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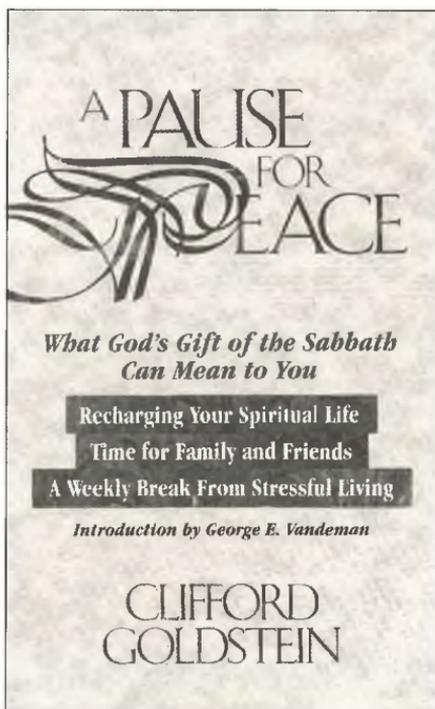
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# THE BOOK OF JOB: DO I DESERVE THIS?

APRIL — JUNE 1993

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## This Quarter's Artists



Lynn M. Petty, whose photograph graces our new *CQ* cover, discovered her aptitude for art at an early age, eagerly studying under a number of artists in southern California. In her teens, Lynn's talents found expression in applied photography, and although she has worked for several years as the director of marketing for a large insurance firm in Idaho, her love of photography has remained active. She currently co-owns Stalet Studio in Caldwell, Idaho, which specializes in creative portrait and commercial photography.

Lynn describes herself as an adventurer and enjoys an eclectic number of interests besides photography. She has recently become an avid scuba diver yet also enjoys the challenges of hiking southern Idaho's high desert country.

Lars Justinen photographed the black-and-white weekly illustrations in this issue of *CQ*. He is also the artist who redesigned our new *Collegiate Quarterly*. Lars's work is familiar to most Adventists, as hundreds of his illustrations have been published in SDA publications. He also illustrates for well-known national clients such as Scholastic Books, Time/Life Books, the N.Y. Metropolitan Opera, PBS, and McGraw/Hill.

The artist and his wife, Kim, who is well known to Adventist parents for her work in children's publications, live in Nampa, Idaho.

# Getting the Most Out of CQ

## Facts You Should Know

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. CQ's purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the adult quarterly find that because CQ deals with the same topics as the adult quarterly, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist young-adult groups work together in producing this quarterly. More than 200 individuals contribute to CQ each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of CQ is about 26,000.

## Pointers for Study

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Introduction" (Sunday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

3. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in the bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

4. Read the remainder of the sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

**"Introduction"** (Sunday) is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

**"Logos"** (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

**"Testimony"** (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

**"Evidence"** (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective. It is likely to be the most scholarly article of the week.

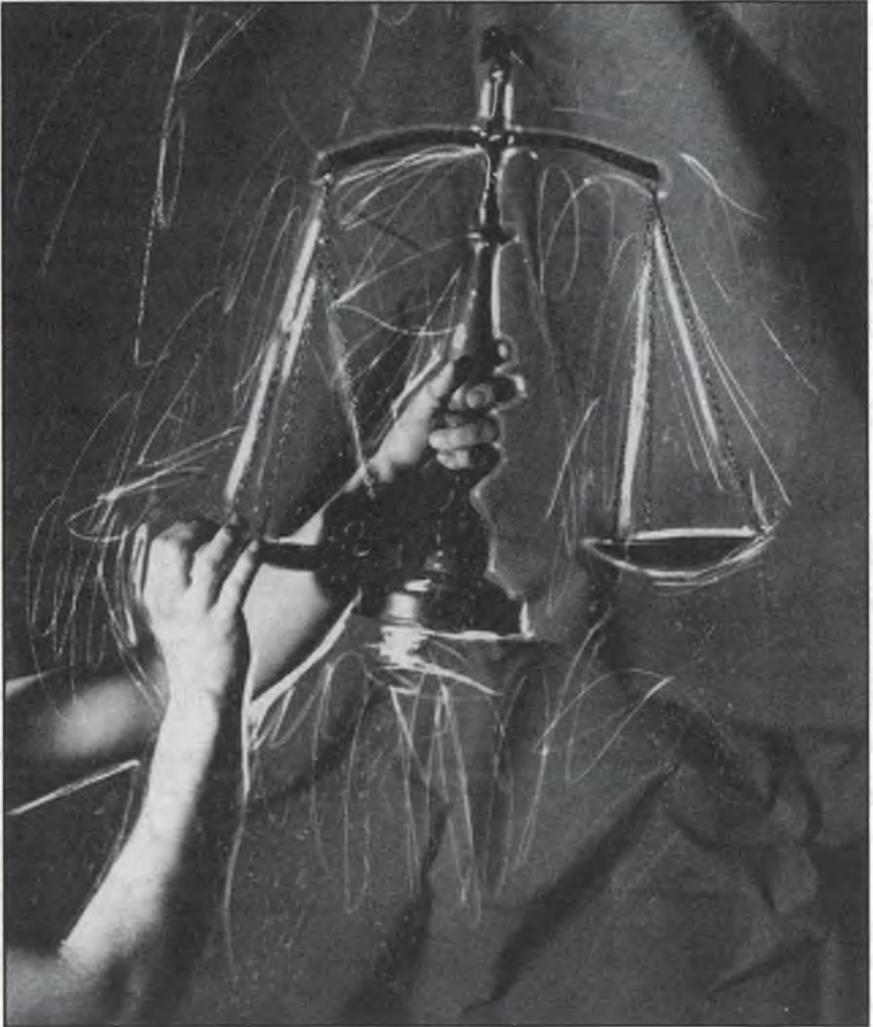
**"How-To"** (Thursday) discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

**"Opinion"** (Friday), a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

## CQ and the Church

CQ is the General Conference-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.*

# TRYING TO CONTROL GOD



**“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised” (Job 1:21, NIV).**

# Job and Me

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Job 1:1-5, 13-22; 2:7-13; 42:10-17**

The book of Job is one of the wisdom books, about a good, rich man from the East. What do I have in common with him? Well, in spite of my Christian education, I'm not very wise. I try to behave myself, but the deans could tell a few stories. Rich? I only wish I were. And I'm not even from the East, unless someone has moved the Yukon.

So what do I really have in common with Job? Is his life—as his questions—so very different from mine?

Yes, Job did have questions. He just couldn't understand why he was suffering, since he led an exemplary life. If he had committed some great sin, or even a small one, he could have accepted his punishment more readily, but he couldn't think of anything he had done wrong. So why was God allowing those horrible events to happen to poor Job? What was God trying to prove, anyway?

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### **This good-behavior-reward idea is actually an attempt to control God with our ideas of fair play.**

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I often find myself with the same idea. If we are good Christians, we should be blessed and sheltered from tragedies. I mean, Auntie Joan was generally considered a fine woman, but she died anyway. She wasn't even really old. And my friend was sincerely trying to live a Christian life, so why did God let her parents divorce and make her miserable? What about the innocent people who are given a disease through blood transfusions? I can't see any justice in these kinds of things.

In a way, though, this good-behavior-reward idea is actually an attempt to control God with our ideas of fair play. Because we can't understand His ways and reasons, we try to force God into ours. But as Job discovered, we don't need to have an answer to every question to be content. By accepting God's actions as they are, without thrusting our concept of justice on them, we can come to God in true humility and learn more of His love and wisdom.

---

*By Robbyn Chiles, a music/English major at Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta, Canada.*

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# The Inadequacy of Orthodoxy

## LOGOS

Ps. 1:6; Prov. 22:5; Deut. 28

### The Idea of Retributive Justice

*“Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, ‘Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts’” (Job 1:5, NIV).*

“You must be asking Why?” the social worker stated as she saw me holding my infant daughter, who was dying of congenital problems.

“No,” I replied. “I’ve read the book of Job too often to ask Why?”

But the book of Job is concerned with the question Why? Why do the righteous suffer? Why do the wicked prosper? This thinking was the underlying idea of retributive justice—one of the orthodox religious teachings people often find in the Old Testament. Edwin Good sums up the belief succinctly: people believed that “righteousness pleases God; God rewards that which pleases him; therefore, the righteous man fares well in this life.”<sup>1</sup> If this is true, people can control God.

### Job’s Riches (read Job 1:1-5)

*“He was the greatest man among all the people of the East” (Job 1:3).*

The narrator of Job 1, 2 tells us that Job was “blameless and upright” and that he “shunned evil” (1:1). Besides that, he was very rich, his employees numerous, and his family line secure. He hadn’t been good in a vacuum. Kenneth Gros Louis points out that although Job was a pious man, he “has not been a hermit or an ascetic, but . . . has lived an active life, participated in the world and established a large estate.”<sup>2</sup>

### Job’s Reaction to Disaster (read Job 1:13-22; 2:7-10)

*“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised” (Job 1:21).*

Servants bring word of disaster. Job responds to these calamities by tearing his clothes and shaving his head—typical signs of mourning. But what he does after that is surprising. He worships God. His belief in God remains strong. This attitude continues even after he receives his second, more personal, trial—boils. Even while he sits on the garbage heap and scrapes himself with a potsherd, he states, “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (2:10). Here we see a patriarch who has great trust in God—the kind of person our mothers would like us to be in times of stress, filled with faith and acceptance.

*What can be learned from Job’s earliest responses to calamity?*

### The Friends Arrive (read Job 2:11-13)

*“No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was” (Job 2:13).*

Often people speak sarcastically of Job’s comforters. However, they should be seen in a positive light. They make long journeys to visit Job; they suffer with him in silence for a full week. And later they try to counsel him to the best of their

ability, giving him their version of “tough love.” But their knowledge of the workings of God is, like Job’s, incomplete, and by defending retributive justice they, in fact, seek to limit the Omnipotent to their tiny preconceptions.

### **The Big Question**

To understand properly Job’s restoration in 42:10-17, it is necessary to summarize chapters 3-41. In chapter 3 and onward, patient Job has been transformed into angry Job. He is angry with his friends for insisting that he is a crass sinner, and he accuses God of injustice.

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## **The calamities that befall Job show that God is not limited by our idea of reward and punishment.**

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Eventually God Himself answers Job’s accusations from the whirlwind, but He doesn’t bother to answer the question “Why do the righteous suffer?” Instead, He goes deeper for the question that has *really* been bothering Job: “How does the Almighty run the universe?” God makes it clear that He is not a pawn that we can control: people with their notions of retributive justice, their sacrifices, or their daily devotions do not determine human destiny. God is in control.

### **God’s Final Grace to Job (read Job 42:10-17)**

*“After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before” (Job 42:10).*

The book of Job concludes with Job’s restoration. He receives twice as many riches, another family, and a span of life twice as long as the usual. But this is not a reward for faithfulness. The calamities that befall Job show that God is not limited by our idea of reward and punishment; his restoration illustrates that God may bless whom He sees fit.

### **God’s Message to Job—and to Us**

*“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted” (Job 42:2).*

God—not man—is sovereign in the universe. That’s the message of the book of Job. But we need not cower or feel as if we are nothing more than dust and ashes. As Good states, “God’s distance from man is maintained, for Yahweh [God] came to speak to Job, not with the intention of smashing him shuddering to the ground but in order to draw him back to himself.”<sup>3</sup>

*Do I try to control God by my actions? What does this say about my belief in God? in myself?*

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1. Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield, England: Almond Press, 1981), p. 201.

2. Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis, “The Book of Job,” *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, ed. Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), p. 228.

3. Good, p. 239.

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*By Denise Herr, professor of English at Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta, Canada.*

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# Infinite God in a Finite Mind

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Job 33:8-14**

Like Job, Ellen White questioned God about innocent suffering. At a time when her husband, James, was very ill and deeply in debt, she wrote these words: "Those were days of sadness. I looked upon my three little boys, soon, as I feared, to be left fatherless, and thoughts like these forced themselves upon me. My husband dies a martyr to the cause of present truth; and who realizes what he has suffered, the burdens he has for years borne, the extreme care which has crushed his spirits, and ruined his health, bringing him to an untimely grave, leaving his family destitute and dependent? Some who should have stood by him in this trying time, and with words of encouragement and sympathy helped him to bear the burdens, were like Job's comforters, who were ready to accuse and press the weight upon him still heavier. . . ."

---

### **It would seem that she had moved beyond blind faith to an understanding of the workings of God.**

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"I was comforted to know that there was One who judgeth righteously, and that every sacrifice, every self-denial, and every pang of anguish endured for His sake, was faithfully chronicled in heaven, and would bring its reward. The day of the Lord will declare and bring to light things that are not yet made manifest."<sup>1</sup>

During these years she was content to accept the wisdom of God at face value and not to question it when it appeared contradictory. Nearly 40 years later, though, she wrote of the importance of looking beyond the outward appearances to see things as they really are. It would seem that she had moved beyond blind faith to an understanding of the workings of God. "Our ideas in regard to the love, the goodness, and the compassion of God are strangely limited. Because our knowledge of spiritual things has become so dwarfed and enfeebled, we have not advanced from light to greater light. The Lord has not been able to open to our understanding many precious things. In view of the losses we have sustained by our earthliness and commonness, we have much to make us humble."<sup>2</sup>

## **REACT**

1. How much doubt do you think God can forgive in us?
2. Explain why you agree or disagree that there is no place in a Christian's life for doubt.

---

1. Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, pp. 197, 198.

2. Ellen White, "The Mystery of God," *Signs of the Times*, March 25, 1897.

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*By Grant Misseghers, a theology student and director of campus ministries at Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta, Canada.*

## Two Jobs?

### EVIDENCE

#### Key Text: Job 42:6, 10

In almost any twentieth-century Bible translation of Job you will notice that chapters 1, 2, and most of 42 are in prose. The rest of the book is written in poetry. If you compare the character of Job as portrayed in the prose and poetry sections, you may think he has a split personality.

In Job 1 and 2, he is humble and accepting—*patient*. But in the poetry, he longs for death: “May the day of my birth perish” (3:3). He later frets at his friends, “How long will you torment me and crush me with words?” (19:2); and rails at his treatment by God, “Then know that God has wronged me” (19:6).

Such differences have caused many scholars to question the integrity of the text. As Moshe Greenberg states, “The book’s representation of Job seems to some modern scholars so disharmonious as to warrant the hypothesis that two characters have been fused in it.”<sup>1</sup> Some think that the prose section was written to promote conventional wisdom, while another author, who, perhaps, had experienced the Babylonian exile and its inherent crisis of faith, may have added the poetic sections to challenge the portrayal of unthinking, patient faith.

But we need to look at the complete biblical text—not just at fragments. The book of Job has been relevant to generations as it has stood.

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### **The author of Job wants to teach us that God is omnipotent and not wholly understandable to humanity.**

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When we read contemporary literary critics of the Bible, we realize that the differences in Job help emphasize the message of the book. The author of Job wants to teach us that God is omnipotent and not wholly understandable to humanity. When we realize this, we can see that changes, reversals, and apparent inconsistencies throughout the book are really part of a larger system.

Good, pious Job has disasters befall him. Patient Job turns angry. Job’s friends have come to encourage him; imagine their surprise when he begins to castigate God. Eliphaz sarcastically tells Job to call on a heavenly witness (5:1); imagine his astonishment when God responds.

To understand the apparent inconsistencies in the book of Job, we don’t have to conjecture about two different Jobs. Instead, we can see that the book of Job is a classic expression of humanity’s longing for divine order when it is faced with the disarray of reality.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Moshe Greenberg, “Job,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1987), p. 283.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 301.

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*By Denise Herr, professor of English at Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta, Canada.*

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# What Does Job Know?

## HOW-TO

### Key Text: Job 2:10

In a single verse Job shows a tremendous understanding of God's character. As I read through the story of Job, this verse helps me understand why Job doesn't rebel, why he doesn't take his wife's and his friends' bad advice.

Ever since I was a little boy, I've had a rebellious streak. I loved the praises and privileges my parents gave me when I hung up my jacket properly or treated our little dog kindly. And I didn't mind too much the discipline, and maybe even the punishment, that came my way when I left my clothes scattered through the house or pulled the dog's tail. But what I truly hated were the rare occasions when I was disciplined or punished for some wrong I didn't do. My rebellious nature would surge to the front, and I would stalk off, muttering (quietly, of course) about how unfair my parents were. I expected my parents to treat me in certain ways, depending on how good or bad I was. When they didn't do that, I rebelled. Even now, I expect people to treat me in accordance with how good I have been. If they don't, I still mutter to myself and consider associating with other people. And, yes, when I feel that God has wronged me, I have a tendency to mutter, complain, and feel rebellious.

---

## **Even now, I expect people to treat me in accordance with how good I have been.**

---

But Job is not like me. This verse tells me that, amazingly, he doesn't seem to expect his righteousness to guarantee prosperity and happiness from God. He has an understanding of how God deals with humans that is different from the way I often have understood it, and certainly from his wife's and friends' understandings. Undoubtedly, he questions God. In later chapters I see him directing some very straight questions at God. But Job 1:22 says, "In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing" (NIV).

So I ask myself, "What special thing deep inside himself does Job know about God?" And when I say *know*, I mean more than intellectual knowing; I am talking about emotional, around-the-heart knowing, the kind of knowing that destroys rebellion. Every time I think about this question, one word keeps popping into my mind—*trust*. Job must know that, whatever happens, he can trust God to allow only those things that are for his eternal benefit. Now that is trust.

Seeing what Job knows about God makes me want more of that awe-inspiring trust in my own life. And I think I know how Job gets it. Job has made a habit of communicating with God: "Thus did Job continually" (1:5, KJV)—not "sometimes" or "most of the time." Job simply likes "hanging around" with God, and that is how he knows Him so well. So that is the secret.

---

*By Rick Mutch, a graduate student in marriage and family therapy at Loma Linda University, Canadian Union College campus, College Heights, Alberta, Canada.*

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# Learning From the Crisis

## OPINION

### Key Text: Job 1:21

Job certainly was a co-worker with God. After his ordeal, he was the one assigned to pray for his misled friends. How can we, through our crises, come closer to our Creator and bring God to our friends?

Linda was only 12 years old when her mother died of cancer, but years later she holds God responsible. Surely God can be more than just a pair of wide shoulders where we can dump our rage and grief. Instead, we need to drop *ourselves* on them so we can be carried, wounded and bleeding, to His shelter for healing. When we realize God is the Loving Shepherd and we are sickly sheep, we can share the comfort we find with others.

---

## Linda was only 12 years old when her mother died of cancer, but years later she holds God responsible.

---

Job was humble at the end of the story and had the essential characteristics of a learner—he was willing to open his eyes and *see* God (42:5). Let's look at another learner. Bradley, ambitious and in his first semester at an Adventist college, writes to a friend that he doesn't need God in his life—he can do just fine on his own, thank you. Two days later Bradley is in trouble. He tried to steal something and was caught. How could he be so foolish and jeopardize his future? Humiliated and desperate, Bradley thinks of suicide. But the wide shoulders are there. Caring friends pray with him and share promises; faculty support him. New light shines from his eyes. Hope returns. From indifference to despondency to joy, a pilgrimage is made.

Bradley arrives at the sheepfold, draped over the Shepherd's shoulders, thankful for the grace and circumstances that showed him that he was lost. Unlike Job, Bradley did not start out with any kind of faith. But thankfully, like Job, he also learned to say, "Now my eye sees thee" (42:5, RSV).

## REACT

1. If he was righteous, what did Job repent of?
2. What misconceptions of God could keep us from restoration and healing?
3. How can we come to the place that we can understand this statement: "Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; . . . and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best."\*

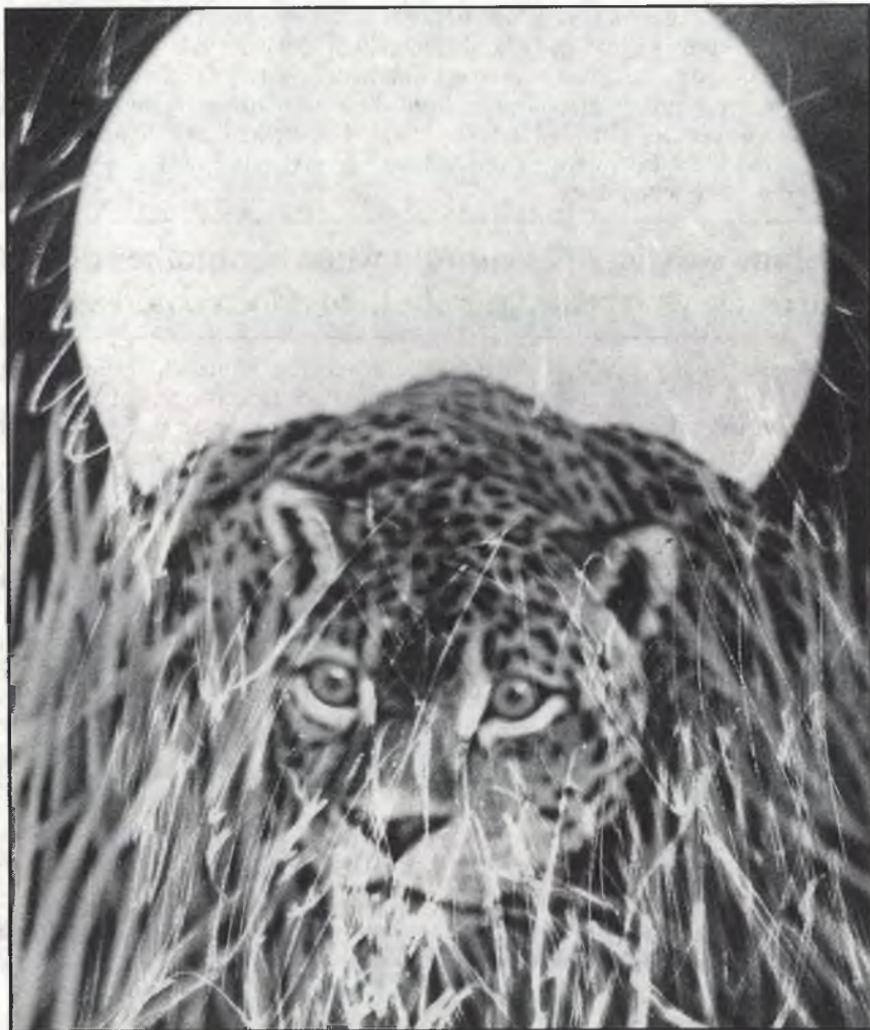
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\* *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 417.

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By John and Catherine DeBourt, who attend Canadian Union College, College Heights, Alberta, Canada. Catherine is an education major and John is a theology major.

# LURKING IN THE GRASS



**“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8, NIV).**

# Overcoming the Adversary

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Job 1:6-12, 21, 22; 2:1-7, 10**

While working on a summer mission project in Kenya, my fellow volunteers and I were treated to a safari to Masai Mara National Game Reserve. On the final day of the safari our bus got stuck in the mud. We all had to get out of the bus to push. Tall grass bordered the muddy road, and I wondered what might be lurking in all that grass. These game preserves were devoted to allowing wild animals to live in their natural habitat. Most animals we had seen on the safari—giraffe, zebra, wildebeest—had seemed relatively harmless. The only lions we had encountered lounged lazily beneath a tree, ignoring our bus and the clicking of our cameras. Even after knowing that the chances of being attacked by one of these docile animals was virtually nonexistent, I still felt anxious to get back on the bus. I didn't like the feeling of being exposed to danger—real or imagined.

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### **The key to surviving an attack by the devil is never to leave the protection of God.**

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In 1 Peter 5:8 the devil is likened to a prowling, roaring lion. It is an accurate simile. Like those harmless-looking lions I saw on the safari, the devil may appear to be tame, but he is ready to devour anyone foolish enough to get too close.

The key to surviving an attack by the devil is never to leave the protection of God. If we stand firm in faith, God will help us resist the devil. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6, NIV).

