

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 45
Week 46 – Job 1-19

Key Concepts: the two main concepts in Job are first that evil happens to good people and that even the best people cannot always figure out why God does/allows such evil.

Stories: the first half of Job contains a narrative that sets up the story of Job's fall into despair and the arrival of his friends, his initial complaint, Eliphaz's initial kind response, Job's reply, Bildad's first, not so kind, response, Job's reply, Zophar's grand rhetorical response, Job's extended reply, Eliphaz's return engagement (not so kind), Job's reply, Bildad's second attack on Job, and finally Job's reply.

Brief Summary: Job is a story about a very, very good man, Job, who loses everything except his life and his wife (children, fortune and health) because of a bet between God and the Satan. Satan bets God that if things do not go well for Job then Job will curse God. God says, fine do whatever you want. The overarching question is why bad things happen to very, very good people.

Job's response to his initial loss is to say God gives and God takes away. However, when he loses his health and ends up in the ash heap of life he bemoans his condition and curses the day of his birth. "Let the day perish in which I was born, and the night which said 'a man-child is conceived.'" In a sense he is feeling his pain and responding in despair...which would seem to be appropriate considering that in spite of his faithfulness to God he is in pain and grief. His friends arrive to "comfort" him.

Eliphaz is the first to speak. Eliphaz is polite, but repeats truisms as if they have been given to him from heaven. These truisms include that the innocent never perish, that no one can be holy before God, human beings are born for trouble and that Job ought to be happy that God is "reproving" him.

Job replies by wondering why God has done this to him considering the fact that Job has done everything right (which we as the reader know to be true). All Job asks for is an explanation, "make me understand where I have erred." And because he receives no explanation he is going to complain.

Next up is Bildad who offers his own explanation, which is that Job's children had sinned. This view is Oriental in nature and implies that the sin of any family member "infects" the entire family. He tells Job to ask God for forgiveness and all will be well.

Job replies not to Bildad but continues his conversation with Eliphaz...that God does indeed bring misfortune on the good as well as the evil.

Zophar is unwilling to be nice and makes it clear that Job is to blame. Job has sinned and therefore deserves his punishment. "Know that God extracts of you less than your guilt deserves."

Job replies with sarcasm. "No doubt you are the people and wisdom will die with you." Job is willing to defend his record of goodness before God and everyone else.

Eliphaz returns with an accusation that Job's "challenging" the customary beliefs about how God works in the world is an attack on religion. "But you are doing away with the fear of God."

Job accuses his friends of being miserable comforters and maintains his innocence.

Bildad returns with a warning that Job is basically headed for hell. "Such is the place of him who knows not God."

Job replies with the statement that one day someone will vindicate him after he is dead.

1. Have you ever felt like Job?
2. How have you responded to friends who have been going through tough times?
3. What do you think of the arguments of Job's friends?