find Him…I would plead my case before Him.* Job 23:3-4 HCSB

**Opening Scene**

1. Which of the following action-adventure movie titles would your friends say best describes how you deal with life? Why do you agree or disagree with your friends’ assessment?

* Star Wars IV: A New Hope—I’m optimistic despite the odds
* Eragon—The dragon scales are tearing me up
* Raiders of the Lost Ark—If I keep moving I stay safe
* A Fistful of Dollars—No problem; I can throw money at
* Gladiator—I can defeat the enemy if I stand with others
* The Matrix—I’m not really sure I want to have a clue what’s going on
* Terminator—I’m unstoppable and I’ll be back
* Ghost Rider—You don’t want me to get “hot under the collar”
* Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**What’s Your Story?**

1. As you focused on true and distorted love this week, what did you hear from God or your heart about God’s love for you and your love for Him?
2. If you completed the “Extra Study,” how did Job’s outlook on his tragedy differ from that of his three friends? Which seems more religious? Which is more honest, more driven by passion?

**Behind the Scenes**

1. Hollywood doesn’t have a monopoly on treating wounds lightly. God criticizes religious leaders for superficial treatment of deep wounds. What are some ways well-meaning religious treats emotional wounds like a B-movie script?
2. Has there been a time in your life when you felt church phrases and Bible verses were given as topical treatment rather than addressing your real issues? Share the highlights with the group.

**Unfolding the Larger Story**

1. What is Job grieving in 7:3-5? After months of enduring suffering as Job did, how might you feel about your life and about God?
2. What complaints and accusations is Job directing at God in Job 19? What is the desperate longing of his heart (Job 29)? What is the deepest need for Job in this time of crisis?
3. How can the loss of honor and respect described in Job 29 affect a man? What’s the value in grieving those things we’ve lost in our own personal situations and also in a fallen world?
4. Although his friends disapprove, Job believes he has reason to accuse God. Who does he blame for the losses and tragedies in his life? Why does Job plead for fairness and justice?

Lesson 14: **Faith—Real and Raw**

*Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.”* Job 11:7, NIV

*If I have sinned, what have I done to You, Watcher of mankind? Why have You made me Your target, so that I have become a burden to You?* Job 7:20, HCSB

*If only I knew how to find Him…I would plead my case before Him.* Job 23:3-4 HCSB

**Unfolding the Larger Story, continued.**

1. Job describes his pain as arrows from God. How are emotional tragedies and traumas similar to arrow wounds? How are they different?
2. Why do you think Job is so desperate to hear from God in his suffering? Recall a time in your life when God was silent and nowhere to be seen. How did you feel and how did you respond?
3. Job’s friends condemn his lack of revenge believing we must be very careful with God. How are Eliphaz’ words the view of well-meaning religion? Why do people think expressing raw emotions to God is “going too far”?
4. Why would gut-level communication be preferable to pious theology? Do you think God in His holiness can tolerate our raw emotions, accusations, and messes? Explain your thoughts.

**Heartbeat of the Story**

1. Since his wife’s death, Graham has not allowed prayer in his home. The depth of his pain and anger climax in the basement. How do you feel about someone speaking to God in the way that Graham does?
2. Graham Hess experienced a terrible and traumatic loss as Job did. How does his reaction to God compare to Job’s in 10:13-18 (see also Job 7:16-21 earlier in this session)? Compare and contrast the way each man talks to God?
3. Do we need to be careful not to question or criticize God? How do you think God feels when we pour out our true, raw feelings on Him (see Job 42:7)?

**Connecting with My Story**

1. How would embracing more of Job’s messy faith change the way I relate to God? How willing am I to open up like that? What’s preventing me from jumping into the mud with God?
2. God, am I really more like Job with a real and messy faith or am I more like Eliphaz and the others, treading carefully with You? How do You feel about the way I relate to You?