Sometimes it may seem that we are alone and unprotected—that God has left us. We may be experiencing incredible suffering. It is during these times that we especially need to hold on to God. We need to remember that people all over the world are going through similar hardships. God has promised never to leave us, and we need to take Him at His word. Job believed this. God allowed Satan to take away everything Job had, but Job did not succumb to the temptation to curse God and die, as his wife suggested. Satan appeared to have the upper hand in the whole situation. But Job chose to remain faithful to God even through his period of questioning, and God heaped more blessings on Job's life than He had done prior to Job's suffering.

The devil as a devouring lion is nothing to fear, even in those times when it seems he is winning. Faith in God helps us defeat this adversary. "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast" (1 Pet. 5:10).

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*By Kharolynn Pascual, a junior ministerial-studies/educational-ministry major at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.*

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# God's Prosecutor

## LOGOS

### Job 2:1-10

The biblical drama of Job presents us with a paradox. On the one hand, Job's distress is portrayed as the result of Satan's work; on the other hand, Job never learns this (see Job 42:1-6). As far as he is concerned, God is the source of his trials. God's entire speech at the conclusion of the book is designed to impress Job with the mysteriousness of the divine will and the inappropriateness of evaluating his circumstances from his own limited, human standpoint (see Job 38-41). The role of the adversary or accuser (*Satan* is a Hebrew word meaning "adversary" or "accuser") is thus an ambiguous one. Satan does not serve as an explanation for Job's troubles from Job's point of view.

*How would you explain suffering to someone who does not believe in Satan?*

The adversary makes his first appearance in Job 1:6. He attends a heavenly council after "going to and fro in the earth" (Job 1:7, KJV). God inquires whether, during these travels, Satan has noticed the distinctive character of Job, "a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil" (Job 1:8, RSV).

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## Satan does not serve as an explanation for Job's troubles from Job's point of view.

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At this point, the adversary raises a plausible objection to God's characterization of Job: Job's fidelity to God reflects, not his appreciation for God's love, but his desire to receive God's gifts. If, says Satan, adopting an archly prosecutorial pose, God were to remove the material blessings Job enjoys, the grounds for his faithfulness would disappear. "But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face" (Job 1:11). God authorizes Satan to determine whether this accusation is correct, charging him only—at first—to avoid any physical harm to Job himself (Job 1:12).

*What role, if any, does wealth play in a Christian's life?*

Despite the fact that catastrophe strikes, Job fails to "charge God with wrong" (Job 1:22). All that he has is God's, and if God wishes to remove it, that is God's prerogative (1:21). Despite this unswerving trust in God, Satan still has doubts about Job's real motives (2:4, 5). "But put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face" (Job 2:5). Again, God grants the adversary leave to afflict Job, asking only that his life be spared (2:6, 7). And again Job refuses to distrust God. Job implies to his hurting and confused wife that God, as the Author of all things, cannot be held accountable in the same way

a human being could: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10), he asks her.

As far as Job can see, God is directly responsible for the evil that has befallen him. In the light of God's self-disclosure in Jesus of Nazareth, we know that God is a God of love, who does not wish anyone to experience calamity or evil. We can see both that God vanquishes the forces of evil—in Jesus' performance of exorcisms and in His victory over death at the Resurrection—and that divine love enables and requires God sometimes to suffer evil, overcoming it precisely in this way rather than through a display of omnipotent power. The serious Christian must "take with full seriousness the implications of the claim that Good Friday is the place of revelation, that the paradigm of divine action in the world is the passion of the Lord's anointed."\*

Because of Jesus we can see more clearly than Job that God is not the author of evil. Because of Jesus, we can trust God even more confidently than Job did.

*What other biblical evidence can you offer to refute the concept that God is the author of evil?*

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\* Nicholas Lash, "These Things Were Here" and "But the Beholder Wanting," *Theology on Dover Beach* (London: Darton, 1979), p. 162.

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By Gary Chartier, who recently finished his Ph.D. in theology from Cambridge and is a graduate of La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

# Conscientious Objectors

## TESTIMONY

### Key Text: Job 1

The first chapter of Job makes it clear that the devil is no myth. Some Christians would argue that the book of Job itself is a myth. However, Jesus, Peter, Ellen White, C. S. Lewis, and other Christians who have taken the concept of a great controversy quite seriously would not dismiss it as a myth. There is a personal devil, just as there is a personal God. Christians who deny the existence of devils are as unbalanced as those who go to extremes over deliverance ministries.

Ellen White believed the power of intercessory prayer could be understood only in the context of the great controversy. She pointed to Daniel's experience as a classic example of how spiritual warfare can exist beyond our awareness, as it did in Job's case.

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## Christians have taken the concept of a great controversy quite seriously

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Daniel struggled in prayer for 21 days. He did not know that God had sent Gabriel to answer his prayer, or that the mighty angel had been delayed by the forces of evil (Dan. 10:12, 13). However, Daniel's persistence in prayer enabled Michael to intervene in this spiritual conflict, and the message was delivered. What would have happened if Daniel had stopped praying?

"As a people we do not understand as we should the great conflict going on between invisible agencies, the controversy between loyal and disloyal angels. Evil angels are constantly at work, planning their line of attack, controlling as commanders, kings, and rulers, the disloyal human forces. . . . We must pray as did Daniel, that we may be guarded by heavenly intelligences. As ministering spirits angels are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. Pray, my brethren, pray as you have never prayed before."<sup>1</sup>

If Adventists in Ellen White's time did not understand the necessity of intercessory prayer, we understand it much less today. The idea that prayer significantly affects spiritual forces of good and evil is foreign to the modern Adventist mind. This concept has largely disappeared in the church today at a time when many other churches are rediscovering its importance.<sup>2</sup> Most Adventists have become "conscientious objectors in the great controversy" at a time when books like *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness* have been outselling most secular bestsellers. We can't deal effectively with the problems of evil if we deny its ultimate source.

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1. Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1173.

2. Larry Christianson, *Welcome Holy Spirit* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987); see also Peter Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit* (Ann Arbor: Vine Books, 1988).

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By Steven Daily, campus chaplain at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

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# The Devil Made Me Do It

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: James 1:14**

Books like Scott Peck's *People of the Lie* and Malachi Martin's *Hostage to the Devil* provide good reason for believing in the existence of evil spirits. But there are also good reasons to avoid focusing too much attention on demonic activity.

First, the healing ministry of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead demonstrate God's power over the forces of evil. In this light we have no need to fear the demonic.

Second, like us, evil spirits are part of created reality. The devil is not an alternative deity, not a genuine competitor for God's position. Lacking not only God's goodness but God's infinity, knowledge, and power, demons differ from us in degree, not in kind.

Third, our capacity to determine who we will be is not eliminated by demonic temptation. As the Epistle of James reminds us, "Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire" (1:14, RSV). We must take responsibility for our actions. The work of evil angels doesn't give us any excuse to deny our own role in determining our own behavior and influencing that of others.

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## There are good reasons to avoid focusing too much attention on demonic activity.

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Fourth, because we are agents, it is unlikely—though by no means impossible—that any human being or institution can straightforwardly be identified with the devil's cause. The Spirit is at work to counteract the dominating influence of Satan. We should never be so fixated on the power of evil that we fail to see how God may be at work in surprising ways.

Fifth, we should resist an interpretation of history that sees every event as reflective of the struggle between good and evil. God has created a world with integrity of its own, and what may seem to us like natural disaster or tragedy may simply be the result of natural processes or human ineptitude or perversity. We need to take the created order seriously for what it is.

The drama of Job focuses first and foremost on the puzzlement we all experience in the face of suffering and on the need for faith as a response to such puzzlement. The work of the adversary is not a central concern in Job, and it ought not be a central concern in our experience either.

## REACT

Explain why you agree or disagree with the statement that we live in a world with "integrity of its own."

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*By Gary Chartier, who recently finished his Ph.D. in theology from Cambridge and is a graduate of La Sierra University, Riverside, California.*

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# How to Protect Ourselves From Satan

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: 1 Pet. 5:8**

Satan does not merely lie passively in wait to destroy each individual. He is actively hunting down those whom he wishes to catch. For this reason, God reveals how we can protect ourselves from Satan's attacks.

### Self-Control Through Christ

As I eat my triple-scoop Baskin-Robbins ice-cream cone, I think of all the exercise I will have to do to work it off. Many of us simply overdo our indulgences. During these times Satan tempts us to want more. But we should remember that without our consent we cannot be overcome by Satan. We need to exercise our power and regain our self-control. This power is found only in Jesus Christ. By allowing God to work in us, we can overcome anything (Phil. 2:13; 4:13).

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## Without our consent we cannot be overcome by Satan.

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### Be Alert

January 17, 1991, was an important date for me, first, because my daughter was born; and second, because the Persian Gulf War began. As my wife went into labor, we watched with great interest as newscasters described the air attacks upon Iraq. I didn't know when to expect my daughter's birth, and I didn't know whether Iraq would use chemical warheads. Likewise, Jesus informs us that we will never know the time of His coming or when the enemy will attack; therefore, we always need to be spiritually awake and prepared (Mark 13:32; Eph. 6:11, 12). We can be always ready by expecting the unexpected (1 Pet. 5:8).

### Be Not Afraid

The analogy of Satan acting like a hungry, savage lion shows the effects of his control. When something is devoured, it is completely consumed, and no trace of it can be found. Likewise, when Satan gets hold of a slumbering victim, he thoroughly ravages that individual. This is a frightening thought, but God wants each of us to know the dangers we face. Thank God, we can take comfort in the fact that Satan is an already defeated foe. Keeping this in mind, when will we ever need to be afraid? Never (Ps. 56:3, 4)!

### REACT

1. Is it possible to exercise true self-control? If so, how?
2. How can an individual exercise spiritual alertness?

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*By Ed Anderson, Jr., a graduate student finishing an M.A. in religion at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.*

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# The Adversary

## OPINION

**Key Text: Heb. 11:1**

Suffering is a perplexing issue for a person of faith to ponder. How can God allow thousands of children to die daily of hunger? Are these children not as important to Him as the sparrows? How could He allow the dementia of one man to result in the wholesale torture of millions of Jews in the Holocaust? Was this event God's own doing? If not, how could he give Satan such free reign to work out his evil in such a gruesome way? For many people throughout the years, the confusing question of suffering is the thing that has severed their faith in a loving, caring God.

Yet somehow people continue to value faith. In America presidential candidates must be persons of faith; atheists don't get into office. Around the world, more than 300,000 Christians die as martyrs for their faith every year. In times of war or natural disaster, people come to their knees in faith to seek understanding and peace from the Divine. For these people, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Faith does not rely on available evidence. If it did, it would not be faith. Rather, faith is its own evidence, giving life to itself, bringing hope to the hopeless.

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## **Around the world, more than 300,000 Christians die as martyrs for their faith every year.**

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We cannot escape suffering by answering the question "Why suffering?" Suffering is a given in life. But there is a reason to be hopeful. There is a reason for this restless planet to hang on. There is a reason for faith and a focus for that faith.

Life's journey will confront each of us with the decision whether to be a passionate and faithful believer or a restless, confused soul without a foundation. The life of Christ demonstrates the profound dimensions of that crucial decision. How can God allow an innocent man to preach the coming of His kingdom and then forsake His Son to a cross of crucifixion? Is this fair or logical to the mind? No, but it is excellent and praiseworthy to the heart. Faith is not a purely intellectual endeavor. Every believer is also a dreamer, allowing the mystery of Christ to put hope in his heart. Today, God remains a dream to every believer, but the dream will appear in clouds of glory one day, and that is every believer's peace in time of suffering. For now, suffering will remain a perplexing question, but the faithful will endure it, spreading hope in the world.

## **REACT**

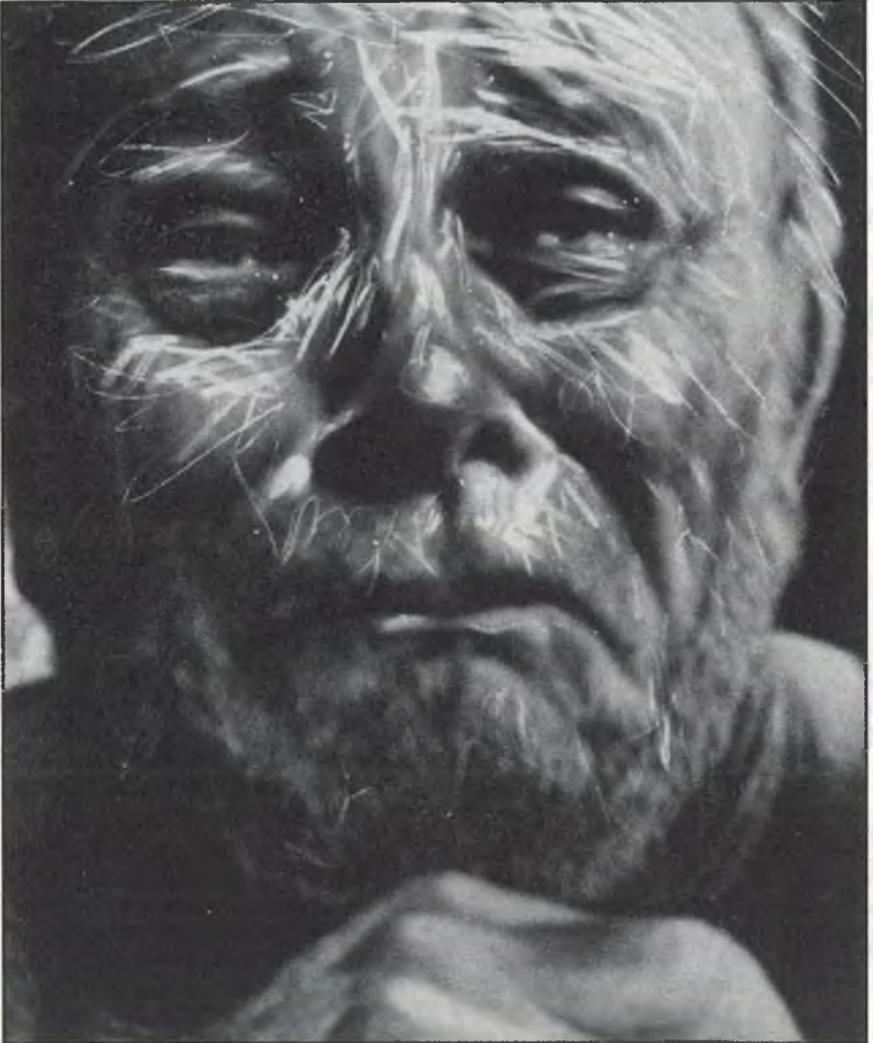
If suffering is a blessing to a Christian's life, why should we not seek it?

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*By Wesley Garcia, campus ministries director at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.*

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# WHAT A DAY I'VE HAD!



**“Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?” (Job 4:17, NIV).**

# Worst Day of My Life

## INTRODUCTION

### Scripture: Job 3-5

My feet dragged slowly along the sidewalk. The interview had not gone well, and almost all of my job leads had been exhausted. I didn't know how I was going to keep both cars and the mountain condo, and still pay for a quality education for the kids. I walked down the street toward my BMW, trying to figure out how much the second car would go for and how much I could get out of the condo.

Turning the corner, I looked down the street toward my car and began to run. A tow truck driver was just fastening his last strap onto my car. The driver put up his hand and said, "Sorry, but your car was in the red zone."

"It was hardly even in the red," I said.

"Sorry, just doing my job. Here's where you can pick your car up." He handed me a card with an address on it.

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## A man stood behind me with a small gun pointing straight at me.

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I gave out my last futile pleas, but he climbed in his truck and drove away.

"I guess it's just not your lucky day," a voice behind me said. I jumped a little and turned around quickly. A man stood behind me with a small gun pointing straight at me.

"I don't believe this," I exclaimed.

"Go into the alley over there," the man commanded. I looked across the street toward an alley, turned, and walked toward it.

As I entered the alley, my hopes flared, but then died again when I saw a man there. He was sitting on rags and wearing rags that left much of his skin exposed. All over his exposed skin were sores. Obviously he would be of no help to me. I looked away in disgust and continued to walk.

The voice behind me told me to stop. I turned to face the thief. He asked for my wallet, my watch, my shoes, and my jacket. I gave them to him grudgingly. He put on my shoes, jacket, and watch, then extracted the money and credit cards from my wallet. The homeless man in rags watched with a look of fascination on his face. The thief threw his old shoes to the homeless man, dug out a five-dollar bill, and threw it to the man. Then he handed me back my wallet and was gone.

The homeless man picked up the bill in his diseased hand and held it out to me. "Here you are," he said. "I'm sorry I couldn't help you out, Mr. . . . Uh . . ."

"Jones," I said, snatching the bill from his hands.

"If you report it," the man said, "they may catch him. Again, I am very sorry."

"You don't know what kind of day I've had today, Mr. . . . Uh . . ."

"Job. Call me Job," the man replied with pride.

I dropped the bill in his lap, walked out of the alley, and headed down the street.

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*Kent Rogers, a senior English major at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.*

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# Spare Me Your Advice!

## LOGOS

### Job 3-5

The two speakers in Job 3-5 approach suffering in dramatically different ways. Job describes suffering from the inside. Eliphaz looks at suffering from the outside. Their contrasting remarks tell a lot about how to respond—and how not to respond to suffering.

#### Suffering From the Inside

*“May the day perish when I was born, and the night that told of a boy conceived” (Job 3:3, Jerusalem Bible).*

Chapters 1 and 2 present Job bravely accepting his fate. He keeps his composure as misfortunes multiply and steadfastly refuses to question God. In chapter 3, however, he seems to reach a breaking point. True, Job doesn’t challenge God, not directly anyway. But in light of recent events in his life, he concludes it would have been better had he never lived. “Why did I not die newborn,” he wonders, “[or why] not perish as I left the womb?” (3:11). Compared to what he is going through, he asserts, death would be bliss. “I should now be lying in peace, wrapped in a restful slumber” (3:13). “There the weary rest” (3:17). Instead, “For me, there is no calm, no peace; my torments banish rest” (3:26).

Do these words follow a long sigh? Does Job mutter them through clenched teeth? Or does he hurl them defiantly into the wind? Is he serenely composed as he weighs the merits of oblivion? Is he bitter, but resigned? Is he downright angry? Or is he whimpering with self-pity? It is hard to tell—perhaps a little of all. But one thing is for sure. Job’s life has lost its meaning. He wishes he had never existed. And that is the first thing to remember about suffering. It threatens the meaning of life. It saps us of the desire to go on. Suffering leaves us feeling that we don’t count for anything.

This is why every response to suffering attempts in one way or another to restore life’s meaning. Our minds abhor absurdity as nature abhors a vacuum. We cannot endure the specter of a meaningless tragedy, so we rush in with explanations. There must be some way to account for what happens. So it is no surprise to find Job’s friends offering explanations for his plight. It is exactly what we would have done. As Eliphaz asks, “Who can keep from speaking?” (4:2, NIV). Certainly not he.

#### Suffering From the Outside

*“Can you recall a guiltless man that perished? . . . I speak of what I know: those who plow iniquity and sow the seeds of grief reap a harvest of the same kind” (4:7, 8, Jerusalem Bible).*

Job’s mood may be hard to detect, but Eliphaz’s isn’t. He brims with self-confidence. He is one of those irritating people who call on personal experience, readily compare themselves to others—always to their own advantage—and just love to give advice. From his opening words, one may surmise that Eliphaz has sat through a number of Job’s lectures and now relishes the opportunity to do

the talking. He notes the irony that Job, the teacher, finally needs a lesson, and he is happy to oblige (4:5).

Given his general attitude, what Eliphaz has to say is not surprising. Like the first response a classmember usually gives to a professor's question, his comments are safe and predictable—the answer of a solid B+ student. Eliphaz serves up the standard approach to suffering: people get what they deserve. “Grief does not grow out of the earth,” he asserts, “nor sorrow spring from the ground. It is man who breeds trouble for himself as surely as eagles fly to the height” (5:6, 7).

According to Eliphaz, suffering doesn't come to us out of the blue. People bring it on themselves. Since people get what they have coming to them, we know what to say to someone who is suffering: “You deserve this. It is for the best.” Most of the material in chapters 4 and 5 spins out this thesis.

Eliphaz's remarks contain other familiar responses to suffering too. He urges Job to look on his suffering as a learning experience: “Happy indeed the man whom God corrects! Then do not refuse this lesson from Shaddai!” (5:17). And he assures Job that eventually things will all work out for the best and the future will be rosy: “In ripe age,” he confidently predicts, “you shall go to the grave, like a sheaf of wheat stacked in due season” (5:26).

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## **Do these words follow a long sigh? Does Job mutter them through clenched teeth?**

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### **Inside Versus Outside**

Things are never the same when they are happening to you. Job is astonished, bewildered, overwhelmed by what he is going through. But when Eliphaz looks at his friend's predicament, he is confident and self-assured. For Job, nothing makes sense. For Eliphaz, everything fits together. Who is closer to the truth?

It is hard to resist moving in on people in distress with explanations and theories. Like Eliphaz, we are tempted to say, “There's a reason for this,” along with things like, “Someday you will understand. You will look back on everything and see that it was all for the best.” And so on. But such assurances fail to help, and, as in Job's experience, they often add to the hurt.

Significantly Jesus declined to discuss causes of suffering on a couple of occasions. One involved the man born blind (John 9). When His disciples asked Him what caused the affliction, the man's sin or his parents' sin, for Jesus the important thing was not to explain the problem, but to solve it.

The best response to suffering is often silent sympathy. Job's friends probably helped him more during the first seven days of their visit than later on. Once they started talking, they only made things worse. There is a lesson here for us. It is easier to stand outside and theorize about suffering than it is to share the burden of the sufferer. But Jesus did share our burdens, and that is what we should do too. Let's offer those who suffer our companionship and care. Let's spare them our advice.

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*By Rick Rice, professor of theology at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.*

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## Blaming the Victim? Blaming God!

### TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Job 5:17, 18**

The story is told of a barber and a preacher who were walking through a ghetto one evening. They saw drunks passed out on the sidewalk, bums rummaging through garbage cans, a dope addict suffering withdrawal in an alley, and a prostitute being beaten by her dissatisfied pimp. Finally the barber turned to the old preacher and said, "How can you believe in a God who would allow people to exist at such a pitiful level?"

The preacher continued walking, until they saw a man who was dirty, unshaven, and had long, stringy hair. As he passed, the preacher said to the barber, "You really make me sick. How can you as a barber let a guy like that walk around the streets."

"I'd love to get that guy into my shop and clean him up," the barber answered, "but I can't force him to do it!"

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### **"How can you as a barber let a guy like that walk around the streets?"**

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"The same is true with God," said the preacher. "He would love to help these people clean up their lives and relieve them of their suffering, but He never forces Himself on anyone."

The doctrine in Scripture supported by the greatest amount of empirical evidence is that human beings have fallen from the perfect state in which they were created. The unfortunate consequences of this chaos, described by God (Gen. 3:14-21), have often been interpreted to be arbitrary curses, which represented the divine will. Job's "comforting friends" say God is punishing Job for his secret failings. This distorted picture of God has probably led more people to turn their backs on Christianity than any other.

Ellen White strongly opposes such a picture of God: "It is very natural for human beings to think that great calamities are a sure index of great crimes and enormous sins; but men often make a mistake in thus measuring character. We are not living in the time of retributive judgment. Good and evil are mingled, and calamities come upon all. Sometimes men do pass the boundary line beyond God's protecting care, and then Satan exercises his power upon them, and God does not interpose. Job was sorely afflicted, and his friends sought to make him acknowledge that his suffering was the result of sin, and cause him to feel under condemnation. They represented his case as that of a great sinner; but the Lord rebuked them for their judgment of His faithful servant."\*

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\* Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140.

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*By Steven Daily, campus chaplain at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.*

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## Getting What You Deserve

### EVIDENCE

#### Key Text: Job 3-5

As we read Job 3-5, our sympathies are naturally with Job, but we must not dismiss Eliphaz too quickly. The doctrine of retribution, as it is generally known, expresses a profound moral vision. For one thing, it reflects the belief that there is order in reality. Things happen for a reason. Moreover, the ultimate principles at work in human affairs are moral in nature. The great principles of good and evil ultimately account for the course of human events. The righteous prosper and the wicked suffer.