*Complete reading on pages 82 and 83 of Job: A Messy Faith*

Lesson 15: **Redemption Revealed**

*Zophar: If only you would prepare your heart and lift up your hands to him in prayer! Get rid of your sins, and leave all iniquity behind you. Then your face will brighten with innocence. You will be strong and free of fear.* Job 11:13-15 NLT (Emphasis Added)

*Job: But He is unchangeable; who can oppose Him? He does what He desires. He will certainly accomplish what He has decreed for me, and He has many more things like these in mind.* Job 23:13-14, HCSB

**Opening Scene**

1. We want a detailed map for life that helps us avoid unpleasant and dangerous obstacles. On the road to our ultimate destination. Do you recall a time when you got lost in a strange place? Briefly share your story with the group.
2. Although Percival had no guarantee of recovering the Grail, he willing set out on a perilous and grueling journey. Why do you suppose he pushed on even in discouragement and disillusionment?
3. Recall a time in your life when you were counting on a simple promise and it didn’t come through. How did you feel?
4. How would judge Percival’s success in achieving results? How would your response change if you evaluate success in terms of character?

**What’s Your Story?**

1. What did you hear from God this week about the messy authenticity of your faith? What might God be doing in all of this?
2. As you studied blessing and reality this week, did you find anything discouraging? Were you encouraged in your look at reality? If so, how?

**Behind the Scenes**

1. How would you summarize the “blessing formula” in which Job’s friends believed? Based on the formula, what are factors or causes should preceded blessings in our lives?
2. What do the words from Eliphaz (Job 22) and Bildad (Job 18) add to understanding the “suffering formula” that Job’s friends espoused? Based on this formula, what are the causes that bring suffering into our lives?
3. How could Solomon write the words of Ecclesiastes 7:15, which seem in direct conflict with his words in Proverbs 3:33?
4. What are some examples you’ve seen of people who did the “right things: but did not get what they were seeking? Why do you think the “blessing formula” and “suffering formula” don’t always work?

**Unfolding the Larger Story**

1. Job refuses to give in to his friends’ simplistic, heartless formulas. He knows he’s blameless. What notes of despair do you hear in Job’s laments? How can unexpected twists and turns in our lives cause disorientation and doubts about God?
2. What inner turmoil do you hear in Job’s complaints in 10:8-12? What doubts does he exhibit about God in 9:22-24 and 10:8-12?
3. Job’s accusations mount as God continues to be silent through the ordeal. What aspect of God’s character is confusing to Job? Do you think God sees Job’s response as understandably human or as blasphemous? Explain your answer.
4. With the weeks or months that have passed prior to Job 23, what is Job’s bottom line disillusionment with God?
5. According to Job 23:3, 8-15 how does Job’s response stand in contrast to Adam’s and Eve’s in the garden (Genesis 3)?
6. Since God obviously didn’t take pleasure as Satan did in Job’s tragedies and ongoing suffering, why do you think God allows things to happen in our lives that He hates?
7. Many people reject God at least in part because He doesn’t protect us 100%. What do they need to realize about God’s heart and the Larger Story?

Lesson 16: **Redemption Revealed**

*Zophar: If only you would prepare your heart and lift up your hands to him in prayer! Get rid of your sins, and leave all iniquity behind you. Then your face will brighten with innocence. You will be strong and free of fear.* Job 11:13-15 NLT (Emphasis Added)

*Job: But He is unchangeable; who can oppose Him? He does what He desires. He will certainly accomplish what He has decreed for me, and He has many more things like these in mind.* Job 23:13-14, HCSB

**Heartbeat of the Story**

1. Mack has come a long way in seeing the messes in his life as something that might be full of the Spirit. How comfortable are you with the messes, struggles, and failures in your life?
2. How does our natural focus on ourselves and our circumstances affect the way we judge whether something is good or bad? Why do you think God is so much more comfortable with the messiness of life than we are?
3. In Job 23:13-14, how does Job explain how God and God’s perspective differs from ours? What confidence can we find in this attitude regardless of our circumstances?
4. How can you relate to Mack’s confession?
5. What do you think about Sarayu’s perspective? Why is it so difficult for us to choose to live and rest only in the Spirit despite our circumstances?