An important element in this vision is the conviction that God upholds this moral order. Righteous Himself, He blesses the righteous and curses the wicked. God will protect those who are faithful. In the words of Psalm 91, "With long life I will satisfy them, and show them my salvation" (Ps. 91:16, NRSV).

But this moral vision of reality leaves some important questions unanswered. It says nothing of persons who disregard the moral order and are later sorry for doing so. Is God bound to punish sinners, or can He somehow forgive them? And, if so, can He forgive without undermining His commitment to justice?

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### **Sooner or later we must confront the brutal fact that there is undeserved suffering in the world.**

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Another question this vision leaves unanswered is the one that appears in the book of Job. Why does this order apparently break down sometimes? If there is a moral order in the scheme of things, then the righteous will prosper and the wicked will suffer. What are we to think when the wicked prosper and the godly suffer?

The simplest response is to say that, in spite of appearances, people always deserve what happens to them. This seems to have been Eliphaz's approach. He concluded that Job had done something to deserve his misfortune. But this approach contradicts experience. We think of people who have gotten away with murder—sometimes literally. And we think of people who could not possibly have done anything to deserve their misery.

Another response is to say that God uses suffering to our benefit. Doctors inoculate us to prevent us from contracting disease. Similarly, God lets us suffer a little to prevent us from suffering a lot. In addition, God can also use suffering to teach lessons. These responses to suffering contain important elements of truth. At times such things happen, of course. Sometimes minor disappointments do prevent major catastrophes. And we can certainly learn a great deal from suffering. But here again the explanations have a limited application.

Sooner or later we must confront the brutal fact that there is undeserved suffering in the world. When we do, let us acknowledge the limits of our understanding and offer the sufferer our companionship and care.

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*By Rick Rice, professor of theology at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.*

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# A Friend in Need

## HOW-TO

### Key Text: Job 4:17

Few positions in life are as important as that of the comforter to the friend in need. Job 3-5 pictures Job in despair over the devastation of his family, wealth, and health. He is so deformed by his illness that he is barely recognizable (2:12, NIV), and so discouraged by his sudden reversal of fortune that he has cursed the day of his birth (3:1). More than anything, Job needs the comfort his friends can offer him. Unfortunately, the reply of Eliphaz to Job's complaint is "tasteless" to Job (6:6), giving no comfort and depressing Job even further. How can we avoid the same mistake when comforting our friends in need?

First, we must be aware that nothing we say can replace what our friend has lost. Although Eliphaz's statement that Job would eventually regain what he had lost was correct (5:24-27), it did not offer any immediate solace. Even the prospect of complete restoration could not have been a happy thought for Job, because it could not erase the pain he felt at the time and had already suffered, apparently without just cause.

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## **Our suffering is not a pointless exercise for the entertainment of spiritual beings.**

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Second, we must keep in mind the fact that there is an ongoing spiritual war between God and Satan. Eliphaz assumed that Job was sinful, and that his present condition was justifiable punishment from God (4:17). Eliphaz's assessment was partially correct. People are sinful, and God does have every right to inflict grievous punishment. However, Eliphaz did not have the insight available to us, namely, that Satan plays a part in the suffering of human beings. Satan's job is to accuse God's followers of unbelief (Zech. 3:1, 2). He is always looking for new victims to tempt and try (1 Pet. 5:8), and he hopes by doing so to discredit God by proving that His followers are selfishly motivated to worship Him (Job 1:9-12). It is Satan, not God, who afflicts us.

Third, we must remember that God's love transcends both human imperfection and Satan's wiles. Eliphaz stated that it is impossible for man to be "more pure than his Maker" (Job 4:17, NIV). The world we live in is corrupt, and often it appears that there is no justice, even for the godly. But in comforting friends and in our own trials, we must understand that our suffering is not a pointless exercise for the entertainment of spiritual beings. It is important to recognize that Satan is the initiator of suffering and to look to God for strength, for "He will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deut. 31:6), even when Satan conceals this truth. Although it is difficult to relate to another's misfortune and easy to excuse it as a turning of God's back, we are challenged to remember our feelings when we experienced trials and continually to remind our troubled friends of God's presence.

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*By Kelly Dunn, a senior English major at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.*

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# AIDS and Leukemia and Calvary

## OPINION

**Key Text: Job 5:17, 18**

Imagine Eliphaz dropping by a downtown Los Angeles hospital and going from bed to bed, offering his sincere speech as a ministry to the patients. Perhaps he might sound like this:

First bed: a 35-year-old man dying of AIDS. Chaplain Eliphaz starts in. “Good morning, friend. In my experience I have found that no innocent person has ever gotten AIDS (Job 4:7). So my advice to you is to acknowledge your sins and to recognize that God is disciplining you (5:17). If you repent, God will heal you and give you a long and fulfilled life” (5:18-22).

Second bed: a 10-year-old girl dying of leukemia. Chaplain Eliphaz is feeling a little less secure here. “Good morning,” he says. “I’m sorry to see you are sick. I wonder whether you have always eaten the best food and followed good health habits. Your parents may have some things to answer for here. And, of course, there is a strong possibility that they have some sins and shortcomings that have made this disease inevitable.” Eliphaz hurries on.

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## **Before you dismiss Eliphaz as ignorant and insensitive, try to construct a response to suffering that improves on his.**

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Emergency room: a six-year-old girl who has been shot from a passing car. The anguished parents watch with Chaplain Eliphaz as the little girl’s life ebbs away. Eliphaz reaches deep inside for something comforting to say. “My friends, I think that things like this are just part of the human journey. Everyone has to face trouble sooner or later (5:7). It is too bad that you have lost this little one, but God is able to give you more children (5:25). However, before proceeding to expand your family, be sure to learn the lesson that He has for you in this sad experience.”

Agonizing in his pile of ashes, almost demented with the pain of his sores, Job had to face just such a Chaplain Eliphaz.

What would be *your* message to Job? Before you dismiss Eliphaz as ignorant and insensitive, try to construct a response to suffering that improves on his.

What would *you* have to say to the AIDS patient, the dying child, the parents of a child cruelly cut down in a senseless murder?

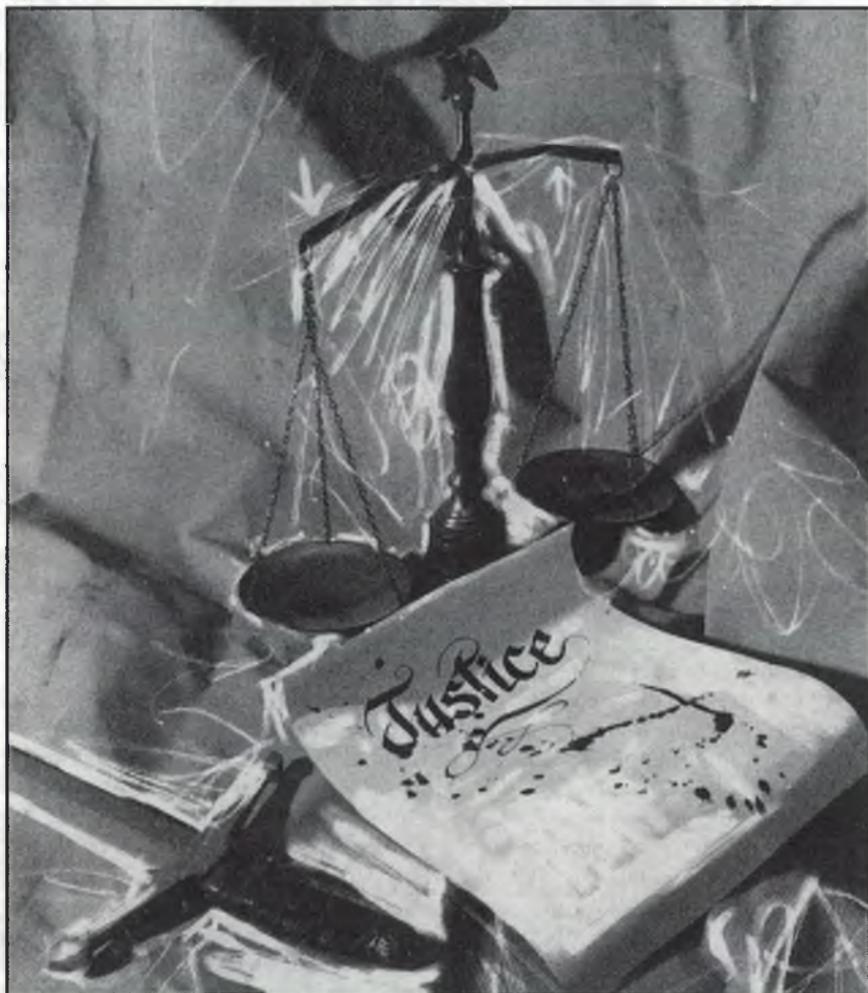
Maybe no one—Job, Eliphaz, or even Jesus Himself—has expressed an explanation of suffering that fully answers all the questions. So don’t be surprised if your answers don’t fully satisfy you or those with whom you are having this discussion. It’s even OK, as with Job, to express a little rage! God understands that. After all, do you think He enjoys AIDS and leukemia and bullets any more than He enjoyed Calvary?

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*By Lyell V. Heise, senior pastor, La Sierra University Church, Riverside, California.*

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# THE UNFAIRNESS OF IT ALL



**“What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor” (Ps. 8:4, 5, NIV).**

# That's What Friends Are For

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Job 6-8**

It all started with a small melanoma on Beth's back that eventually spread throughout her body and into her bone tissue. As both pastor and friend, I felt numb and speechless following Jim into the bedroom where Beth was resting. Chemotherapy and her disease had made her almost unrecognizable. Most of her hair was now gone. Her arms and legs resembled those in pictures I had seen of starving Third World children. Forming even the shortest of sentences proved too exhausting for her. I was surprised yet encouraged that she even knew who I was.

Such is the effect of bone cancer on a 40-year-old woman who would eventually leave behind three young children and the man of her dreams. All my ministerial training and experience could not have prepared me well enough for dealing with their grief.

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## **Couldn't God have a little mercy—just a little— and either heal her or take her?**

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When the children were put to bed and Beth's needs attended to, the questions and complaints began. Why was God allowing this to happen to her, to him, to them? Couldn't God have a little mercy—just a little—and either heal her or take her? Marriage had been good to Jim. What would he do without the woman whom he loved, the only girl he had ever kissed, the mother of his children?

It all seemed so unfair. Much of Jim's lament resembled statements from Job's first response to Eliphaz in chapter 7. Like Job, Jim felt he and his family had been marked by God for affliction. What joy could God receive in watching their family go through such pain when He had the authority to intervene?

The book of Job does not fully answer the cry of Job or of my friends. God's final response to the afflicted through all time is not a thunderous speech at the end of a confusing book, but a broken heart opened wide on a cross where God not only declared His sovereignty over sin and affliction but also demonstrated His compassion and solidarity with the diseased. Only the light streaming from Calvary dispels the darkness of confusion about God's relationship to suffering and disease caused by the cancer of sin. Unfortunately for Job, the cross was far ahead, and, for my friends, remained eclipsed by their own grief.

Experience tells me that the help we appreciate most at such a wrenching time is the patient and caring love of a friend, who allows us to spill out all the anguish and pain without censure or reproof. But Job was refused even this favor. One thing the book of Job does make clear: God at least can handle the complaints and grief of a friend. Can we?

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*By Ron Pickell, campus minister for Advent House, a campus ministry at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.*

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# Friends Who Act Like Enemies

## LOGOS

### Ruth 1:11-14

#### Job's Despair

*"The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God's terrors are marshaled against me" (Job 6:4, NIV).*

In Job 6:1-13 Job responds to Eliphaz with a typical Hebrew lament (cf. Ps. 88:15, 16). Job's wish is for his afflictions to be properly understood and accounted for (verse 2). Verse 3 may best apply to Eliphaz compared to Proverbs 27:3, "A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both" (RSV). Proper discernment will prove the validity of Job's complaint against God.

In Job 6:4 God is depicted as a heavenly warrior, shooting poisonous arrows that have pierced Job. Job's affliction has affected him within. Perhaps the worst trial we face in suffering is the horror of feeling abandoned.

Verses 6 and 7 may refer to the counsel that Job received from Eliphaz. The RSV translates a key word in verse 6 as *purslane*, a yellow flowering weed with a tasteless slimy substance running through the center. Eliphaz's words are as tasteless as the milky center of a slimy weed.

Job requests again to die. There is no future, so why does God prolong the present?

*With Job's situation in mind, what can you learn about calamity to help you personally? What is the bigger picture that suffering often eclipses? How can knowledge of this help you face trials?*

#### Job's Disappointing Friends

*"He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty" (Job 6:14, RSV).*

Job now turns to face his supposed friend (verse 28). At the time when he needed comfort and understanding, he received rebuke and correction. The effect of the Hebrew is that even if Job has begun to turn away from God, Eliphaz should stick by him.\* The betrayal of his friends is compared to the failing waterways of Palestine that overrun their banks in the spring from winter's thaw and are bone dry during the summer heat when most needed.

Perhaps the greatest service Job's friends could have given him was to continue what they did for the first seven days—nothing. Listening is usually the best response to a friend in need. We look for encouragement, not accusations or even answers. Job offers a reason for his friend's betrayal in verse 21. Could it be that we shy away from others in trouble or feel the necessity to explain their predicament because of our own fear? Fear that we have to make sense of it ourselves. Fear of losing our hold on God.

*How does Job's reaction to his friend's betrayal prepare you to be a better friend to someone in need?*

## **Job, the Hopeless Cynic**

*“Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul” (Job 7:11).*

Chapter 7 begins with the despair and hopelessness of life (verses 1-6). Verses 7-10 form a cry to God about a life that is wasting away. In verses 11-21 Job spews forth perhaps the most bitter and cynical address to God delivered in the entire book. Job first compares himself to the sea monster that God feels the need to subdue. Next he accuses God of torturing him with nightmares of horror. Verse 17 should be compared to Psalm 8:4, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” (KJV), only here God’s watchful eye is for the purpose of pouncing on him in punishment. Job 7:20 is a most daring complaint: “Why hast thou made me thy mark? Why have I become a burden to thee?” (RSV).

*Compare the anguish of spirit expressed here by Job with the sorrow and suffering of Jesus in Isaiah 53 and Matthew 26:36-46. How are their circumstances and their reactions to this ordeal similar? How are they different? In what way does their honesty allow us permission to express ourselves before God?*

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## **The equation is simple. Job was a sinner, so he must suffer the consequences.**

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### **Bildad’s Speech, Job the Hypocrite**

*“Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh? Can reeds flourish where there is no water?” (Job 8:11).*

Bildad, another friend, is incensed over Job’s accusations against God. God’s decrees are always just. If Job is suffering, he or his children have sinned. Bildad, along with Eliphaz, expresses the law of personal retribution. The equation is simple. Job was a sinner, so he must suffer the consequences. Prosperity cannot flourish where sin lies at the root, just as reeds will not grow where there is no moisture. This was the same principle behind the question of the disciples in John 9:2 when they asked Jesus of the man born blind, “Who sinned, this man or his parents?”

God does punish sin and reward righteousness. But there is more to the answer, as the end of Job implies. Here God reprimands Job’s friends for having falsely represented Him (see 42:7).

*How does Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross refute the claim that Job is suffering for his sins? What does the gospel of Jesus Christ declare about the principle of God’s rewards and punishment?*

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\* Marvin H. Pope, *The Anchor Bible, Commentary on Job*, vol. 15 (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1985), p. 52.

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*By Ron Pickell, campus minister for Advent House, a campus ministry at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.*

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## A Life-and-Death Situation?

### TESTIMONY

#### Key Text: Job 7:16

Although it's easy to assume that Job's struggles have reached the point that he no longer enjoyed living, it is difficult to believe that his wishes to die were equal to an intent to commit suicide. How can a man whom the Bible calls upright now have suicidal thoughts?

Job's idea was not to take his life in his own hands. "There is something pathetic about the earnestness of Job's longing for death. If he had been a pagan, he might have talked of suicide. His attitude toward life precludes such an idea. . . . He must submit to God, although he feels that his troubles are God's arrows, tipped with venom. Even though he desires death, he shows not the slightest evidence of taking the matter in his own hands."<sup>1</sup>

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### Even though he desires death, he shows not the slightest evidence of taking the matter in his own hands.

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"Into the experience of all there come times of keen disappointment and utter discouragement—days when sorrow is the portion, and it is hard to believe that God is still the kind benefactor of His earthborn children; days when troubles harass the soul, till death seems preferable to life. It is then that many lose their hold on God and are brought into the slavery of doubt, the bondage of unbelief. Could we at such times discern with spiritual insight the meaning of God's providences we should see angels seeking to save us from ourselves, striving to plant our feet upon a foundation more firm than the everlasting hills, and new faith, new life, would spring into being. . . .

"From the depths of discouragement and despondency Job rose to the heights of implicit trust in the mercy and the saving power of God. Triumphantly he declared: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him: . . . He also shall be my salvation' (Job 13:15). . . .

"For the disheartened there is a sure remedy—faith, prayer, work. Faith and activity will impart assurance and satisfaction that will increase day by day. Are you tempted to give way to feelings of anxious foreboding or utter despondency? In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He knows your need. He has all power. . . . And He will bestow upon His faithful servants the measure of efficiency that their need demands."<sup>2</sup>

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1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 515.

2. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 162-165.

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*By Silvia Abel, a student from the Dominican Republic who is working on a master's in veterinary medicine at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.*

# The Dance of Death

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Luke 18:8**

Few understand how different life is today from that of previous eras. Widespread disease, famine, and premature death were common to all humanity prior to the modern era. For 2,500 years prior to our times, medicine consisted primarily of treating symptoms through manipulation of the “bodily humors” by means of bleedings, induced vomitings, and purges. Some medical practices may actually have contributed to the spread of disease (e.g., applying dung to the symptomatic area). It is probably just as well that few physicians were available and that most people could not have afforded them anyway. The average life expectancy was between 25 and 45.\*

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**It is probably just as well that few physicians were available and that most people could not have afforded them anyway.**

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In such an environment, fear and superstition spread as rapidly as infection and disease. An outbreak of plague or famine might lead to attacks on the Jewish population, as well as to ritualistic flagellations and “dances of death.” Individual calamities might induce sufferers to accuse personal enemies of witchcraft. The practical importance of religion when all aspects of the material environment were so completely beyond human control, or even beyond comprehension, was obvious even to the nondevout. Religious fervor is often inversely proportional to humanity’s ability to control the environment.

Perhaps Jesus was looking ahead to a time such as ours, with unparalleled control of the material environment and a corresponding lack of religious devotion, when He decried the lack of faith in the world at His return. Even today it is easier to see our need of God when we are faced with some crisis and harder to accept when prayers offered at such times seem not to avail. The real test of our faith would then seem to be when our material environment fails us and our prayers for help seem unavailing as in the case of Job.

## REACT

1. To what extent is your faith in God affected by your environment?
2. Do you find yourself turning more fully to God in times of trial or in times of ease? Why?

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\* Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), pp. 5-14.

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*By Bill Both, a Ph.D. candidate in history at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.*

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# When Things Go Wrong

## HOW-TO

**Key Texts: Rom. 8:28, 38, 39**

One of the hardest questions to answer is why bad things happen to good people. It is human nature to try to explain the cause of unthinkable events that take place in our lives. The most common response is to place the blame on someone or something. Too often the blame falls on God. Insurance companies categorize some accidents as “acts of God.”

In trying to explain why these events take place, people go to many different sources. As Christians we should have an advantage in how we view calamity. We have a source that never fails. Everything on this earth will eventually let us down. God is the one constant on whom we can always depend.

We must have faith that God is in control even when it so often seems this old world is out of control. Hebrews 11 talks about that kind of faith. Fifteen times it says, “by faith.” It is still the same today.

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## **We will never face a temptation that we cannot handle.**

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Just because you have faith doesn't mean you will never have trials. Faith helps you face these situations. The great psalmist wrote, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil” (Ps. 23:4).

Through God and His Word we know that Jesus Christ was victorious. I once heard an old preacher say that he had read the end of the book and that God had won. It is true! God has won, and it is only a matter of time. As that famous saying goes, “The opera isn't over till the fat lady sings.” Well, she is singing, and the devil knows it. That's why he and his angels are working overtime.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that we will never face a temptation that we cannot handle or for which God has not made a way of escape. This also speaks to any crisis that might come our way. Romans 8 is full of promises. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God” (verse 28). One of my favorite promises is found in the last two verses of that chapter. “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (verses 38, 39).

When things go wrong, remember:

1. God is in control.
2. No one's life is immune to tragedy.
3. Faith helps to go through these times.
4. Jesus was victorious, and we can be too if we accept Him.

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*By Stan Dobias, associate pastor of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church, Knoxville, Tennessee.*

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# Can We Question God's Actions?

## OPINION

**Key Text: John 15:15**

In this book we find Job lamenting his deplorable condition. As a result of the calamities that have befallen him, he has become distraught and bitter. Among his lamentations, we find Job questioning God's judgments and actions for allowing these dreadful events to happen to him (Job 7:17-21; 10:1-22).

In contrast to Job's reaction, we as Christians have been taught from both pulpit and classroom that God is right, that He is all-knowing, and that there is no possible way that we could hope to understand His motives, so we shouldn't try. Therefore, the proper reaction to tribulation such as Job's is simple: God knows what works out for the best, and we should just accept it (see Rom. 8:28), or the Lord gives and the Lord takes away (see Job 1:21). Questioning God is taboo. We are to accept, without thought or hesitation, the "workings" of the Creator.

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**We as Christians have been taught from both pulpit and classroom that God is right, that He is all-knowing, and that there is no possible way that we could hope to understand His motives.**

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Job questioned God, but we are taught not to. What should we do? What *can* we do? We are told that Job was a blameless and upright man (see Job 1:1). It follows then that if God could still call Job a righteous man, questioning Him might not be such a bad thing. After all, does our God have anything to hide? Good rulers desire their followers to ask questions, to find out why they do what they do. Only then can followers be trusted, because one who knows nothing about his or her leader could just as easily follow any other leader. So Jesus says, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15, NIV).

## REACT

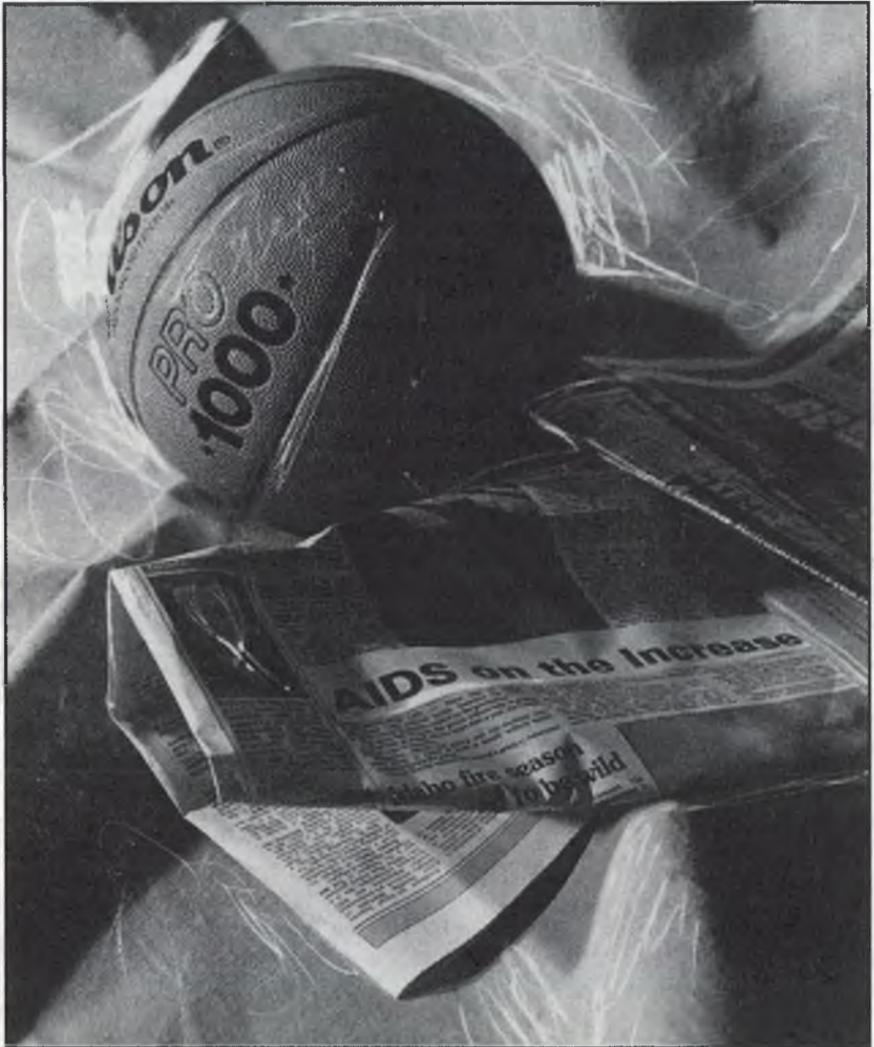
1. At what point, if ever, do we simply accept an event as a directive from God and not question our lack of understanding of the reason or cause?
2. How has adversity in your life affected your relationship with God?

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*By Patrick Mathiesen, a junior zoology major at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.*

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# FROM JOB TO MAGIC JOHNSON



**“Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?” (Job 11:7, NIV).**

# The Sack You Live In

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Job 9-11**

Ask average people on the street to make a list of the organs of the human body, and they will usually begin with the obvious stuff: heart and lungs, the brain and the stomach, the kidneys and liver and maybe the pancreas and spleen. Often, however, they will forget that the skin is considered by physiologists to be one of the organs of the body too. Though we may take it for granted, this big, form-fitting sack that we walk around in every day is as important to our health as any other organ. Just think where we'd be—not to mention what we'd look like—without it!

A square inch of skin can have as many as:

- 20 blood vessels,
- 78 nerves,
- 13 cold sensors,
- 78 heat sensors,
- 165 pressure sensors,
- 650 sweat glands, and
- 1,300 nerve endings.

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**Job was trying to find an explanation for his pain and disappointment, and he was wondering why God would have gone to such trouble to create him if he was just going to be unhappy.**

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With all this going on, it is clear to see that the skin isn't just for looks. It does far more than just hold us together. And Job must have recognized this when he remembered that, among all the other wonders of creation, God had outfitted us with a pretty sophisticated outer covering. "Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews" (Job 10:11).

At the time Job was trying to find an explanation for his pain and disappointment, and he was wondering why God would have gone to such trouble to create him if he was just going to be unhappy. "Your hands shaped me and made me," he writes. "Will you now turn and destroy me?" (verse 8, NIV).

But Job finally realized that the trials of life—no matter how painful or stressful—do not necessarily come from God. Only the blessings—like health and happiness *and skin*—come from God because He loves us.

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*By Gary B. Swanson, editor of CQ and Cornerstone Connections in the General Conference Church Ministries Department, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

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# Who's Who in Your Life?

## LOGOS

### Job 9-11

*"Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?" (Job 11:7, NKJV).*

Under great suffering, Job stated that God punishes the innocent and the guilty. He concluded that he could not receive a fair hearing in the divine court. Zophar reiterated that Job was being punished because he was guilty. Both were wrong.

### **Planet Earth's Who's Who (Job 9:1-19)**

Few of us would be listed in any international *Who's Who*. The better we understand the hierarchal system in which we live, the more rewarding our lives will be. Human hierarchies can be changed, but not the divine.

When we look at *Planet Earth's Who's Who*, only one name is listed, *God*. Everyone else is subject to Him. Shakespeare said, "Man, proud man! dressed in a little brief authority, plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, how they must weep as we challenge God's authority. "Who can say to Him, 'What are You doing?' " (Job 9:12, NKJV). When I recognize *who* is *who* on this planet, half of the battle is won.

### **Guilt/Innocence Not Equated With Life's Experiences (Job 9:20-35)**

Cause and effect—so logical, so simple. If a certain thing happens, changing the cause will change the results. How often is one's relationship to God judged by the events of that person's life.

Job is simply reflecting the thinking of his day. Guilt and innocence are equated with what happens to you. It is strongly hinted that Job's situation is a result of his waywardness. Job expresses his resignation that no matter what he does, he is guilty (Job 9:28-31). What has happened to him seems to prove that God sees him as culpable.

Nowhere in Scripture does God suggest that fortune or misfortune indicate His relationship with us. If this were so, then His only Son—who experienced more sorrow and suffering than we ever could<sup>2</sup>—was His worst enemy. Christ's misfortunes were not in direct proportion to God's love for Him. "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

### **The Complaint Department (Job 10:1-22)**

Saying that God is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient is saying that He can do no wrong. Whatever He does or permits must be perfect in every way. Complaint against God is equal in degree to distrust of Him. God's love is dedicated to leading us from the complaint department to the halls of praise and thanksgiving. Job learned to trust God no matter the circumstances: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15, NKJV).

*If practice makes perfect, why not practice complimenting God more than complaining to Him?*

### **Zophar Cries Foul (Job 11:1-6)**

In today's English, Zophar calls Job a windbag. There is some truth in his comments. God's grace is beyond measure. He does not treat us as we deserve. This truth is spoken in ignorance. Meaning to be helpful, Zophar pours salt on Job's wounds by reminding him that his suffering is his own fault. Zophar and Job at this point see only the results and not the means. Satan does his thing, and God takes the blame.<sup>3</sup>

With friends like Zophar, who needs enemies? Knowing God as a personal friend provides discernment that will lighten burdens and increase strength to bear the cross.

*How does knowing God personally help us to deal with well-meaning friends who cause more pain than pleasure?*

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## **God's love is dedicated to leading us from the complaint department to the halls of praise.**

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### **You Cannot Match Wits With God (Job 11:7-12)**

A humorous yet extremely serious verse sums up this section very nicely. "Mere man is as likely to be wise as a wild donkey's colt is likely to be born a man!" (Job 11:12, TLB). Man cannot match wits with God.

We constantly tell God how His job should be accomplished, if not in word, certainly by our actions. We try to match wits by direct confrontation or by simply ignoring Him. When we are tempted to retrain God, it would be well to remember Zophar's study in contrasts.

*How can we know the difference between substantive thinking and trying to out-smart God?*

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### **Get on the Winning Team (Job 11:13-20)**

We like winners and we like to be winners. Winners have learned self-control, endurance, cooperation, obedience, persistence, single-mindedness. Determination to win is an essential ingredient. So must it be in the Christian's race to the kingdom. There is no more serious game than the game of life. The stakes are eternal, and there is no second chance.

Job stumbled over his failure to understand why he—a follower of God—should suffer so. He leaves a pattern for us to emulate: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15, NKJV). Ellen G. White wrote, "Heaven will be cheap enough whatever sacrifice we may make to obtain it."<sup>4</sup>

## **REACT**

What does it mean progressively to give God control of one's life?

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1. *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* (Standard Book Co.), p. 35.

2. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 86.

3. M. M. Campbell, *Light on the Dark Side of God* (Middleton, Idaho: OHJ Publishing), p. 54.

4. *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 73.

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*By D. G. Rand, chaplain at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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# Water Under the Bridge

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Job 11:15-20**

Recently I had a conversation with a friend who felt that his having trouble in school had to do with the fact that he was not living as God wanted him to live. For him the problems of daily university life represented God's effort to "tell him something." I have been a little haunted by his remarks, not because I necessarily believe he is right, but because he so fervently does.

The way Ellen White describes Job's experience seems applicable in my friend's case. "It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. . . . God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. But Israel did not understand the lesson."<sup>1</sup> I wonder whether my friend understands.

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### **"[Satan] uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows."**

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I can understand the source of his confusion. "[Satan] has studied the secrets of the laboratories of nature, and he uses all his power to control the elements as far as God allows. When he was suffered to afflict Job, how quickly flocks and herds, servants, houses, children, were swept away, one trouble succeeding another as in a moment."<sup>2</sup> But Job's experience shows that God is not to blame for these problems; quite the contrary, "It is God that shields His creatures and hedges them in from the power of the destroyer."<sup>3</sup>

So much has to do with our maintaining the right attitude. "In all ages God's appointed witnesses have exposed themselves to reproach and persecution for the truth's sake. . . . Job was deprived of his worldly possessions, and so afflicted in body that he was abhorred by his relatives and friends; yet he maintained his integrity. . . . These examples of human steadfastness bear witness to the faithfulness of God's promises—of His abiding presence and sustaining grace. They testify to the power of faith to withstand the powers of the world. It is the work of faith to rest in God in the darkest hour, to feel, however sorely tried and tempest tossed, that our Father is at the helm. The eye of faith alone can look beyond the things of time to estimate aright the worth of the eternal riches."<sup>4</sup>

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1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 471.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 589.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 575, 576.

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*By Bruce Closser, professor of English and director of the writing center at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

# Suffering and Sometime Justice

## EVIDENCE

**Key Texts: Rom. 8:28**

Recently I heard an elected official state that “no one with AIDS deserves our praise.” Although he later clarified his statement and claimed that the press had taken it out of context, many were still concerned. This unfortunate comment highlights a mind-set that holds that those who suffer deserve their punishment. Even in this age of greater enlightenment and awareness, some still believe that suffering is earned. In the case of AIDS it is easy to generalize and consider it a disease of sinners. Society must remember that AIDS can be contracted by hemophiliacs, innocent children, medical workers, and even faithful spouses. Unfortunately, some still perceive AIDS as a curse inflicted on the sinner by God.

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## **Society must remember that AIDS can be contracted by faithful spouses.**

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This way of thinking is rather like that of Zophar and Job’s wife, who felt that suffering arose from guilt. Apparently this was a common way of thought during that time period. All of Job’s friends, his surviving family, and even God seemed to be branding him a sinner to explain his tribulations. This caused Job to question his existing value system, justice, and the nature of God. Throughout the book of Job, these concepts are explored as Job attempts to understand who inflicts suffering and why. He has great difficulty coming to terms with his pain and cannot easily comprehend why God would bring suffering to a faithful servant. Although the question is never completely resolved, we are led to the conclusion that Satan causes suffering and God overrules it—sometimes. It is that “sometimes” that may be difficult for us to understand and accept.

Living a good life and following God do not guarantee that we will avoid suffering on earth. Nor does it mean that we will always understand God’s will and thus be able to accept our suffering graciously. As Job learned, we are not meant to understand all the intentions and actions of God. There is a plan and He is in control, but human judgment limits our comprehension of it. Therefore, we must trust, believe, and accept God’s wisdom as what is ultimately best. Innocent people do suffer, while the guilty often go unpunished. We are subject to these inconsistencies while we are here on earth, but ultimately justice will prevail.

## **REACT**

1. What other examples from everyday life can you think of that illustrate the mistaken notion that suffering is deserved?
2. What can a Christian do in a practical way to combat such thinking?

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*By Diane Artress, an English major and writing-center tutor at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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# Believing God Is a Fair Judge

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Job 9:14-20**

When Job complained that God was unfairly afflicting him in his innocence, he questioned whether God was a fair Judge. Many people today echo Job's question. How can we believe that God is a fair judge?

**1. God doesn't mete out immediate punishment in anger when He sees us commit a sin.** We can witness this truth daily in our own lives and the lives of people around us. When we commit wrong acts, lightning doesn't stab down from heaven and cook us alive, trees don't fall on our cars, we don't spontaneously contract the AIDS virus. God does, of course, allow the natural consequences of our actions to occur. But God doesn't lash out at us in anger as a means of punishment. Instead, He allows each of us a fair trial in the investigative judgment. God's punishment is a systematic final destruction of unrepentant sinners—the death penalty—at the end of the millennium. Thus God will eradicate all sin in a fair way.

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## When we commit wrong acts, lightning doesn't stab down from heaven and cook us alive.

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**2. God gives us a Defense Attorney at the judgment.** In America's justice system, if a person can't afford an attorney, one is provided. God does the same thing for us. He provides an Attorney for us free of charge. Jesus Christ is the best attorney available because of His unique existence as both God and man. As a member of the Godhead, He is on the inside, so He knows exactly how God's system of law and justice works. And as a man who lived and died on earth, exposed to all the temptations that we face, He can empathize with us and our position. This allows Him to present our case with the passion possessed only by one who has had the experience of life on our sinful planet.

**3. God gave us a Substitute to bear our death penalty.** God's law says that anyone who sins must die. And we are all sinners! Though He loves us and wants to extend mercy to us, in all fairness He can't make exceptions to His law. So to remain fair and also to be merciful, God provided a Substitute, Jesus Christ, who died for all of humanity. He made the greatest sacrifice to deal with our sins justly and mercifully. Our God promises a fair trial, provides a Defense Attorney, and offers a Substitute in punishment. Can God be accused of being an unfair judge?

## REACT

Compare and contrast God's legal system to the legal system in your home country.

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*By Kevin Wiley, an English graduate student and writing-center tutor at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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## What Is God's Will for Us Today?

### OPINION

**Key Text: Job 11:7**

Heads are bowed all around me, and the individual on the platform has begun to pray. As the prayer nears conclusion I hear the words, concerning a fellow member who is quickly dying of cancer, "If it is Your will, may this person be healed." I have heard this sentence so many times, in many different prayers, regarding many different people and events, and it always causes me to struggle with the question What is God's will?

Job struggled with this question as he watched his life reduced to rubble. This man of the Old Testament watched his career, his family, his friends, and his property be snatched away from him in a moment.

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### **From Job to Magic Johnson, Satan uses his scare tactics to confuse us.**

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Modern-day Jobs surround us everywhere. While watching the news, we hear of a family who have lost everything they own in a fire. All over the world people are starving to death. The AIDS epidemic is sweeping across the world, and everyone is frightened of what they don't know or understand. Everywhere, as suffering and crisis after crisis arise, people are asking the question Why is this happening?

Satan uses all these horrible experiences to throw us off. He wants us to feel abandoned, as Job did long ago, wondering where God is. Satan enjoys watching his creations of starvation, war, death, and destruction wreak havoc not only on the physical lives of the human race but also on our spiritual lives, as well. From Job to Magic Johnson, Satan uses his scare tactics to confuse us.

However, if we take the time to step back and look at our situation, much as Job did, and question without losing sight of God, we can then see the evidences that God has given us that prove to us what His will truly is. From the very start of Creation, God's main desire was for us to live forever with Him, healthy and prosperous. He demonstrated, through Jesus Christ, that no matter what we choose to do, His main wish for us is eternal life as a free gift.

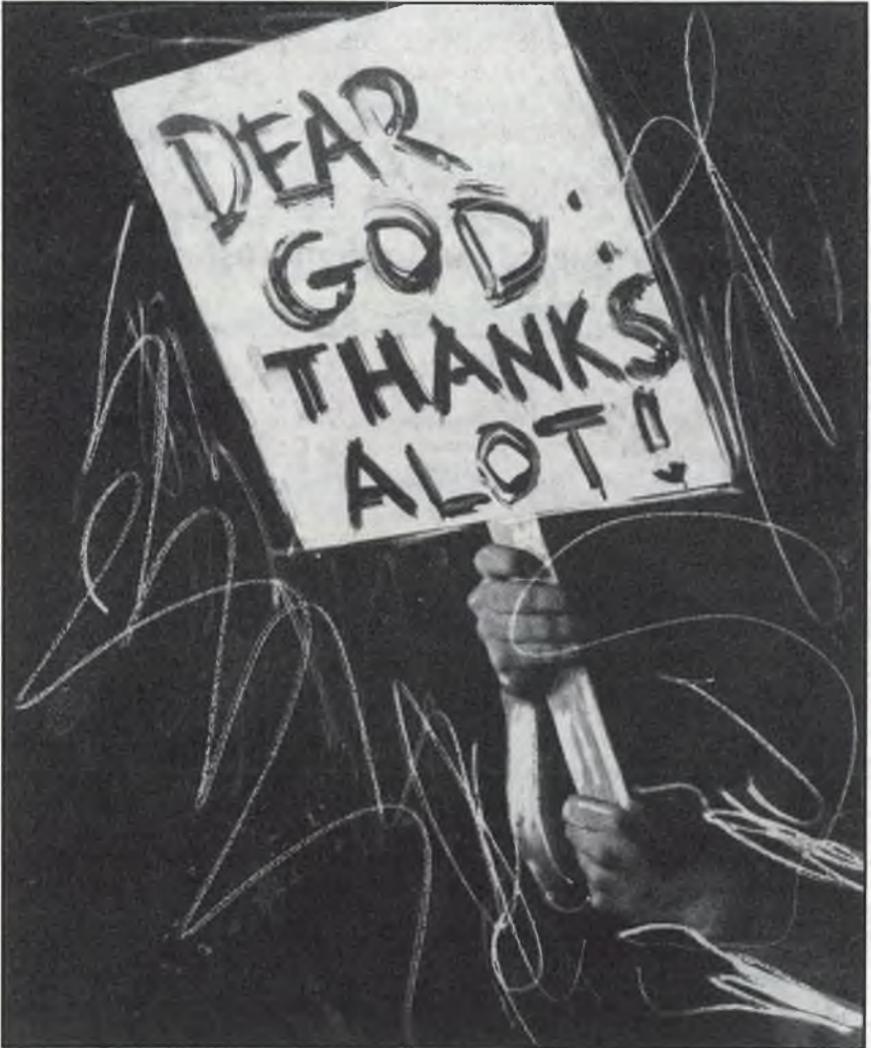
Job is symbolic of the life we live today. A life that is a mixture of disappointments and pain but also of joy and good times. After Job's pain, he then is restored to a life more rewarding than before. We too will someday be taken out of our world of suffering and enjoy the life that God has always wanted us to have. As long as our world goes on, there will be pain. However, we can know as children of a loving God that His will has been and always will be for us to have an abundant life, today and eternally.

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*By Mary Kay Sherman, an English major at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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# JOB'S SNAZZY COMMENTS



**“To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his” (Job 12:13, NIV).**

# Verbal Defense

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Job 12-15**

“Mom!” Jennifer screamed. Jennifer always screamed. Every time she thought she had me some place that Mom wouldn’t like, she screamed. I’d cringe, aware that I had been caught—snitching a cookie or playing with Mom’s makeup—and I would wait for Mom to come and investigate my older sister’s obnoxious cry of vengeance.

I say vengeance because I knew that was what it was. Jennifer had been 5 1/2 years old—the established baby darling of our family—when I happened to appear. I spent the first dozen years of my life listening to her yell about how it was my turn to do the dishes and feed the dogs. She would supplement her instruction with a little physical coercion—always wonderfully successful when I needed extra convincing.

Eventually I learned something. I couldn’t ever satisfactorily beat her up, but I could defend myself with a few choice, well-timed words. So I began my assault. Every time the enemy approached, I would launch forth with a prepared arsenal of insults. Launch, that is, unless my parents were anywhere near. I kept silent then, but imagined all the things I could say to my sister to make her realize which of us was actually the victor in our familiar war.

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## **I could shoot off a few good razzings in the time it took her to pin me to the floor.**

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The best thing about my new tactics was that Jennifer couldn’t really fight me back. I would toss a snazzy comment about how ugly she was, and when she yelled for Mom, there wouldn’t be any evidence left. Not like the cookie jar! I could shoot off a few good razzings in the time it took her to pin me to the floor. Ah, my life was finally fair.

Now, Jennifer and I have since stopped beating on each other with words or fists, and we happily regard each other as a best friend. I don’t ever think of those nasty, biting comments anymore. But they did serve a function—if not a very nice one—in my life for a time.

This week, Job, unable to receive any support from his friends, resorts to sarcasm and nasty remarks to defend himself from their comments. His was a natural response in the face of what must have seemed like vengeance from God. His questions, his requests, all mark a man willing to understand, if only understanding can be given to him. He wants to know why these calamities have fallen upon him. Additionally, he wants to inform his friends that their advice has been useless. Job seeks a peace that he will not know until God Himself tells him the reason.

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*By Rebecca De Wind, who attends Andrews University, where she tries to write at least one interesting or useful thing every day.*

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## Sanctified Sarcasm?

### LOGOS Job 12, 13

What a perfectly heartening concept to understand that a man whom God in His dialogue with Satan has described as “faithful and good” (Job 1:8, TEV) can be so skillfully sarcastic toward his friendly antagonist. “Yes, you are the voice of the people. When you die, wisdom will die with you” (Job 12:1). Job sheds a whole new light on godliness. Sometimes, in our attempts to project our notion of how God is or how a godly person behaves, we strip away all passion or even honorable outrage. Our picture of perfection is delicate helplessness in the confronting face of stifling insensitivity. Not so with this paragon of godliness. Job knows where to place his trust—it is not in his own righteousness, but neither does he give up his own sense of worth.

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### **Picture the warmest, strongest, most open set of earthly parents and multiply by infinity.**

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*“Old men have wisdom, but God has wisdom and power. Old men have insight; God has insight and power to act” (Job 12:12, 13).*

Now Job—this special man of God, this example for all time—does not just comfortably turn his personal sense of self-worth off so his friends can bury him. Neither does he simply acquiesce to God’s omniscience. Job shifts his comments from Zophar to God.

*“Everything you say, I have heard before. I understand it all; I know as much as you do. I’m not your inferior. But my dispute is with God, not you; I want to argue my case with him” (Job 13:1, 2).*

Job suggests that a guilty man would not dare to presume to do what he is preparing to do. One might call what he exhibits here “holy boldness.” Not only does Job feel confident that he can answer humanity’s most pointed allegations, but he is secure enough in his knowledge of God that he joins the ranks of biblical giants in facing God.

“Now, God, here are some ground rules. Agree, and I will be straightforward with You; back off with the punishment and stop scaring me to death, OK?” Who would dare set forth such conditions to God? Either someone supremely presumptuous or someone absolutely connected. From God’s words in the introductory portion of the book, it would seem to be the latter. Even recognizing God’s sovereignty doesn’t preclude honest inquiry.

“What have I done?” “Why don’t You answer me?” “Why are You avoiding me?” Job is looking for answers much like those humanity looks for today in the face of catastrophe—personal or global. A major difference is that his dilemma may result more directly from God’s intervention in his experience than most of ours—or is it? What could we see if the veil were lifted? God does not discredit

Job for his candid objections. He is not brittle, nor does He want humanity to perceive ties to Him as fragile. Picture the warmest, strongest, most open set of earthly parents and multiply by infinity.

In the final verses of Job 13 and the beginning of 14, Job's words turn to morbidity. "I'm like the rest of humanity—rotting wood, wilting flowers—we all just live a little while and then die." This author does not set forth a clear concept of death and resurrection. He alludes to a better day—sometime. He does seem to be a regular member of the human family in his despair. His words in this chapter are not a veiled suicide threat, but they do bear some resemblance to the sentiments sometimes expressed by suffering folk who know they will die soon because of their condition, and the rest of death seems attractive compared to their current hopeless state.

It is comforting to find in godly Job the real sentiments of struggling humanity. He should not be faulted for his openness regarding his state of mind. In the twentieth-century Western mind, such soul baring might be labeled weak or less than godly. Biblical, pious heroes lived in a real world with real pain—and depended on a real, personal God.

The last portion of this study is the demoralizing diatribe of Eliphaz. If you need a lesson in "how to kick a person while he's down" or "how to shoot wounded comrades" or "how not to encourage someone," read Job 15. Eliphaz has saint subduing down to a science. He proves it is entirely possible even to be right and dead wrong at the same time! Self-righteous judges did not die off with Eliphaz or the Pharisees of the New Testament. Don't look around for current examples. Don't even castigate yourself for your own failing in this area. Study to become the supporter of the oppressed, the lover of the loser, the reflector of the Redeemer.

## **REACT**

1. How is it possible for someone as godly as Job to be as emotionally spent as he appears to be in Job 12-14?
2. How can you fortify so that life's greatest trials produce growth rather than despair?
3. What current hope do you find when you read Job's ancient responses?