**Connecting with My Story**

1. God in what areas am I trying to play God in my own independence? What is it that I’m avoiding in my redemptive, relational journey that You want me to see?

*Complete reading on pages 98 and 99 of Job: A Messy Faith and discuss questions.*

Lesson 17: **Light Shines Out of Darkness**

*Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.”* Job 38:1-3, ESV

*Then Job answered the Lord and said…”I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”* Job 42: 1, 5-6, NASB

**Opening Scene**

1. What’s your favorite happy ending in any story or movie? What is it about this ending that grabs your heart?
2. How do you feel when a story does not close with a happy ending? Why do you think most of us are disappointed in a story that lacks a happy ending?
3. As Job’s story comes to a close, it sounds a lot like a fairytale. In Job 42, what elements sound like “he lived happily ever after”?
4. Reflect back on Job’s losses throughout the story. What thinks were not restored? With what losses did he have to grieve and cope to the end of his days?

**What’s Your Story?**

1. As you connected with God and your heart this past week, what did you learn about lament? Would you be willing to read the lament psalm you wrote in your journal to the group?
2. What did you hear from God about your doubts and fears? About His redemptive, relational plan for you?

**Behind the Scenes**

1. According to verses 12-13, what puts the marriage offer at risk? What do you make of Boaz’ contradictory statements and emotions?
2. What can we learn from Naomi’s counsel when we feel like God, our Kinsman-Redeemer, is not responding or withdrawing from us?
3. How did Boaz show cunning in the way he closed the deal in Ruth 4?
4. What can we learn about God’s heart for us from the story of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 3 and 4)? What can we learn from Isaiah 59 about the way He works on our behalf against Satan, who would also lay claim to us?

**Unfolding the Larger Story**

1. Job vows by “the living God” and triumphantly declares, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” What might Job be thinking about God when he uses these phrases?
2. Do you get a sense that Job’s trying to manipulate or appease God? How do you think he’s doing at honoring God in Job 27:1-6 and 19:25-29?
3. Job won’t “curse God and die” (2:9), but he’s willing to directly challenge God and die. What’s the difference and what might drive this kind of thinking?
4. Verse 15 explains why Job would never curse God and die. Allow the thought to settle for a minute: We have no other hope. If God is truly God, where else can we turn? How might seizing that truth affect the way we approach God and life?
5. What kind of relationship with God is required to follow Him down “unfamiliar paths” when you’re blind or to walk fearlessly with Him “through the valley of the shadow of death”?

Lesson 18: **Light Shines Out of Darkness**

*Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.”* Job 38:1-3, ESV

*Then Job answered the Lord and said…”I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”* Job 42: 1, 5-6, NASB

**Unfolding the Larger Story, continued**

1. What was the look on God’s face when He responded to Job in chapter 38? Do you think God is saying that Job has acted wrongly or been out of line?
2. What tone of voice do you imagine God used when He spoke to Job in chapters 38-40? How does the message differ if you view God in each of the following roles?

* Aloof Judge and Law Enforcer
* Almighty Power who must put us in our place
* Insecure Deity who bullies to demonstrate His dominance
* Loving Parent who just wants us to trust the goodness of His heart
* Lover who hurts when we doubt and falsely accuse Him

1. Recognizing that God’s goal is relationship, why do you think He found Job’s response in 40:3-5 unsatisfying? How would you feel in Job’s shoes? In God’s?
2. In what ways does Job’s response in 42:1-6 differ from his first response in 40:3-5? Why did God find satisfaction this time?

**Heartbeat of the Story**

Complete activity on page 112

**Connecting with My Story**

1. What is still in the way that keeps me from trusting the heart of God enough to say with Job, “God might kill me, but I have no other hope.”
2. God, are You really willing to wrestle with me? What if I accuse You falsely or cross a line of respect?
3. Are there areas that I’ve prayed about where You, like Boaz, are out of sight turning the tables on the enemy?