# Trust on Trial

## TESTIMONY

### Key Text: Job 13:15

The story of Job has been a great inspiration. His faithfulness to God in the midst of severe trial seems impossible to comprehend. And yet not only did Job remain faithful, Mrs. White says, "From the depths of discouragement and dependency Job rose to the heights of implicit trust in the mercy and the saving power of God." She reinforces this by adding Job's words of trust and triumph. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." (Job 13:15.)<sup>1</sup>

Our reaction to the trials of life is often expressed in three letters: *WHY*? Did Job deserve the trials that he was forced to go through? Do we deserve the roadblocks that we face?

"Why, God?" In response Mrs. White says, "The dealings of God with His people often appear mysterious. His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. Many times His way of dealing is so contrary to our plans and expectations that we are amazed and confounded."<sup>2</sup> "Whatever may be your circumstances, however dark and mysterious may be the ways of Providence, though the path may be through the deep waters, and trials and bereavements may afflict again and again, the assurance still comes, 'All things work together for good to them that love God' (Rom. 8:28)."<sup>3</sup>

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## We have the advantage of knowing Job's whole story.

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As we read the story of Job, we have the advantage of knowing the whole story and of knowing the reasons behind God's actions. We have a firsthand account of the conflict between the Lord and Satan over this precious, faithful soul. How different the story would be if Job had given up and cursed God for the evil that had befallen him. But instead, Job honored God by turning his trials into a faith-filled triumph.

"If your steps are ordered by the Lord, dear youth, you must not expect that your path will always be one of outward peace and prosperity. The path that leads to eternal day is not the easiest to travel, and at times it will seem dark and thorny. But you have the assurance that God's everlasting arms encircle you, to protect you from evil. He wants you to exercise earnest faith in Him, and learn to trust Him in the shadow as well as in the sunshine."<sup>4</sup>

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1. *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 163, 164.

2. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 503.

3. *Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 261.

4. *Messages to Young People*, p. 102.

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By Donna Warman, an English master's student and writing-center tutor at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

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# Seeing, Not Seeing, and Trusting Anyway

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Isa. 64:4**

While we were driving home from preschool the other day, my five-year-old son asked me what his gloves were made of. Nylon and vinyl, I answered. Then he wanted to know what nylon and vinyl were made of. Atoms, I answered. What's an atom? he wanted to know next. Tiny electrons, protons, and neutrons, all spinning around together so fast that they seem solid, I said.

I expected one of those strings of questions that run something like, "Why do roads run both ways" and "Why is there nothing in a hole?" Today, however, Evan surprised me by asking the one question that is at the heart of all knowledge: How do you know, Daddy?

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### **I expected one of those strings of questions that run something like, "Why do roads run both ways" and "Why is there nothing in a hole?"**

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Fortunately, Evan forgot the question as quickly as he had asked it. As it happened, I was at the time considering how one might address the eternal question posed in the book of Job. How can we learn to trust a God who apparently lets bad things happen to good people? It is one of those questions my son might ask me, one to which my answer would be as lame as the one about atomic particles.

Like other five-year-olds, Evan is at what Piaget would call the concrete stage. He can believe only things that he can see. He cannot understand how I know he has slipped from his safety belt in the back seat of the car based on the snap of the latch coming loose. "But you didn't see me, Daddy, so how could you know?" he responds when I remind him to refasten the belt.

As we humans move through the Piagetian stages, we learn to abstract our realities, to draw assumptions often based on the scantiest of evidence. Remarkably, we are often correct. Scientists discover mathematical principles that can be tested only theoretically, yet those principles set the first man on the moon.

I should say that I'm not certain about this, but do we do any less when we draw assumptions about how God and man deal with each other? Christians see the evidence, admittedly scant evidence at times, that God is truly in control, and draw untestable assumptions about the nature of that control. Just as I haven't seen an atom, but I believe that they exist because the evidence suggests they are there, so I don't have a verifiable response to why God seems to let bad things happen to good people, yet I believe that whatever is true, God is still good and can be trusted. There is, after all, the text, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. 2:9).

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*By Bruce Closser, professor of English and director of the writing center at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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# Searching for Excuses

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Job 13:15**

Trust is an integral part of any relationship. The ultimate test of faith is in something you cannot always see. As Christians, we attempt to place our trust in God, believing that everything will then turn out for the best. If anything goes wrong along the way, we try to understand why. Human nature pushes us to understand—to find a reason for every consequence. There is often nothing more frustrating than being left in the dark.

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## **The decision to trust and serve God does not guarantee a carefree life without tribulation.**

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By comparison the story of Job shows that he did not have even the luxury of feeling God's presence or hearing His voice (Job 23:1-9). Even the persons who came to Job in an attempt to comfort him did so with rationalized explanations for his suffering. Each one was wrong. Their attempts to define actions and consequences were futile. They refused to concede that the workings of God are beyond our helpless human comprehension. In reliance upon self and their own understanding, they trespassed the boundaries of a trusting relationship with God. How do we avoid that trap?

1. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Prov. 3:5, NIV). God has provided for us even in our times of confusion and discouragement. Our obligation is to obey His instruction and deny our selfish, independent struggles to comprehend the tactics of the Almighty. How better to strengthen that trust than to test it through various trials in our lives?

2. Recognize that our will is not always God's will. When we pray for a specific outcome, and do not receive it, again, we ask Why? Was it something we did or did not do? Was God really listening? Was He aware of how much we desired a specific answer? As difficult as it might be, instead of placing blame or searching for excuses, we should trust the only one qualified to control our destiny.

3. Recognize that the decision to trust and serve God does not guarantee a carefree life without tribulation. As our relationship with God develops, Satan's concern over our salvation grows. He becomes even more determined to thwart our efforts at Christianity and to ensure our loss of eternal life. Our only hope is to hold tightly to God and to trust Him completely.

## **REACT**

What should be the relationship between trusting God and relying on human effort?

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*By Stacy Harper, an English master's student and a writing-center tutor at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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# Is God Unfair?

## OPINION

**Key Text: Ps. 149:4**

I cried. Even though it wasn't happening to me, I cried because I couldn't stand seeing John's pain as he was losing his wife to cancer. Death did not ease itself gently upon her soul.

Jenny was a close friend. She was a single parent whose ex-husband was abusing her financially and battering her psychologically. I felt angry on her behalf. The climax for John's and Jenny's situations both came in the same week. I hurt so deeply with them. *Life is so unfair*, I thought. All my pat theology was falling apart before me. I know that the "rain falls on the just and on the unjust," but where is the rain for the just?

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**All my pat theology was falling apart before me.  
I know that the "rain falls on the just and on the unjust," but where is the rain for the just?**

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The people who don't suffer seem to be those who deserve it most. Those on top in the world seem to have it all: big houses, lots of cars and boats, while others (even in our churches) struggle to keep food on the table. It's not fair.

But was the cross fair? If God were really fair, we would all be dead, with no chance of eternal life. It's the cross that isn't fair. The gruesome death of a pure, good human being who lived His life for others is unfair enough, but the death of a holy God for a wicked and unholy people is even more unfair.

There are others who died on crosses and suffered brutality from soldiers (look at the Holocaust), but none went so peacefully as Jesus because He had a mission. He was not hanged there to pay for His sins, but to save a world. Jesus endured separation from another holy Being, His Father, to make Him *our* Father.

No, life isn't fair, and I'm glad it's not. Or we'd all be lost.

## REACT

1. To what extent is the human concept of fairness based on selfishness?
2. To a Christian, what is the difference between fairness and forgiveness?

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*By Debbie Higgins, an English master's student and supervisor of the writing center at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

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# BALANCING YOUR CHECKBOOK



**“Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high” (Job 16:19, NIV).**

# My Advocate's Apprentices

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Job 16-18

I have been feeling a bit like Job lately.

I don't have any open sores that won't respond to antibiotics. I haven't lost any sheep or cattle recently—not even a favorite book or scarf, which is amazing for me. The roof over my flat is secure, as far as I can tell, though I do worry from time to time about the suspicious shingling gaps in places. No, I haven't suffered any Job-sized losses. But I am suffering. Constantly. And I don't like it.

I won't list my pains. You would stop reading. I will tell you, though, that before this piece is typed I will be visiting the physiotherapist for the fifth time in two weeks, hoping that this time she will be able to work miracles.

I will be calling my general practitioner to tell her that the anti-inflammatory pills are gone but the restricted movement isn't.

I will be grading three sets of final examinations that will cause both me and my students some discomfort; in too many cases the points received will not equal those anticipated.

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**I will step on the bathroom scale and wish once again I could be three inches taller (growing into my weight seems the only hope).**

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I will look in the mirror and see a face that pleased me more ten years ago than it does today. I will step on the bathroom scale and wish once again I could be three inches taller (growing into my weight seems the only hope).

I will listen to a recording of a talk I gave recently and will hear my voice crack, even though the injustice described happened years ago.

I will balance my bank book and realize once again that any riches I may possess certainly aren't being stored where moth and rust doth corrupt—unless those destroyers work with microscopes.

Some of these pains are simply annoying. Some are perversely amusing. Others are debilitating. And, with Job, I can't help asking, "Why me, Lord?" I don't expect to get a complete answer, at least not this side of eternity. But unlike Job, I can count on comfort. For I have loving counselors who say repeatedly and with conviction, "This shouldn't be happening to you. You deserve better." And that continues to make all the difference.

I wish Job had been as fortunate as I am. His pain was greater than anything I will ever experience, but sadly his friends' comfort was far less. If I could change history—or literature, for that matter—I think I would be tempted to replace Eliphaz with Caroline, Bildad with Eric, and Zophar with Bob. For Job's sake.

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*By Beverly J. Matiko, a lecturer in the humanities department at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.*

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## A Glimpse—A Step

### LOGOS Job 16:19

*“Surely, O God, you have worn me out; you have devastated my entire household. You have bound me—and it has become a witness; my gauntness rises up and testifies against me” (Job 16:7, 8, NIV).*

Brainwashing was not invented by the Chinese or by some secret-service agents. Its successful formula—isolation, humiliation, indoctrination—has sabotaged human life all through the ages.

Job feels worn out. He is tired. And with extreme weariness comes the tendency to give in. His friends have longed for this moment all along. Their “Who are you, anyway?” attitude has not missed the target. Job trembles; his fall seems to be just a matter of time.

What Job goes through is more than suffering. It is passion. He is bound, not by an unknown enemy, but by a strangely masked friend. He wrestles, much like Jacob against God, or rather, against his own perception of God as an arbitrary ruler who demonstrates His authority by stripping Job of his dignity. The dilemma that Job faces is not simply that of personal assault. It is that he is confronted with a picture of God he can neither live nor die with.

*Explain why you agree or disagree that God is ultimately responsible for everything that happens on earth.*

### True and False Hope

*“O earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry never be laid to rest! Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend” (Job 16:18-21).*

Job is a firm believer in a fair fight, he, himself, well versed in judicial settings. Anyone familiar with Arab culture knows that while you may disagree with someone, there is one thing you must never do—take away another person’s honor. It is, therefore, that Job cannot let go, for honor or integrity (as in Job 6:29) gives life permanency beyond death. But to be denied a name, as Bildad later comments (Job 18:17), is more than Job is willing to put up with. Man’s life cannot simply be a “fleeting shadow” before God (Job 14:2).

Job has witnessed that those who used to respect him now are willing to denounce him to defend their cut-and-dried view of how things work (Job 17:5). What they do not understand is that Job’s suffering falls out of all measurable categories. The chaos is too complete to be the net result of Job’s behavior.

If God is there, he must be just. But where there is no purpose, justice has lost her footing. Job’s friends have urged him to repent; have tried to make him believe in a way out (Job 17:12). But you must have something to stand on in order to turn.

No, the solution cannot depend on anything Job could do. Besides, the death-bed appeals and admonitions are out of place. If he, Job, is not granted a hearing before God, then, at least an advocate might take up his plight and move God

to reconsider. The thought is unbearable for Job that God might simply drop him like a hot potato. Job speaks of an advocate, but he means God Himself. As he flees from the God who appears to spit in his face, he seeks the God who loves and respects him like a true friend.

As Job is torn between self-denunciation and self-righteousness, he reaches out into darkness, hoping to get hold of something, someone, to rely on. A flash of light appears in the distance, only to vanish in the next moment. But Job has seen it, and he will see it again.

*What is the relationship between faith and personal integrity?  
For a Christian what kind of pride, if any, is justifiable?*

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## **What Job goes through is more than suffering. It is passion.**

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### **A Wisdom of Suffering?**

*"The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out" (Job 18:5).*

It has been customary in Arabian lands always to keep a fire burning during the night for the benefit of passersby—in an inhospitable environment, a much-needed sign of life. A tent without a burning lamp was, to the Arab, what a house with broken windows and torn-down curtains is to us—a sign of desolation—not much that bids us to stay. We might speak of a God-forsaken place.

In his second speech Bildad becomes bolder in condemning Job. Surely a man of such misfortune cannot be a man of God. He may and should still turn to God. But he is certainly not a teacher of wisdom.

Job has become a nuisance. Why should he, Bildad, still sit there, listening to a God-forsaken wretch? Job's suffering is terrible, for sure, but it is Job's problem—at best an incentive for him to be quiet and plead for mercy, at worst God's righteous act of judgment. Suffering might be a lesson for the sufferer, but if he refuses to accept that lesson, why put up with him any longer? Is it profitable to stay at a deserted house? What do I gain from walking through its empty rooms? Isn't this an object for the demolisher rather than for the contemplator?

*What lessons of life could we learn from a person who lives on Social Security benefits?*

*Have I allowed my "belief-system" to blindfold me as to the needs of my friends?*

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*By Matthias Morgenroth, a postgraduate student in religion, Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.*

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## Wearing Out the Judge

### TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Luke 18:3**

She persisted in pleading, "Help me against my opponent" (Luke 18:3, TEV). And Jesus' story about the corrupt judge and persistent woman ended happily. The happy ending of the story results less from the attitude of the judge than from that of the woman and the means she used to win her case. She wore the judge out (verse 5). Jesus told this story to assure us what God is not like. He focused on a corrupt earthly judge to contrast and distance him from the heavenly Judge.

In her writings, Ellen White often shifts our attention to the court in heaven and tells us what the Judge and Advocate there are like. "God's appointments and grants in our behalf are without limit. The throne of grace is itself the highest attraction because occupied by One who permits us to call Him Father. . . . By His appointment He has placed at His altar an Advocate clothed with our nature. As our Intercessor, His office work is to introduce us to God as His sons and daughters."<sup>1</sup>

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### Jesus told this story to assure us what God is not like.

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Ellen White also shows how our role is not the one of the woman in the story, because our Judge and Advocate in heaven are vastly different from earthly judges. She gives specific counsel: "[Christ says, Make use of My name. This will give your prayers efficiency, and the Father will give you the riches of His grace, wherefore, 'ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.'" John 16:24.'"<sup>2</sup>

"Satan stands at our right hand to accuse us, and our Advocate stands at God's right hand to plead for us. He has never lost a case that has been committed to Him. We may trust in our Advocate; for He pleads His own merits in our behalf. . . . With upraised hands He pleads, 'I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.'"<sup>3</sup>

### REACT

1. How can we, like the woman in the story, sometimes badger God, forgetting His true nature?
2. What are the Christian's legal privileges in heaven, and what fee is involved?
3. What evidence, if any, would you, as the accused, use to justify a verdict of innocence or rights restored?

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1. *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 363.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 364.

3. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 948.

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*By Dragisa Vidacak, a senior English and theology major at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.*

# Like a Rat in a Trap

## EVIDENCE

### Key Text: Job 16:9

“You can’t really share someone else’s weakness or fear or pain. What you feel may be bad. It might conceivably be as bad as what the other felt, though I should distrust anyone who claimed that it was. But it would still be quite different. When I speak of fear, I mean the merely animal fear, the recoil of the organism from its destruction; the smothery feeling, the sense of being a rat in a trap. It can’t be transferred.”<sup>1</sup>

So wrote C. S. Lewis, describing his famous trip through personal suffering. In this picture of isolation that surrounds a grieving individual, Lewis uses the same technique as Job does to his friends. “The smothery feeling, the sense of being a rat in a trap,” says Lewis; Job says, “God assails me and tears me in his anger and gnashes his teeth at me” (Job 16:9, NIV).

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**“When I speak of fear, I mean the merely animal fear, the recoil of the organism from its destruction.”**

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In Job’s case God is the tormentor, the one Who “shattered” him, “seized” him by the neck and “crushed” him; the one Who made him His “target” and without pity “pierces” his kidneys and “spills” his gall (Job 16:12, 13). Perhaps the violence of this picture leaves us wondering whether Job’s friends were right to condemn him. Yet C. S. Lewis again seems to agree: “Sometimes it is hard not to say ‘God forgive God.’ Sometimes it is hard to say so much.”<sup>2</sup>

Contemporary psychology would see Job going through a healthful and natural response to grief in much of chapter 16. God seems to understand his anger and frustrations in the same way, for soon Job’s metaphors of physical devastation and his picture of God as tormentor are to be justified by God—not because Job is right, but because he is honest and continues to reach out to God, even while he doubts Him. “Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high” (Job 16:19). Job might vent his anger at God, but he still has faith. And that faith will take him through to what seems in chapter 16 an impossible ending, an ending that Lewis again shares with Job. It will not be an expected answer, but an experience with God that says, “‘Peace, child; you don’t understand.’”<sup>3</sup>

## REACT

How can recognizing that you don’t understand be an answer?

1. C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 13.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

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*By Andrea Luxton, education and Sabbath School director for the British Union, Stanborough Park, Watford, Hertsfordshire, England.*

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# God Talk

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Job 16:1-5**

Through long, philosophically complex arguments, Job's three wise friends and comforters have asserted their belief that God is surely punishing Job for his sinfulness. Their religious tradition had taught them that suffering is a symbol of divine disfavor and that a good person would never go through what Job is going through. Their resulting judgmental attitude, their metaphysical "God talk," instead of comfort, resulted only in Job's increased suffering.

Hundreds of years later, on Calvary, this same attitude would condemn a Man to death on a cross. Religious leaders of the day, wise in their knowledge of the law and skilled in cleverly arguing nuances of orthodox doctrine, were also the ones capable of walking by an injured man. They could condemn the healing of a blind man on Sabbath. They would crucify Jesus because He did not fit their conception of the Messiah. Their orthodoxy and claim to sight had blinded them to the very purpose of their religious belief.

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## **Their orthodoxy and claim to sight had blinded them to the very purpose of their religious belief.**

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Francis Schaeffer once wrote, "There is nothing more ugly than a Christian orthodoxy without understanding or without compassion."\* Could it be that, like Job's friends and the religious leaders of Jesus' time, we also could lose sight of the true challenge and effects of our Christianity? Are we also skilled in rhetoric while billions are malnourished, ill, or homeless? Dare we take up the challenge of our God's humiliation in the form of Jesus Christ? Dare we convert our God talk into concrete action and truly represent the character of God to the world? Dare we remember that the symbol of our faith is, not a cathedral, but a cross?

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. . . . Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:16-18).

## **REACT**

1. How do our words and actions affect others' perceptions of the God in whom we believe?
2. Why should the cross be the symbol of Christianity, and what are the concrete implications of this?

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\* F. A. Schaeffer, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview, Volume One, A Christian View of Philosophy and Culture* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1987), p. 34.

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*By Paulo Goncalves, a junior theology major at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.*

# The Journey

## OPINION

**Key Text: Phil. 3:14**

Despair slumped to the floor in desperation. She had had enough of the taunts and the sneerings of Self-pity and Bitterness, who had persisted in bothering her since she had parted company with them. The journey to the Kingdom of Light in the high places now seemed an impossibility. Had the Shepherd deceived her? Was she really living only an illusion? Should she return to the Valley of Darkness?

In a feeling of utter despair, she called to the Shepherd. All at once, with his presence she felt strength, yet also a feeling of shame for doubting his word. He smiled at her kindly, but said nothing as he looked deeply into her eyes, reading the very thoughts of her heart.

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## How often are faith and hope like thorns, often piercing us to the heart.

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Despair felt a surge of love for the Shepherd. He really understood her, as if he had been there too. "Please help my unbelief," she cried.

With that remark the Shepherd threw back his head and laughed.

Despair watched in utter disbelief. Then he stopped and looked at her more seriously and said, "I thought you'd never ask." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a rose. Despair gasped at its beauty, but then retreated when she saw two large thorns on the stem. The Shepherd smiled gently at her and explained to her the meaning of the rose.

"The rose in its beauty is your vision of the Kingdom of Light. With time the beauty will fade and die, becoming only a distant memory. The thorns are faith and hope. At times they will be painful, but their presence protects the beauty of the rose from harmful intruders. Keep these thorns with you. They are essential."

Despair smiled nervously at the Shepherd and put the rose into the bag with the other memorials of the journey and then continued up the mountain.

We often picture hope and faith as beautiful attributes, but as with Job, how often are faith and hope like thorns, often piercing us to the heart.

## REACT

1. In what ways can we keep hope a reality? Suggest some activities that you could share with others in a study group.
2. Do faith and hope need to go together? If so, why? If not, why not?
3. Suggest some of your own definitions for faith and hope and relate them to your own experience. Try not to use biblical terms.

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*By Suzanne Jean-Baptiste, a sophomore religion major at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.*

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# ENOUGH OF MY FLESH



**“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth” (Job 19:25, NIV).**

# Modern-Day Job

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Job 19, 20**

Ellen Dippenaar radiated happiness. Yet this South African lady was blind, confined to a wheel chair, and had badly damaged hands. During her stay in a leprosy hospital, she experienced one heart-rending tragedy after another. Her only son died of polio; her husband was struck down by cancer; a sister was killed in a car accident. And Ellen lost her sight one tragic day when her nurse inadvertently used carbolic acid while putting drops in her eyes. Shortly afterward she lost a leg to gangrene. In the first 55 years of her life, Mrs. Dippenaar went through 56 operations.\*

If you had met this modern-day Job and she asked you for an explanation of her immense suffering, how would you have replied? You might have talked about calamity as part of the refining-of-character process, or maybe you would have taken the view "It's tough now, but it will work out right in the end."

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### **Ellen lost her sight one tragic day when her nurse inadvertently used carbolic acid while putting drops in her eyes.**

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Leaving aside these options, you could have asked Mrs. Dippenaar some probing questions to find out whether she had done anything that brought about these misfortunes. Job's friends used these approaches, but they failed to appreciate the physical and emotional trauma of the unfortunate individual before them.

What did Ellen Dippenaar, scarred by so many tragedies, talk about? Her succession of misfortunes? The unfairness of life? No, she spoke of God's blessings, His goodness and faithfulness. Her words were no pretense; her radiant face showed it.

Despite experiencing appalling external circumstances, Job could declare his faith in the reality of a Redeemer (Job 19:25) and his belief that he would see God (verse 26).

Habakkuk pictured the worst scenario he could imagine, yet he clearly declared his desire to rejoice in God no matter what (Hab. 3:17, 18).

The question of suffering, and particularly its indiscriminate nature, has always been an enigma. We should continue to develop an understanding of suffering, but we need to comprehend the essentials of a trust and courage that sustained Job, Habakkuk, and Ellen Dippenaar. They serve as an example and a challenge.

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\* Robert H. Pierson, *Though the Winds Blow* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1968), pp. 19, 20.

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*By David McKibben, a junior theology major at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.*

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# The Anger of Faith

## LOGOS

### Job 19, 20

#### Job's Woe (Job 19:1-20)

*"Though I cry, 'I've been wronged!' I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice" (Job 19:7, NIV).*

More and more today we hear of people convicted and punished for crimes they did not commit. Job knew the feeling.

His dialogue is getting nowhere. Instead of bringing help, his comforters only torment him (Job 19:1-4), he feels he has been unjustly abandoned by God (Job 19:5-12), and he has been deserted by everyone he ever knew (Job 19:13-20). His physical pain fades into insignificance against the agony of his loneliness, and out of these depths Job is stirred into outrage.

How can we understand these fiery words? Job is angry with the friends who have failed him, with the God he imagines has done this to him, and maybe with himself, too, for being what he is. Yet it is an anger that cares and confronts. No way will Job turn his back on his God or escape it all by denying Him. He is going to see this thing through even if God isn't answering calls at the moment. His is the anger of faith.

*In what ways might we sometimes torment others with our own self-righteousness?*

*How is the knowledge that alienation is worse than physical suffering reflected in the way we treat people?*

#### Faith in the Darkness (Job 19:21-29)

*"Yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:26, 27).*

Job is also helpless. Knocked down by the blows he has already received, he pleads for mercy from the friends who are hitting him still (Job 19:21, 22), but in their pious enthusiasm to make him see the truth they refuse to stop accusing him.

The cry, "Will you never get enough of my flesh?" (verse 22) is "a typical Semitic idiom for slander," and how fitting it is. Gossipmongers run down wounded public figures like wild animals on the scent of blood. Against such odds, Job can only hope for some future vindication, and so it is that he breaks through into the glorious climax of verses 25-27: "I know that my Redeemer lives."

His conviction has been there all along (see Job 14:12-17), but now Job's need has been thrust into fuller expression. Suffering can push us into a position from which we can see things that those who never suffer find hard to understand.

Even though he does not have the full New Testament picture, Job understands that there must be something beyond the grave. More than this he knows that in this afterlife he will meet his Redeemer and his cause will be vindicated. The amoral chaos of this world is so inconsistent that anything less is unbelievable.

And with this realization something else changes for Job, as well. He no longer needs an intermediary to plead for him before a vindictive God (see Job 9:33; 16:19–17:4). He may not see him clearly now, but he knows his God is a good God. Now he longs only to meet this God face to face, in that final encounter that will restore all rightful things. The end of Job's quest is more than healing, more even than understanding. It is communion with God Himself, and in his despair, he longs for it more than ever.

*On what basis do you refuse to abandon hope in the hereafter?  
How close to our picture of the Lord Jesus is Job's vision of his Redeemer?*

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## **He is going to see this thing through even if God isn't answering calls at the moment.**

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### **Zophar Flunks (Job 20)**

*"Like a lame man's legs that hang limp is a proverb in the mouth of a fool"* (Prov. 26:7).

Is it possible to write a great essay yet score an "F"? Yes, if you don't answer the question! Zophar misses the point of what Job has just said. He is out of his depth, but instead of closing his mouth and opening his mind, he presses on with his one grain of truth. This chapter is lively and powerfully written, and the saying is true: "Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice" (Prov. 16:8), but Zophar's theory that the wicked always get what they deserve just isn't the way it is in the real world. "Truth oversimplified and misapplied becomes untruth."

Why can't Zophar see what Job was getting at? The opening of his speech is his giveaway: "I hear a rebuke that dishonors me" (Job 20:3). Zophar's primary concern is not to help Job at all, but to defend his own slighted honor. He wants only to fight back, and in the language of verbal fighting, vehemence and power count for more than any honest attempt to grapple with the heart of the matter.

But something else flows from this besides. In turning his attention onto his own hurt feelings, Zophar has lost his compassion for Job, and in the words of Paul, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1).

*Does our church's truth have to be handled carefully in case it becomes untrue, the way we present it? Can you think of an example?*

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1. F. E. Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1988), p. 941.

2. G. A. Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 3 (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 1062.

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*By Chris Peake, a final-year postgraduate student in religion at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.*

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# Hope Shines Through

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Job 16:19**

Chapter 16 is a turning point for Job. His view of God dramatically changes from a view of God as enemy to that as advocate. His depression ebbs to the lowest point. Just as Job reaches a climax of despair, a small glimmer of hope shines through. He realizes that it is not possible for God to be his enemy. Although everyone else may be against him, God has always been his witness, advocate, intercessor, and friend.

It is appropriate that our advocate should be one who knows what suffering is. Ellen White describes Christ as “He who has been most abused by their [sinners’] ingratitude.”<sup>1</sup> Job had doubted and blamed God for his suffering, yet ironically, Job’s mistrust caused God to suffer also.

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### **It is appropriate that our advocate should be one who knows what suffering is.**

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God is the only one we can trust implicitly as an advocate because of the depth of his love. Ellen White writes, “In the courts above, Christ is pleading for His church—pleading for those for whom He has paid the redemption price of His blood. Centuries, ages, can never lessen the efficacy of His atoning sacrifice. Neither life nor death, height nor depth, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus; not because we hold Him so firmly, but because He holds us so fast. . . . Our grasp on Him may seem feeble, but His love is that of an elder brother; so long as we maintain our union with Him, no one can pluck us out of His hand.”<sup>2</sup>

“Men have only one Advocate, one Intercessor, who is able to pardon transgression. Shall not our hearts swell with gratitude to Him who gave Jesus to be the propitiation for our sins? Think deeply upon the love the Father has manifested in our behalf, the love that He has expressed for us. We cannot measure this love. Measurement there is none. We can only point to Calvary, to the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It is an infinite sacrifice. Can we comprehend and measure infinity?”<sup>3</sup>

## REACT

What steps, if any, do we need to take to ensure God is our advocate?

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1. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 474.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 552, 553.

3. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 914.

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*By Andrea Burt, a senior English major at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.*

# Meaning More Than What You Say

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Job 19:25**

Sometimes in a play a character says something the full significance of which he does not realize. We call it dramatic irony. In some ways Job's impassioned declaration "I know that my Redeemer lives" is like that.

The context of Job's oft-quoted statement makes it clear that Job is defending his integrity. Bildad and his friends have alleged that Job's evildoing is the reason for his trouble and suffering. After all, it is only "the lamp of the wicked [that] is snuffed out" (Job 18:5, NIV). Job's humiliation is proof of his guilt.

"But I'm innocent," argues Job. "It is God who has done this wrong to me. How can I prove my innocence?" Death will soon claim him. There is not much time left, and in his anguish the grave appears as a lightless gloom (Job 14:10-12). Could it even be a place of no return? He recoils at the thought.

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## **One day God will set the record straight, declare Job innocent, and turn the tables against his unjust friends.**

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Then Job returns to his only hope, his bedrock conviction that God is just. God might seem to be against him now, but one day, God will be his kinsman. He will vindicate him. "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth." One day God will set the record straight, declare Job innocent, and turn the tables against his unjust friends.

Today we read these words in the blaze of light that shines on them from Jesus, who brought "life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10). In the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus, Job's inspired declaration has a deeper and wider significance. It points beyond itself.

Without Christ, Christians today see themselves, not innocent, but guilty, hopelessly lost and justly condemned. Our Redeemer comes to release us from our guilt, set us right with God, and deliver us from death. This is a different meaning from the one Job had in mind. But Job, like others of the ancient prophets, spoke more than he knew. "I know that my Redeemer liveth" was a germinal truth, intended by the Spirit of God to be so. It is dramatic irony that continues to unfold in its meaning for us.

## **REACT**

1. In what sense, if any, does Job's original meaning apply to Christians today?
2. In what way did Jesus bring light to life and immortality?

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*By Gilbert M. Valentine, a chaplain and lecturer at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.*

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# When Our World Is Falling Apart

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Job 19:25**

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance” (James 1:2, 3, NIV).

Say this to a mother who has just lost her baby or to the young man paralyzed in a car accident—or what about the young couple experiencing a broken relationship? Holding on to faith in a world that is falling apart is not easy. Frustration, anger, and heartache take over, leaving little room for God.

In Job we find the story of a broken man. His pain is physical, emotional, and mental. He is left frustrated with his conditions and angry with God. He cries out, “He [God] has stripped me of my honor and removed the crown from my head. He tears me down on every side till I am gone” (Job 19:9, 10).

From Job we can see that feelings of anger and pain are OK. They are a natural reaction to the suffering found in a sinful world. Job dispels the stigma sometimes attached to suffering. He shows that it is OK to feel, to react, and to express emotions associated with suffering.

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## **Say this to a mother who has just lost her baby or to the young man paralyzed in a car accident.**

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Although expressions of pain are nothing to be ashamed of, what matters is what we do with these emotions. From our feelings there must come a great leap of faith into the outstretched arms of God. Job complains of his pain, yet he never doubts God. This is crucial. In Job 19:25 he says, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” In the same way that Job knows that God lives, so we must assert the authority of God, whatever our situation. Note, however, that Job’s faith was based in part on a personal relationship with God. Because of this closeness in the past, Job was able to hold on to God in the worst time of his life.

We can summarize in three points: (1) It is OK to feel intense frustration, and even anger, during the time of trouble. No sense of guilt or shame should accompany our natural emotions. (2) What matters is what we eventually do with our emotions. Do we ignore them, run away, give up on life, or give them over to God? (3) A current, close relationship with God strengthens us so that in difficult times we have a Friend by our side. With God at our side we will be able to say with Job, “After my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.”

Despite the worst situation, we will believe. In the end, this is what counts.

## **REACT**

How can I strengthen my relationship with God?

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*By Meggan Syme, a postgraduate student in education at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.*

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# Despite What Satan Throws at Us

## OPINION

**Key Texts: John 3:16; Eph. 6:16**

Why does God allow suffering? People have wondered this for as long as suffering has been a part of the human condition.

Some early Christian theologians, wrestling with this problem, came up with a solution known as “dualism.” They believed that, since God was perfect, He could not have created all the imperfections so apparent in the world, therefore, there must be two gods—one good and one evil. The evil god they associated with Jehovah of the Old Testament, because they saw him as a god of wrath and vengeance, as opposed to the merciful God of the New Testament.

It is easy to smile indulgently at their foolishness; but are we so different?

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## **Blaming God goes back to when Satan convinced Eve that God was withholding from them the means of making themselves gods.**

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Growing up in the Adventist church and attending Adventist schools, I gained the impression that the Father was the God of the Old Testament and the Son, of the New. “Of course,” I was told, “Christ is present in the Old Testament as the Creator. And the Gods of both Testaments are the same and perfectly compatible.” But it seemed to me that Jehovah could not have been an easy God to worship. Look at what He put Job through for the sake of an object lesson.

As we grow up and have to deal with more of the tribulations of life, it grows harder, not easier, to accept placidly that they are for our own good. The idea that we are made to suffer for the betterment of our souls comes from the same root out of which grew the doctrine for saving ourselves through human good deeds. Blaming God goes back to the Garden of Eden, when Satan convinced Eve that God was withholding from them the means of making themselves gods.

The ultimate conceiver of all that is evil, painful, and false is Satan. He has planted and fostered the belief that it is God—not himself—who causes us suffering in order to purify.

God gave us His Son, who died so that we do not have to go on suffering forever. Job is not merely an example to us of how to suffer nobly; he is a reminder that, despite what Satan may throw at us, God will always be there to rescue His family in the end, even if the end is postponed until the final reckoning.

## **REACT**

Explain why you agree or disagree that the God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Testament.

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*By Wendy Trim, a senior history and English major at Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.*

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# HANDLING THE ARMCHAIR CRITICS



**“If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! . . . There an upright man could present his case before him, and I would be delivered forever from my judge” (Job 23:3-7, NIV).**

# Take It Like a Man

## INTRODUCTION

### Scripture: Job 21-25

Macduff: He has no children. All my pretty ones?  
 Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?  
 What, All my pretty chickens and their dam  
 At one fell swoop?

Malcolm: Dispute it like a man.

Macduff: I shall do so;  
 But I must also feel it like a man.  
 (*Macbeth*, Act 4, Scene 3, Lines 215 ff)

Like Macduff in Shakespeare's play when he hears the news of his children's death, Job is expected to dispute like a man before he has even had a chance to "feel it like a man." How often well-meaning friends recite pat phrases when what is actually needed is empathy: a keen awareness of our humanity. "All things work together for good" can be of encouragement in certain cases, but only if the person suffering can see hope through his/her distress.

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## **Even if Job were to blame, surely his plight should have awakened sympathy from his friends.**

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Job has to face the accusation of these friends that he has brought all his calamity on himself. No wonder we still speak critically of "Job's comforters!" Even if Job were to blame, surely his plight should have awakened sympathy from his friends. In the depth of his discouragement he is required to debate on a topic on which his experience goes against what, possibly, he himself believed.

Job's greatest problem is God's inaccessibility: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand I seek him, but I cannot behold him; I turn to the right hand, but I cannot see him" (23:8, 9, RSV). It is almost as if he would like to put God on the witness bench. Job contains some of the strongest language directed at God. To his great frustration, God remains silent and apparently aloof.

As you study this week's lesson, think of ways that you could comfort your friends in such a way that they will feel understood. One way is to speak to people who have experienced trauma or difficult times and ask them what gave them hope and encouragement. Do you think that feelings and logic complement each other? How much does a personal knowledge of Christ and His suffering help us to associate with the suffering and point them to the Hope of the ages?

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*By Bob Bell, an English lecturer at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.*

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# Glimpses of the Hidden God

## LOGOS Job 21-25

In response to Zophar's last speech (chapter 20), Job now directs his words to his three friends alone. Their self-evident approach to God afforded no solution to Job's pain. There must be more to suffering than punishment for sin!

### **A Shocking Reality (Job 21:1-34)**

*"But their prosperity is not in their own hands, so I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked" (Job 21:16, NIV).*

Job's situation is now beginning to manifest itself in impatience with his narrow-minded friends (21:4). Not only were they very touchy about his words and trying to indoctrinate him with the conventional truths he had always believed in, but in their zeal to champion the cause of God, they were simply not even taking Job's position sympathetically into consideration.

If they can only allow themselves to be dumbfounded by his pitiful condition (21:5), they will also be able to catch a glimpse of the terror he experiences at the thought that things are well with the wicked, in spite of their open rejection of God. He invites these armchair critics to ask people who have been about in the world to testify how evil men are spared calamity, denouncement, and recompense (21:27-31). The fact that God does not punish the ungodly, but that He is the source of their prosperity (9:24; 21:16), presents a frightful enigma to Job about the ways of God with man.

*Why is it that a person sometimes does not know where he or she stands with God's will?*

*When are redemptive events dependent on man's cooperation with God and when not?*

### **When Truth Is a Lie (Job 22:1-30)**

*"He will deliver even one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands" (Job 22:30).*

With chapter 22 the third cycle of speeches in the dialogue section of the book begins. But unlike the first and second cycle, this one is abbreviated, creating the impression that arguments from both sides have been well-nigh exhausted. Undoubtedly feeling the force of Job's incisive logic and being unable to produce any evidence of sin in Job's life, the formerly moderate Eliphaz now resorts to extreme forms of argumentation. Then follows one of the most impassioned appeals for repentance in the whole of the Old Testament (22:21-30).

The problem with the touching appeal of Eliphaz is not what he says, but how he says it and to whom. He presupposes that what is true of mankind in general, namely man's guilt before God, is also true of Job. Furthermore, he presupposes that Job is really interested only in the restoration of material wealth. If the righteous were motivated solely in hope of reward, then the righteousness of the most godly would be the worst of sins. And this is exactly what Satan accom-

plished through New Testament Judaism, in which strictest obedience to law, without Christ, became but the embodiment of the foundation principle of sin, namely pride.

*In what way is it true and in what way untrue that God forgives the sins of the wicked for the sake of the righteous?*

*In which sense does God benefit from the righteousness of His saints?*

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## **The fact that God does not punish the ungodly, but that He is the source of their prosperity, presents a frightful enigma.**

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### **God Versus God? (Job 23-24)**

*“Dominion and awe belong to God; he establishes order in the heights of heaven” (Job 25:2).*

In response to Job’s shocking argument that God’s actions toward the wicked are inconsistent, Bildad defends God’s orderliness in the universe. This provides the key for understanding Job’s line of reasoning in chapters 23 and 24.

With a bitter complaint, Job voices his frustration in not being able to have an audience with God. He cannot find God anywhere to deliver him from his critics (23:3-5, 8, 9). He nevertheless expresses his conviction that God knows his integrity. If he could state his case before God (23:6, 7), he will be forever acquitted. But in spite of all his pleas of innocence, God is grinding him down with an irresistible force that awakens in him a bewildering fear of God. Job now calls for a day of reckoning (23:17-24:1). Such a day of judgment is long overdue (24:2-12).

Apparently reflecting the position of his friends, Job now plainly states that divine retribution does fall on the wicked (24:18-25). But this is in stark contrast to what he had just said about God’s not charging evildoers with wrongdoing! By purposefully placing two completely divergent lines of action of God side by side, he deepens the impossible puzzle of the book dramatically. Could it be that instead of his suffering being the punishment for sin, or even to purge away sinful dross, his sufferings, for some reason unknown to him, are given to manifest the purity of his soul? While Job could not yet see it, could it not be that it was beginning to dawn on Job that God’s universe, after all, is a fully consistent, orderly universe of a just and righteous God?

*How should one approach what appears to be inconsistencies in Scripture? Mention a number of meanings for God’s testing of man.*

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*By Johan A. Japp, a lecturer in theology at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.*

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## “I Shall Come Forth as Gold”

### TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Job 23:10**

Although Job could not seem to find God, he firmly believed that God was purposeful in His dealings with him. “Job was beginning to understand that he was being tried. . . . One of the rungs of the ladder by which Job climbed from the pit of despair to faith was his recognition . . . that he was not being punished or unjustly treated, but rather was being tested that he might emerge as pure gold from the furnace.”<sup>1</sup>

When Ellen White and her husband were married, they were so poor that they had to borrow furniture. A year later their first child, Henry, was born. James White worked from dawn to dusk hauling stone for the railway and chopping firewood for only 50 cents a day. Ellen describes their despair in her own words, “My first feelings were that God had forsaken us. I said to my husband: ‘Have we come to this? Has the Lord left us?’ ”<sup>2</sup>

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### **James White worked from dawn to dusk hauling stone for the railway and chopping firewood for only 50 cents a day.**

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Ellen White’s response is worth noting. She neither murmured nor blamed God. Her hardships inspired her to write: “At this time I was shown that the Lord had been trying us for our own good, and to prepare us to labor for others . . . Our work was to labor for souls; if we had been prospered, home would be so pleasant that we would be unwilling to leave it; trials had been permitted to come upon us to prepare us for the still greater conflicts that we would meet in our travels.”<sup>3</sup>

The prophet of the Lord encapsulates the task that we have at hand with the afflictions that confront us: “We are nearing the end of earth’s history, and the different departments of God’s work are to be carried forward with much more self-sacrifice than has yet been practiced. . . . The work to be done calls for sacrifice at every step of advance. The workers are to come forth from that trial, purified and refined, as gold tried in the fire.”<sup>4</sup>

### **REACT**

A faithful member of your local church loses her entire family in an automobile accident. She believes that God is punishing her. How would you answer her?

1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 561.

2. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 83.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Review and Herald*, 18 Nov. 1902.

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*By Antonio Pantalone, a former mechanic who is now studying theology at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.*

# The Prosperity of the Wicked

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Job 21:7**

*“Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power?” (Job 21:7, NIV).*

Trained in the school of wisdom, Job is philosophizing on the subject of the wicked after listening to the lengthy elaboration on the fate of the wicked by his friends (8:11-19; 15:20-35; 18:5-21; chap. 20). In contradistinction to their views, Job, in beautiful figurative language, portrays the wicked, who reject God (21:14) and even regard prayer as a fruitless waste of energy (verse 15), as prosperous—flourishing in all aspects of life (a promise made to Israel—see Deut. 7:12-15.) Job repudiates the ways of the wicked by attributing their prosperity to God’s providence (22:17, 18). But this realization creates within the mind of Job an enigmatical reality, viz. *Why is God good to evil people?*

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## The writer seems to wrestle with God’s rulership of people in the light of the prosperity of the wicked.

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In Psalm 73, the writer seems to wrestle with the same problem of God’s rulership of people in the light of the prosperity of the wicked until, in almost utter despondency, he calls out: “Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence” (verse 13). In verses 16, 17 we find as it were the echoing sigh of Job: “When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.”

It seems that personal communion with God (entering the sanctuary), in contrast to the temporary nature of the wicked’s prosperity, is the effective answer to the perplexities of man’s enigmatic questions and overshadows thoughts that plague us when we compare the state of the wicked with our own afflictions. Communion with God results in fullness of life, while the wicked fall inevitably from their state of proud prosperity, for “he will join the generation of his fathers, who will never see the light of life” (Ps. 49:19). In contrast to the fate of the wicked, Job could say, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth” (Job 19:25).

In the light of the Books of Wisdom, it seems clear that the prosperity of the wicked is brief and “the joy of the godless lasts but a moment” (Job 20:5) compared to the fullness of the eternal inheritance promised to those who rely upon the Lord. “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Ps. 73:26).

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*By Hein von Horsten, a teacher of Bible and Afrikaans at Helderberg High School, Somerset West, South Africa.*

# How to Handle God

## HOW-TO

**Key Text:** Heb. 13:8, 9

How much do I involve God in my daily life? If I decide that this is too risky, then am I not still trying to handle God in my life? I personally have trouble trying to separate pious living from the “fringe benefits.” The trauma of human life seems to become more intense when not only my friends have become Job’s comforters, but God seems to have become as tormenting and irritating as the boils, the sackcloth and ashes. God’s apparent increasing withdrawal left Job more and more alone with his rage and disillusionment.

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## I personally have trouble trying to separate pious living from the “fringe benefits.”

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This is not an attempt to encourage you to become learned about God. It is actually very simple and therefore terribly complicated! One of the identifying marks of Job’s comforters was their tenacious belief in Jewish tradition about suffering—that sin is punished in this life and that “disease and death . . . [proceed] from God—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin,” so that the person “upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner.”<sup>1</sup>

The Jews rejected Jesus on the basis that he was “stricken, smitten of God and afflicted” because He “hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”<sup>2</sup> They literally could not handle God. Neither Job nor his friends had this hindsight. The whole purpose of the record of the history of Job is to show that “suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy.”<sup>3</sup>

“I had a thousand questions to ask God; but when I met Him they all fled and didn’t seem to matter.”—C. Morley.

## REACT

1. Should one try to solve all the mysteries of one’s own life?
2. If you ever suffered disillusionment with God or with the church, did it result from an experience with some well-meaning Job’s comforters?
3. How can this kind of experience be turned into something meaningful for others who are suffering?

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1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 471.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

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By D. E. Steyn, a lecturer in communication and education at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.

## Job's Library Resources

### OPINION

#### Key Text: Job 23:10

Consider, from our perspective, the immense problem that Job has with his picture of God. Available resources are very sparse: Three antagonists who provide no proof or bibliography to substantiate their argument, but who keep hurling insults at both Job and God. A wife who seems to suggest that suicide is the solution (with it eternal death for cursing God). A God whom he cannot locate to answer his questions, which are many.

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### **Consider, from our perspective, the immense problem that Job has with his picture of God. Available resources are very sparse.**

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No library to check what Ellen White has to say in *The Great Controversy* about God's role in the affairs of men and the universe—not even Job 1:8 as a glimpse into God's opinion of him or the scenario that preceded his misery.

No life of Christ in the Gospels to give a clearer picture of God; the real meaning of love, and the healing power of a relationship with Jesus.

No definition of God's wrath given three times in Romans chapter 1: "Therefore God gave them over . . ." (verse 24, NIV).

No Revelation to supply the balancing knowledge of the eventual, final end of the wicked.

No Alden Thompson to give insight into the role that culture played in the writings of the Old Testament; and to discuss why Satan is mentioned only a couple of times; and to address the problem of God being credited with the good and evil which befalls man.

Yet Job says, "When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold" (23:10), a thought that is reflected in 1 Peter 1:6, 7. God is trustworthy! Job doesn't get to know *why* all this has happened to him, but he trusts God anyway. "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him" (13:15). What a God! What a man—Job!

### REACT

Does God test our trustworthiness with heartache and trials? If so, why?

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*By Ginn Fourie, a lecturer in the department of physiotherapy at the University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa.*

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# THE MURDER OF MY TWO FRIENDS



**“I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity. I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live” (Job 27:5, 6, NIV).**

# Why?

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Job 26–31

Remember, Job did not have the inside information that we are given at the beginning of the book. Read the conversations between God and Satan in chapters 1 and 2. Satan's question, "Does Job fear God for nought?" (Job 1:9, RSV) does give the reader an insight that Job lacked in his suffering. A difficult question to answer is whether Job should have suffered just because Satan made an accusation.

Don and Ann were friends of mine. They felt that the leading of the Lord in their lives was so clear that they could only follow. We had worked together as missionaries. Don was a gentle giant, and they were both caring Christians. My family and I were back in our home country when we received the news of their brutal murder. I had a preaching appointment that Sabbath. How I wrestled with God! I was angry. Where was God when this happened? The God in whom I believed could easily have prevented this. At the time of the murder, Don was at his typewriter typing the names of his students who needed special prayer. How could I face a congregation and speak to them about a God I could not understand? If only I could have some hold on Him and get Him to answer for Himself. Why, God? I even considered canceling the preaching appointment to try to spite God. Why should I say nice things about a God who let things like this happen!

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## **Don and Ann were friends of mine. We had worked together as missionaries.**

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My own experience of and faith in a God of love prevailed. Through prayer and Bible study I began to realize that God was right there with Don and Ann during their last moments, suffering with them. His involvement with humankind and the evidence of His infinite love for His creation strengthened me. I still could not understand why, but the cross and Jesus' suffering did give me the strength to preach about two modern martyrs that Sabbath.

Job's three friends are silent. Job has presented them with arguments they cannot answer. Still there is no word from God. Patience is sometimes a difficult virtue to practice when we want an answer *now*. As you study this week's lesson, try to think of answers to the following questions:

1. How does one explain God's silences to someone who needs answers?
2. How important is an intimate knowledge of God when things go awry?

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*By Bob Bell, an English lecturer at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.*

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## “I Hold Fast”

### LOGOS

#### Job 26–28

With Job’s answer in chapter 26 to Bildad’s short speech in chapter 25, the third cycle of speeches comes to an end. To balance Job’s opening lament in chapter 3, Job gives the closing discourse of the dialogue section of the book in chapter 27. A hymn to wisdom (chapter 28) forms a bridge to the monologue section of the book (29:1–42:6). The first of three monologues is given by Job in chapters 29–31.

#### Considering the Options on God (Job 26, 27)

*“And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him!” (Job 26:14, NIV).*

Job reproaches his friends for failing to help one writhing in physical pain and spiritual anguish. God is the source of wisdom (12:13). But they got their information somewhere else (26:4). Therefore, it cannot be called wisdom in any sense of the word. This does not mean that what they said is in itself false. What makes their wisdom irrelevant is that they are applying what is right in the wrong context. That is when truth becomes a lie, even as the “works of the law” of the Pharisees became rebellious lawlessness (see Matt. 15:3; Rom. 7:10).

He too, like Bildad, can praise with sublime, hymnic poetry the power and majesty of God (Job 26:5–14). With typical oriental figures of speech, he portrays God as not only reigning over the forces of nature but also uncovering the secret abode of the dead, and conquering the forces of evil. In the light of such passages as Job 14:10–12, 21, there is no intelligent activity in death. But in metaphorical poetry the wind can clap its hands (27:23), wisdom can be a created consort to God at Creation (Prov. 8:22–31), and Abaddon a place that trembles before God and talks about God’s great wisdom (26:5, 6; 28:22, RSV).

In spite of all Job’s suffering, the silence of God, and the callous castigation of his friends, the greatness of God compels him to take a solemn oath that he will not lie or say something wrong before God as long as he lives (27:2–4). Job again states that God can and does take decisive action against the ungodly through divine agents of retribution such as war, famine, and pestilence (27:13–23). Job is here apparently contradicting earlier statements where he portrayed the well-being of the wicked and the failure of God to judge them. The fact is, both realities existed inexplicably side by side. It is there for anyone to see (21:29).

Job also believed in the patriarchal view of cause and effect under God. That is why he complained so bitterly (29:18, 19; 3:25, 26). But the real reason for juxtaposing these contradictory realities was dramatically to compel the listener to consider the options on God: He is either capricious, and therefore can only be dreaded in His unpredictability, or in His infinite wisdom and greatness He has an incomprehensible-yet-just reason for doing what He was doing. That Job chose the second option is apparent from his resolve not to sin (27:5, 6), his faith in the fairness of God (23:6, 7).

*Apart from the correct statements of facts, which other components are necessary before knowledge becomes wisdom?*

*Why do we tend to talk about the goodness of God only when things are going smoothly?*

*In what way is the punishment of the wicked in this life simply natural law taking effect, and in what way divine intervention?*

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**God is either capricious, and therefore can only be dreaded in His unpredictability, or in His infinite wisdom and greatness He has an incomprehensible-yet-just reason for doing what He was doing.**

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### **Wisdom Is Reverent Submission to God (Job 28)**

*“And he said to man, ‘The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding’” (Job 28:28).*

As if in anticipation of the divine monologue of 38:1–42:8, the hearer is reminded here that true understanding and wisdom comes only from God. Everything that man can observe in life is but a faint whisper of Him, but the outer fringe of His works (26:14).

At the risk of their lives, men are mining precious metals and precious stones out of the darkness of the subterranean world (28:10, 11). But wisdom remains hidden from the eyes of every living thing, including man and even death itself. The accumulated mass of humanity from the beginning of time—here personified as Destruction and Death (28:22)—have heard only a rumor about it! It is so precious that nothing on earth can find it or is precious enough to buy it. It takes the perspective of God’s high and exalted throne to be able to detect its way, its dwelling, and its origin (28:23, 24). Here wisdom is associated with God’s creation of the world.

Ultimately, the purpose of Creation is found in the intimate relationship between God and man. From the human point of view, this relationship is called the “fear of the Lord”—one of the most pervasive concepts in Scripture. It involves an element of awe and respect. But above all, it is characterized by reverent submission to the will of God (Heb. 5:7) and can be translated as serving God from the heart. This is indeed the way that the man Job is described in the earlier parts of the books (1:1, 8; 2:3). And if Job is indeed the original poet who penned this remarkable ode to wisdom in chapter 28, it would be in full harmony with his resolve, in spite of his suffering, to trust in God and his wisdom alone (23:12).

*In what way is the expression “the fear of the Lord” a repudiation of secular society?*

*Since the concept of sacrifice is not mentioned once in Job, how can one harmonize the wisdom of Job with the wisdom of the gospel (see 1 Cor. 1:17-24)?*

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*By Johan A. Japp, a lecturer in theology at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.*

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# Allegiance as True as Steel

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Job 27:3-6**

I have found two texts in the Bible to be absolutely inseparable. Whenever I read one of them, I am compelled to read the other also:

“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isa. 53:3, NIV).

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

We often feel abandoned in the trials that confront us. At times it may seem that we stand alone and nobody cares. It is so good to know that there is One who is *always* there when we need Him, who knows that we are frail and made from the dust of the earth, but who loves those who fear Him (Ps. 103:14-17).

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## **Significantly Job’s unswerving faith in God was not instantaneous. Neither did it come to him miraculously.**

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Job had been deprived of his worldly possessions, he was misunderstood by relatives and friends. He was unjustly accused by his comforters, yet his allegiance to God never wavered.

Significantly Job’s unswerving faith in God was not instantaneous. Neither did it come to him miraculously. Ellen White wrote the following about the life of Job:

- He was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame.<sup>1</sup>
- He was a kind and benevolent man.<sup>2</sup>
- He labored for the salvation of his family.<sup>3</sup>
- He hoped for the Second Advent.<sup>4</sup>
- His righteousness was after Christ’s order.<sup>5</sup>

Job had led a dedicated and consecrated life before the troubles had come upon him (Job 1:5). Through this constant communion with his God in the midst of his trouble Job was able to exclaim, “I know my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. . . . I myself will see him . . . How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19:25, 27). Job’s daily experience with God had become his anchor in calamity.

1. *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 530.

2. *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 257.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *The Great Controversy*, p. 299.

5. *My Life Today*, p. 244.

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*By Antonio Pantalone, a former mechanic who is now studying theology at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.*

# Making Sense for Moderns

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Job 26:12, 13**

### *Pictures of a Cosmic Conflict (Job 26:12, 13)*

Did writers of poetic literature in Scripture really believe in aspects of ancient Near Eastern mythology? If not, why do we have references to such common mythological figures as Rahab (Job 9:13; 26:12; Ps. 89:10; Isa. 30:7), Leviathan (Job 3:8; Ps. 74:14; Isa. 27:1), Tannin (Job 7:12; Ps. 74:13; Isa. 27:1) and Behemoth (Job 40:15)?

Israelite authors did not suffer from “parallelomania,” slavishly copying pagan traditions. They were using imagery whose meaning was already then lost in the mists of antiquity. When the believing Israelite referred to these figures, it was first to relate to the people of his day in traditional language. But Hebrew usage and interpretation differed drastically from that of the pagan. Second, far from subscribing to the underlying theology of these pagan mythological figures, the Hebrew writer used them as symbols of all that is alien to the Hebrew faith and to demonstrate the superiority of Israel’s God over every aspect of nature and life as symbolized by these forces.

**His friends were charging him with specific sins, and to have admitted to them simply to get them off his back would have been expediency.**

### *To Confess or Not to Confess (Job 31:33, 34)*

Job refused to confess to that of which he was not guilty (Job 27:5, 6). He could easily have admitted to his friends that he was a sinner in a general sense, and he would not have been lying. In fact, he did exactly that in Job 42:6. But his friends were charging him with specific sins, and to have admitted to them simply to get them off his back would have been expediency—a problem that confronts the Christian in business and politics.

The Bible tells of the expediency of Abraham when he lied about his wife to both Pharaoh and Abimelech. Scripture portrays these acts as distrust of God with tragic consequences. Job was not going to have his conscience reproach him because of the inevitable hurt that expediency would inflict on others (Job 27:6). The only reason Job was willing to make a public confession *if* he was guilty was in the case of social sins against the poor, the widow, the orphan, the dying, the blind, the lame, and the stranger (22:5-11; 29:11-17). Ellen White wrote that “many confessions should never be spoken in the hearing of mortals” (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 645). Instead of helping others, it actually reinforces the power of temptation for those on the verge of compromising their Christian principles.

*By Johan A. Japp, a lecturer in theology at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.*

# How to Question and Not Doubt

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: 2 Pet. 3:8, 16-18**

How do you deal with the accusation that questions God? Can a Christian question? Job's spiritual schizophrenia has something to say to us.

1. Christians need to question. Much of contemporary knowledge has been propagated by people with secular, humanistic, or new-age assumptions diametrically opposed to biblical assumptions. Their starting point is not God as Creator and Redeemer. "Men fall into error by starting with false premises and then bringing everything to bear to prove the error true."\*

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**“Men fall into error by starting with false premises and then bringing everything to bear to prove the error true.”**

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2. Christians shouldn't doubt. God did not remove the possibility of doubt. Do I foster my doubts, or do I endeavor rather to seek that evidence upon which to base my faith? By expressing doubts, I may be not only increasing another's burden through my negative thoughts but also fueling my own.

Doubt appears to be a private matter between God and me and will increase unless dealt with. Doubting may become a way of life. It is an indication that: (1) I am unbelieving, ungrateful, and distrustful, and that I actually have a very bad memory; and (2) I need to reestablish some constants.

Some suggested comparisons of constants from Job could be: (1) traditional interpretations of God and His role in human affairs versus God, my personal Friend and Comforter; (2) my friends as confidants versus God, who knows better; (3) science and technology versus the ultimate reality of God as the source of all truth; (4) wealth, as well as those means by which wealth is obtained, versus the pricelessness of wisdom; and (5) piety as a means to prosperity versus confidence in the fact God loves supremely.

Job was comfortable with accusation. But ultimately, he does not want to be accused of doubting that his "Redeemer liveth." This was the point that started the whole episode (see Job 1:9-11).

## REACT

1. What is the difference between false and true science?
2. Can you deal with your questions and your doubts? Spend some time going through *Steps to Christ* to work out a strategy for yourself.

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\* *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 181.

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By D. E. Steyn, a lecturer in communication and education at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.

# Something's Happening

## OPINION

### Key Text: Job 30, 31

Job lived by the system. Read Job 31 again. Can you imagine having any kind of fun with this guy? It is easy to understand why Job wasn't at that feast with his children. Probably, after checking his accountant's ledgers, he planned to revise the strategic plans for the international expansion of his camel-freight business, sit on a committee for the promotion of leprosy awareness, preach at the rescue mission, go to aerobics (basketball is too inefficient!), read several trade journals, review foreign-market data, update his "to do" list, dictate several letters, buy flowers for his wife, prepare to teach Sabbath School, spend an hour in prayer, check his will, and get eight hours of sleep. Job did things by the book—better, if possible.

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## It is easy to understand why Job wasn't at that feast with his children.

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The system betrayed Job. Read Job 30 again. Of course, from our vantage point, it is easy to insist that more accurately, Job's *understanding* of the system betrayed him. After all, Jesus *loves* me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so. Several questions go begging: What about Job's Bible? What did it tell him? And now, is the Bible, the Truth of 20 years ago or even one year ago still sufficient? One wonders if our understanding of "The System" will betray us too. Is it really worth it to do things by the book, to be like Job? Job's graphic descriptions of physical and mental agony and his disillusionment with a picture of God that no longer fit the realities of life are all too familiar in our world today. More innocent people are hurting than ever before. Mental distress abounds; disillusionment with the world's chosen gods prevails.

It is interesting that in spite of Job's inadequate picture of God, in spite of his misunderstanding of "the system," he was exactly the man God needed and used. Phrases come springing to mind: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pet. 2:9, RSV); "Be ye therefore perfect" (Matt. 5:48, KJV); "Come out of her, my people" (Rev. 18:4, RSV).

## REACT

1. Are we better off than Job because of our updated understanding of The Great Controversy? Is it possible to have "bad" theology and still represent God well? What do your answers imply?

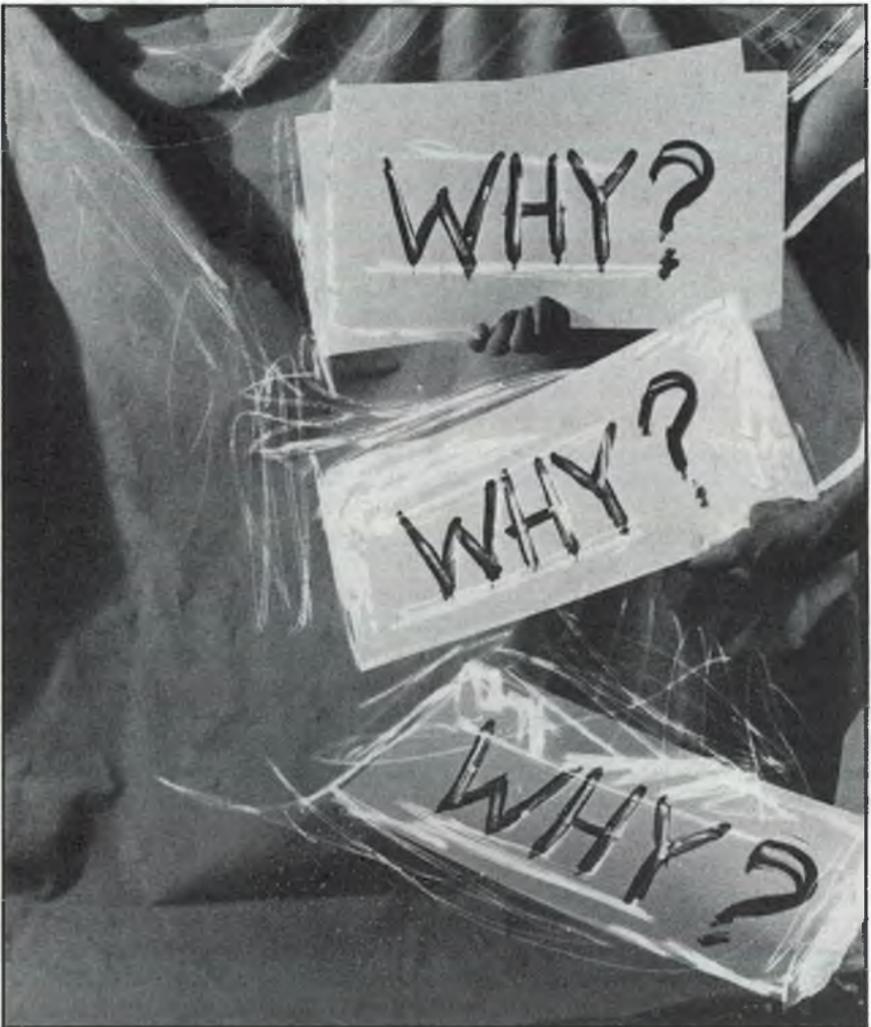
2. Does God expect or want us to be like Job? If so, in what ways?

3. In this context evaluate what is happening in your life.

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*By Lynn Boyd, a lecturer in the business department at Helderberg College, Somerset West, South Africa.*

# WHEN WHYS COME YOUR WAY



**“Do you know how the clouds hang poised, those wonders of him who is perfect in knowledge?” (Job 37:16, NIV).**

# Enjoying the Blessings

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Job 33:12**

Job 32–37 warns us about judging others. It also gives us insight into God's perfect knowledge. Sometimes we don't know how to act under adverse circumstances; therefore, we need to learn to trust God and develop a friendly fellowship with Christ. Serving God for the right motive—love—is very important. Complete surrender of our lives to God, because of what He is and not for what we can obtain from Him, is a must.

The righteous are not always recipients of God's blessings. My mother was on the phone 600 miles away, crying her heart out to me. She had spent a beautiful Christmas with us. My family and friends had given her some useful gifts. On the way home to Chiapas she had to transfer in Mexico City to a different bus depot. A taxi driver approached her and asked whether she needed a taxi; her answer was positive. The driver took her suitcase and other small boxes and started moving through the multitude on his way to the cab. Noticing that my mother—at 67 and with bad rheumatism—could not keep up with him, he just left her and took all her belongings with him.

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## The driver took her suitcase and other small boxes and started moving through the multitude.

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My mother could not believe what had happened to her. God had taken care of her for so many years. Why had He disappointed her this time? Her whys came one after the other and I (like Elihu) just listened until I was finally able to talk.

“Mother,” I said, “I know how much they mean to you, all the presents you have received from your grandchildren, your friends, and from us. I know all the sentimental value they have for you, but my greatest joy right now is that you are all right, that nobody hurt you. I love *you*.” After a few moments of silence, calmly she answered back and said, “You are right, I should enjoy the blessings of the Lord. Things, important though they might be, can be replaced if necessary.”

I am glad that God can be trusted in spite of the deceit, suffering, and pain that surround us. My knowledge is very limited, but He knows the end from the beginning. Elihu may be said to have been wrong about his understanding of Job's problems, but he was right in his understanding of God when he said: “Behold, God is great, and we know him not” (Job 36:26). “Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment” (34:12). “Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom” (36:5). “The Almighty, . . . he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict” (37:23), and he “is perfect in knowledge” (37:16). “Behold, . . . God is greater than man” (33:12).

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*By Jaime Cruz, a professor of religion at Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.*

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## Elihu's Discourse

### LOGOS

#### Job 32–37

With Job's final discourse (Job 29–31) his friends fell silent. Since they were unable to convince Job of his sinfulness, they had nothing to add. It would rather seem that the contrary had happened: Job was convincing them of his righteousness and virtues (Job 32:1, 3) and, therefore, of his unjust suffering.

At this point Elihu comes into action. He was the son of Barakel the Buzite (Job 32:2, 6), probable descendant of Buz, brother of Uz, from the lineage of Nahor, Abraham's brother (Gen. 22:21). We know that he was youngest of the group.

#### **Elihu Explains his Silence (Job 32)**

*"Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom"* (verse 7, NIV).

Because Elihu was the youngest, he had kept silence while his friends presented their reasonings. In the Ancient Near East, the young remained silent while the elders spoke. Since the acquisition of knowledge was mainly experiential, it was supposed that elders were wiser.

But Elihu could remain silent no longer. He rose up to speak, motivated by two reasons: first, he considered that his friends' arguments were weak, since they were unable to refute Job's position; second, the silence of his friends made God appear unjust for having punished Job without a reason.

#### **Elihu Presents His Philosophy (Job 33)**

*"God does all these things to a man . . . to turn back his soul from the pit, that the light of life may shine on him"* (verses 29, 30).

Elihu's purpose was to teach wisdom to Job, and he attempted to do it by appealing to principles of integrity and truth. Since Job had complained several times regarding his inability to talk with God, Elihu himself, a man like Job, will undertake to speak for God, and he resolves to do it with consideration.

It must be remembered that Semitic thought in ancient times was permeated with the concept of God's absolute sovereignty and power. For that reason, it attributed to God both the good and the evil that happened to people. In Elihu's opinion, since God was just, He could not return evil for good. Therefore, Job must be wrong. If he suffered, it surely resulted from his sin.

But Elihu softened his words by stating that God's chastisement was a discipline. Job had complained that God was punishing him without any reason. Elihu answered that God's procedures were too high for us to understand. Because of that, God used different means to correct people: dreams and visions, earthly trials, especially sickness and pain, and words from friends and counselors, with the purpose of holding people back from evil. It is obvious that Elihu considered the last two cases to be true in Job's experience.

#### **Elihu Endeavors to Vindicate God (Job 34)**

*"It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice"* (verse 12).

According to Elihu, Job not only declared himself to be just, but asserted that God made him suffer without cause, and that it was useless to look for God's favor. Based on this understanding of Job's opinion, Elihu stood up in God's defense. For him, God was just and paid everyone according to his or her works, pouring out his judgments on evildoers. God, however, was ready to forgive those who repent, and Job's refusal to acknowledge his sin was rebellion and his words showed he was an evil man. We might disagree with Elihu's approach and arguments in facing Job's dilemma, but certainly he was moved by a passion to defend God from what he considered to be false accusations on the part of Job.

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**Semitic thought in ancient times was permeated with the concept of God's absolute sovereignty and power. It attributed to God both the good and the evil that happened to people.**

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#### **Elihu Appeals to the Justice of God (Job 36:1-21)**

*"I get my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe justice to my Maker" (verse 3).*

In these passages Elihu focused on what he considered was the true sense of Job's trial, and emphasized again his belief that God did justice to the just and punished the ungodly (verses 3-10). He also repeated his concept of the disciplinary nature of God's judgments (verses 11-14), and suggested that Job's calamities had their origin in God, who was trying to save him through them (verses 15, 16). He concluded, therefore, that Job should repent instead of desiring death, since his own wickedness was the reason for his disgrace.

#### **Elihu Appeals to the Perfect Works of God (Job 36:22-37; Job 24)**

*"God's voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding" (37:5).*

This section is a hymn to the sublimity, omnipotence, wisdom, and providence of God. In it Elihu tried to make Job comprehend how high are the thoughts of the Creator. Through his description of natural wonders, he had intended to inspire in Job fear and reverence toward God. That the procedure is judged to be appropriate is revealed by the fact that when God intervened to rebuke Job, He presented a still more impressive list of His creative acts (Job 38-41).

However, neither Job nor his friends had things straight. Only He who had perfect knowledge knew that, frequently, just people suffer and unjust people prosper. Human beings, without God's revelation, will go astray, no matter how wise they may think they are. Often, as in the case of Job's friends, we call evil those who are good, and good those who are evil. And very frequently, as Job did, we rebel against our Creator because we cannot understand His ways.

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*By Eloy Wade, chairperson of the religion department at Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.*

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# Avoiding the Trap

## TESTIMONY

### Key Text: Job 33

There seems to be something about sins in others that really bothers us. We go out of our way to talk about them, and we seem obsessed with solving them with our own solutions. And just as Job's friends thought they had spiritual solutions for his spiritual problem, we, too, fall into the same trap. We cannot justify our meddling in God's business unless we can find a spiritual reason.

How can we, who have such a dimmed spiritual vision, even consider ourselves capable of judging others? In our attempts to right the wrongs of others, we only do greater damage, for which we will be held accountable.

"Through sin the divine likeness was marred, and well-nigh obliterated. Man's physical powers were weakened, his mental capacity was lessened, his spiritual vision dimmed."<sup>1</sup>

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## By dwelling upon the faults of others, we are changed into the same image.

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We pass judgment when we ourselves are worthy of death. We find fault with someone who may have sinned, not thinking about the fact that we are desperate sinners ourselves. Only God is perfect in knowledge and capable of reading the heart!

"It is not given to any human being to judge between the different servants of God. The Lord alone is the judge of a man's work, and He will give to each his just reward."<sup>2</sup>

"The Saviour bids us, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' Remember that soon your life record will pass in review before God. Remember, too, that He has said, 'Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: . . . for thou that judgest doest the same things.'"<sup>3</sup>

"Earnest workers have no time for dwelling upon the faults of others. We can not afford to live on the husks of others' faults or failings. Evil-speaking is a two-fold curse, falling more heavily upon the speaker than upon the hearer. He who scatters the seeds of dissension and strife, reaps in his own soul the deadly fruits. The very act of looking for evil in others develops evil in those who look. By dwelling upon the faults of others, we are changed into the same image."<sup>4</sup>

1. *Education*, p. 15.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 276.

3. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 485.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 492.

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*By Dennis Blum, chairperson of the public-health department at Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.*

## Being Perfected in Suffering

### EVIDENCE

**Key Texts:** Gal. 6:7; Job 32:1

Up to now Job's friends have been trying to convince him that his sins have caused all his calamities. This argument is partially true, because of the principle of sowing and reaping (Gal. 6:7). Yet Job's friends did not recognize that this is not the only reason for suffering. Job's defense of his innocence has left his friends speechless (Job 32:1), thus opening the possibility to seek another answer to the problem of suffering.

Here Elihu suggests that God might have another loving purpose in letting Job suffer (33:15-30). Elihu also affirms that in reality Job is the one who has chosen iniquity and as a result affliction (Job 36:21).

Elihu's point of view has already been mentioned by Eliphaz (5:17, 18): God does not want anybody to suffer or be hurt, but He uses suffering as a means of polishing and correcting certain aspects of our character, so that we can reach perfection and success in this life and in the life to come.

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### **As human beings we are part of a spectacle to the whole universe.**

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Besides these two explanations, there is one more in Job's book that is presented in the prologue and the epilogue: suffering is allowed to vindicate God's character from Satan's accusations that those who enjoy God's protection and blessing are unfairly advantaged (Job 1:9, 10; 2:4, 5; 42:10-17). This view is unique to the book of Job.

Here we are allowed to see the conflict between God and the powers of darkness. It can be seen more clearly in the New Testament. As human beings we are part of a cosmic controversy against spiritual powers that is a spectacle not only to the world but to the whole universe (1 Cor. 4:9). God's children have to confront the opposition. We suffer for Christ's cause and truth (1 Pet. 4:12, 13). Yet, this type of suffering should not worry us, but make us happy because, if we are participants of Christ's sufferings, together with Him we also shall be glorified (Rom. 8:17), and our reward shall be great in the kingdom of heaven. Undoubtedly, Job's author had this purpose in mind when he presented Job's story as an objective illustration of this truth. Job's prologue and epilogue reveal the final result that emerge when character has been tried and comes out victoriously.

The different views in the book of Job help us, first, to be aware of sin, knowing that "whatsoever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7, RSV). Second, it helps us to accept that it is part of a process toward perfection. Finally, it helps us see it as our participation in the great controversy because we have chosen to be on God's side.

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*By Armando Juarez, a professor of religion at Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.*

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# Perfect in Knowledge

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Job 34:17**

The emphasis in this week's lesson on judging others suggests that it would be well not to be judgmental with Elihu himself. Some think that he is a liar, or a parrot merely repeating what the others have said. Others go as far as to think that he was just plain crazy. It would seem fair that we should start by not passing judgment on Elihu—or anybody else, for that matter. Think about the two statements that are prominent in the following section:

*1. Let us draw near to God with assurance.* As human beings we are concerned with the opinion that others might have of us. This concern frequently carries us to live in the unreal world of appearances. A section of the book of Job shows us how vain this experience is. It is evident that we also have not been just (Job 33:12), our cases are before God (35:14), and because of this He invites us to go to judgment (34:23). Yet we are in the hands of One who is just (34:17); moreover, One who never perverts judgment (34:12).

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**As human beings we are concerned with the opinion that others might have of us. This concern frequently carries us to live in the unreal world of appearances.**

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*2. The perfect knowledge of God is within our reach.* As young people, we have to confront the most important decisions of our life. This portion of the book of Job assures us that we have the privilege to go into the perfect knowledge of God (37:16; 36:4) and receive wisdom. "Let the student take the Bible as his guide, remain firm in the principles, and then he can aspire to reach any height."\*

## REACT

1. In what practical ways can a Christian "draw near to God"?
2. What does the phrase "perfect knowledge of God" mean to you personally?

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\* *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 370 [Spanish].

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By Ismael Castillo, president of Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

# Elihu's Answer to Job

## OPINION

**Key Text: Job 38:2, 3**

“And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him’ ” (John 9:1-3, NASB).

Jesus' disciples, Job's three friends, and Elihu all had the mistaken belief that all disease, suffering, and calamity were the consequence of personal sin. But Jesus' answer to His disciples and God's dialogue with Satan in Job 1 and 2 make it plain that personal sin was not responsible for either the man's blindness or Job's troubles. There is something far more important than personal sin and suffering. We are all part of the great controversy between Christ, the Loving Shepherd, and Satan, the accuser of the brethren. The disciples and Job's friends were seconding Satan's self-appointed role as they accused and judged and condemned. But in each case God was able to accomplish His glory through the accused!

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**While he was correct that God is “perfect in knowledge,” Elihu assumed that this attribute of God had passed to himself.**

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In Job 32–37 Elihu could no longer control his frustration and anger as he listened to the elders speak. Job had gone too far, and no one could refute him. As Elihu vented his accusations against Job, his frustration with the elders, and proclaimed his defense of God, he was convinced that he was presenting the final telling argument. He *knew* he was right! While he was correct that God is “perfect in knowledge,” Elihu assumed that this attribute of God had passed to himself, and now he was qualified to judge the motives of Job. But Elihu was self-deceived; he had received no commission from God to act the part of accuser.

When God spoke in Job 38, He cut Elihu off and talked to Job. The words of Elihu were not worth commenting on, and he was never heard of again.

As Christians in the twentieth century, we must realize that our purpose is not to join with Satan as accusers of the brethren. Rather, we are the accused. And, ultimately, God will accomplish His purpose through these accused ones to His glory for ever and ever.

## REACT

1. What is the relationship between sin and disease?
2. How is healing a spiritual term?

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*By John A. Goley, a professor of public health at Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.*

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# ¡NO MAS!



**“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?  
Tell me, if you understand” (Job 38:4, NIV).**

# Elijah's Chariot

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Job 38–41

“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind” (Job 38:1).

Slowly, a single strand of yellow dust swirled upward in silence. Slumped on the ground was a solitary figure surrounded by four others. Job was waiting. He had learned all he wanted to learn from the hard teacher of life. He had heard all he wanted to hear from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Even the speeches of Elihu hadn't satisfied Job's yearning to understand and be understood. He wanted to talk to God. He wanted God to know his innocence. He wanted God to answer for all he, Job, had experienced. He was about to get an answer. He had said, “Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! let the Almighty answer me!) Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary!” (Job 31:35, RSV). He was about to be granted his audience, and Job 38–41 is that audience.

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## The swirling dust became his audience with God, and as he sat alone God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind.

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The swirling dust became his audience with God, and as he sat alone God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind. The Hebrew word for whirlwind is *searah*. This is the same word for the whirlwind that took Elijah up into heaven (2 Kings 2:1) and the same word for the whirlwind that scatters the unrepentant for the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah (Isa. 41:16; Jer. 23:19). God's whirlwind not only speaks, it also acts. It divides; it separates; it challenges. God's whirlwind saves, and it condemns.

God's voice in the whirlwind came twice to Job. Job was looking for an explanation and a chance to explain, but from the first question it quickly becomes clear that God did not come to dialogue. He asks question after question only He can answer. He poses challenge after challenge only He can fathom. The issue he raises is not Job's innocence or guilt; it is Job's position in the universe. The point is clear. Only God is God.

The answers Job so desperately wanted were not in the whirlwind. The answers came after the whirlwind. With the whirlwind came humility, repentance, and relationship. With the whirlwind came salvation. With salvation came the answers.

Perhaps you know this whirlwind. It is confusing, frightening, and humiliating. It comes when everyone else has left us, when we're alone and at our darkest moments. It denies us the answers we feel we so desperately need. It also brings Elijah's chariot.

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*By Randall Skoretz, associate pastor of the Loma Linda University Church and a chaplain of Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.*

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# God's Solution to the Sin Problem

## LOGOS

### Job 41:1-4

In examining his situation in this sinful world, Job gets to the point with God that he complains, "He [God] is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment" (Job 9:32). "There is no one to step between us—no one to judge both God and me" (verse 33, TEV). Job is like the famous tough-guy boxer Roberto Duran, who was being so severely beaten up that he finally yelled in Spanish "no mas" ("no more") and the fight was ended. Except that Job complains God is so big and powerful that He can sit up in heaven and hurl His lightning bolts all day at innocent people and no one can stop Him. Being God, He is far removed from the horrendous realities of earth and can't possibly understand us, because He hasn't experienced the temptations and struggles and sufferings of fallen humanity.

At last God finally has His chance to respond to Job's audacious charges in what some authors have called the pinnacle of biblical poetry, chapters 38–41. He asked Job a series of provocative questions starting with "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding" (38:4, KJV). This approach to Job's charges is followed by rapid-fire tough questions that Job is obviously forced to say he can't answer: Can you make it snow? Can you make it rain? Can you throw lightning bolts? Several different interpretations of God's reply to Job have been suggested by many well-meaning writers.

1. Some authors have stated that basically what God does in these verses is to blow away Job's questions. On the surface it appears that God's answer only confirms Job's complaints about a God who is inaccessible and condescending. Is God saying to Job, "If you can't do any of these things, then how dare you presume to question Me?"

2. Some suggest that Job's questions are so deep there are no answers, so God did His best and it falls short.

3. Others think that the very fact that God condescended even to talk to Job proved His existence and was enough to satisfy him.

None of these explanations is very satisfying. Christ promised that if we went to our heavenly father and asked for bread we could be sure that He wouldn't give us a rock. Was Job a sincere person who asked honest questions? Was Job given a rock? We must assume that God gave Job bread! So let's approach this passage with the initial belief that God did hear and answer Job's questions.

### God Turns Job's Attention to Creation (Job 38 and 39)

God's questions to Job about nature in chapter 38 turned his attention to the fact that God is Creator. God asked, "Do you have creative power?" Why did God use Creation to get Job's attention? To handle man's fallen nature requires creative power ("Create in me a new heart"). God had to bring Job to an understanding of this important truth.

### **Job's Righteousness Was Not Inherent (Job 40)**

God said, If you can answer by questions, "then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee" (40:14). Job had said that "but by the grace of God there go I." If Job had been born with a mother who was a heroin addict, he would in all likelihood have also been a heroin addict. Any righteousness that Job possessed was 100 percent Christ's righteousness. More was needed than Job's right hand (best efforts) to save himself. Since Job couldn't save himself, he needed his Saviour. So God turned Job's attention to Christ.

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**If Job had been born with a mother who was a heroin addict, he would in all likelihood have also been a heroin addict.**

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### **Christ Revealed (Job 41)**

God picked a strange illustration about an animal called Leviathan to bring Job's attention to Christ. It appears that God asks a question about Leviathan and implied in the question is an answer relating to Christ. God said, "Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn?" (Job 41:2). Answer: Christ will spend His whole human life in prayer for the world. Will Leviathan make a covenant with you? Answer: Christ already has, and His covenant is sealed with His blood. The old covenant is that we are saved by believing God's promises to us. "Wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?" (Job 41:4). Answer: Christ didn't consider His position as God something to be grasped "but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant . . . and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7, 8). Incredibly, Christ has consented to being a servant for eternity.

Job's complaints with God were answered. Besides the comfort of knowing that our heavenly father will give us bread when we ask for it, we also have the revelation of a sin-pardoning Redeemer. We have a God who, as Creator, will gladly create new hearts in sinners. Someone has broken down the enmity between earth and heaven. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:14, 18).

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*By Donn LaTour, a medical student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.*

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# Have You Seen God?

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Eph. 5:20**

The book of Job is an incredible story of one man's suffering as few others in earth's history have suffered. Many of Job's experiences were explained by his friends as being some sort of retribution from God. However, we are told that "Job is brought distinctly before us as a man whom the Lord allowed Satan to afflict."<sup>1</sup>

Suffering occurs not because of a specific sin we have committed, but because Satan is prince of this world and his government is based on self-above-God. We are caught in a battle between good and evil, but God uses any means possible to bring us into a saving relationship with Himself. This occurs as we realize what he has done for us on Calvary and how much He loves us. Suffering can turn us to God when little else would. "Job attained through his experience a richer and deeper appreciation of God and God's ways of dealing with man."<sup>2</sup>

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## God uses any means possible to bring us into a saving relationship with Himself.

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The answer to all of our sufferings is to see God as He truly is—the lover of our souls. When God answers Job, He does not answer all of Job's questions as to why all the suffering. "Job's philosophic problem was that he did not understand the source of his trouble."<sup>3</sup> He couldn't see—except by faith—that God wasn't causing the sufferings, only allowing Satan to have his way.

"His divine purpose is not to settle an argument, but to reveal Himself."<sup>4</sup> In revealing Himself He intends to answer Job's problems. "When Job saw God, his perplexities disappeared. Only God could provide this kind of solution for his problems."<sup>5</sup> "Job no sooner hears the divine voice than his soul is bowed down with a sense of his sinfulness, and he says before God, 'I abhor myself, [for pride and doubt?] and repent in dust and ashes.'"<sup>6</sup>

"Nothing reaches so fully down to the deepest motives of conduct as a sense of the pardoning love of Christ."<sup>7</sup> This is what Job saw, and experienced, that caused his problems to melt away. We, too, need to "see" God and His matchless love for us. Then our problems will be seen in true perspective. He alone is able to cause us to give thanks for all things (Eph. 5:20).

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1. Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 599.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 598.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 509.

7. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 478.

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## Gird Them Loins!

### EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Job 38:3**

“Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me” (Job 38:3, RSV).

Apologetics is the theological art of self-defense. When the early church came under attack by the Roman government, Christian writers began an intellectual defense of Christianity designed to convince the emperor to lighten up. They were called apologists.

To many the book of Job is seen as an apology that attempts to explain the meaning of suffering in human existence. The answers of Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu, as well as Job, are often misconstrued as God’s authoritative explanations for the existence of suffering. They aren’t. It is important to remember that God doesn’t speak to the issue until Job 38, and when He does, it isn’t apologetics. God answers questions with questions—challenges with challenges.

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**This is the most logical place in the Bible for God to give a philosophical defense for the existence of suffering in the world.**

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God first questions Job’s credentials to question God. “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2). And then He challenges Job to “gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me” (Job 38:3). The word for *man* in this passage actually carries the connotation of valiant warrior or hero.\* It seems as if God is almost mocking Job, turning the tables on Job and requiring him to stand and answer. “Be a hero,” God seems to be saying, “gird your loins and stand and answer. I will question you and you will declare to me, not the other way around.”

This is the most logical place in the Bible for God to give a philosophical defense for the existence of suffering in the world. Instead He challenges Job to answer His questions. Perhaps God is saying that the key to understanding the mysteries of suffering is not in intellectual confrontations with God, but rather in humble, repentant personal relationships with Him. Perhaps heroism is not apology.

Although we shouldn’t ignore them, perhaps it is time to stop glorifying theistic proofs, theodicies, scientific theologies, and other apologetics. Perhaps it is time to gird up our loins, be heroes, answer God’s challenge, and realize relationship with Him.

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\* George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 8 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 1174.

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*By Randall Skoretz, associate pastor of Loma Linda University Church and a chaplain of Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.*

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## Faith in Four Feet of Water

### HOW-TO

**Key Text: Ps. 46:1-3**

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging” (Ps. 46:1-3, NIV).

A bus load of young people tumbled happily out onto the sand, smiling and laughing and very happy to be doing something. I had been sitting in the front seat and so, naturally, was the last person off the bus. It was the cheapest tour of the Sinai you could get out of Jerusalem, and so the bus was packed only with students.

We had seen all the sights of the Sinai peninsula: the Jewish settlements, the important military places of the Six-Day War, St. Catherine’s monastery, and, of course, Mount Sinai itself. This day was a break from all the important sightseeing and a chance to recoup. We were going snorkeling in the Gulf of Elat.

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### **The same principle of trust works in four feet of water as in four leagues of water.**

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The Gulf of Elat has some of the most beautiful underwater sightseeing in the world. It was my first experience snorkeling, and I was excited. We were on a reef that extended about 100 yards from the beach. The water wasn’t deep, so you had your choice of standing stationary with your head ducked under the water or swimming gently from spot to spot over the colorful coral and schools of fish.

It was here that I learned about faith. I liked the swimming from spot to spot, and slowly I made my way across the reef. Suddenly I was shocked as the reef disappeared and an unfathomable chasm opened up underneath me. I had swum off the edge of the reef. I felt as if I’d just jumped off the Empire State Building. My mouth went dry and I was panting for air in syncopation to my thunderous heartbeat. Quickly I turned to shore and splashed my way onto the coral reef.

Standing in four feet of water, I suddenly felt very stupid. I knew in my head that I could swim in water 300 feet deep just as easily as water four feet deep, but one of the hardest things I have ever done was to make myself swim off the edge of that reef again. After several times it became easier and easier to match my emotions to my intellect. And then it even became fun.

Faith is the water that holds us up, and the same principle of trust works in four feet of water as in four leagues of water. When the bottom falls out from underneath us, God is still there. In the whirlwinds of life, God is still there.

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*By Randall Skoretz, associate pastor of Loma Linda University Church and a chaplain of Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.*

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# Rock or River

## OPINION

### Key Text: Job 40:8

Situational Ethics. Rationalization.

“What God really meant to say was . . .” “Well, you need to take things in context . . .” “Sure, that’s what it meant then, but that applies to us in a different way . . .” “I think that God wouldn’t mind if I did this . . . really!” Sound familiar?

God gave us the power to reason, to take information, process it, and come up with conclusions, objectives, actions. This is good. We need this to function.

Yet things in life are not always black and white. There are a lot of gray areas. Different but equally good viewpoints exist. We may choose to agree or disagree.

Sometimes logic is used to rationalize actions that might not befit a Christian. Job 40:8 reminds me that my justice is not God’s, my words are not His, my thinking is not His.

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## “In matters of taste flow like a river. In matters of principle stand firm as a rock.”

---

Benjamin Franklin said: “In matters of taste flow like a river. In matters of principle stand firm as a rock.”

Where do you draw the line? What issues are black and white and what issues are gray?

Among the following issues, how are principle and taste involved:

- jewelry
- abortion
- discrimination
- environment
- music

How is logic used to justify one’s actions?

Are *situational ethics* and *rationalization* dirty words?

## REACT

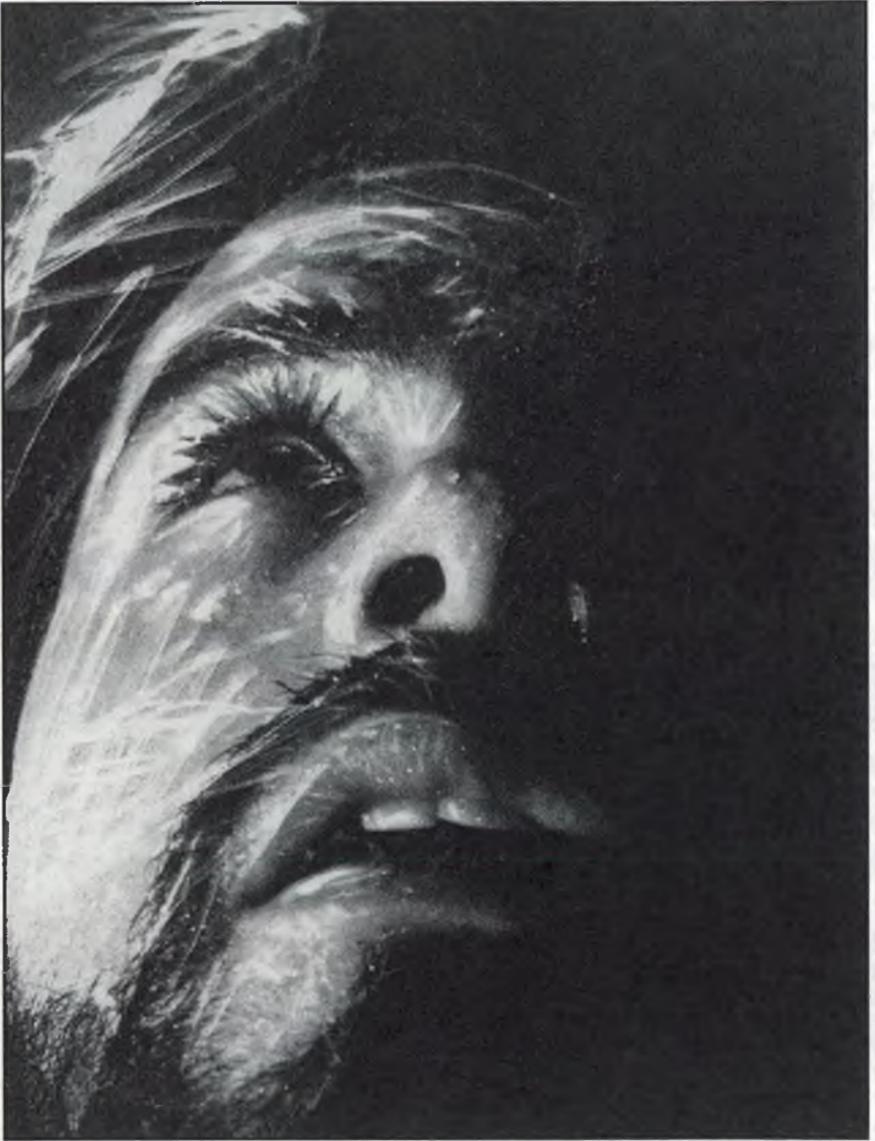
1. On what should a Christian’s standards be based?
2. How can you know you are acting on Christian principle as opposed to cultural interpretation?
3. Explain why you agree or disagree that there are gray areas in life.

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By Michael R. Samardzija, a graduate student in physiology at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

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# NOW I SEE!



**“My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you” (Job 42:5, NIV).**

# To See God

## INTRODUCTION

### Scripture: Job 42

God is love. God is an all-powerful judge. He is forgiving. And He requires perfect obedience. In one form or another, these statements about God are things that many of us have heard for quite some time now. But why?

When we hear a collection of statements like these, we human beings are likely to develop a warped concept of who God is. We, like Job, may begin to view God as a capricious deity imposing His cosmic will on the universe. Or we may go to the other extreme and perceive God as a soft, spineless being who refuses to acknowledge our faults because of His great love. However, when we view the preceding statements through eyes that have seen God, we are apt to be awed by His majesty and faithfulness. We are likely to fall to our knees in confession because whom we have seen is so much greater than what we have heard.

---

**“It’s my—my friend. He’s kinda like me, see?  
He’s got big ears.”**

---

One day a child was playing in the clay. He was so intent on his sculpture that he did not notice the adult who stopped to watch. After some time, the adult bent down and asked, “What are you doing?”

“I’m making something out of clay,” the child responded.

“That’s nice. Exactly what is it?”

“It’s my—my friend. He’s kinda like me, see? He’s got big ears.”

“So I see. Why did you make him?” queried the adult.

“Because I loved him.”

“You loved him even before you made him?”

“Uh-huh.”

“How could that be?”

“‘Cause I knew what he was going to be like all along and so I loved him,” came the simple reply.

“Does he love you?”

“I sure want him to, but that’s up to him.”\*

Where will you see God at work today? Will it be in the touch of a friend or the eyes of a stranger? Maybe you will see His creativity in a flower or, perhaps, in a stressful situation. Look for God today. He is all around you and He longs to change your life.

---

\* Benjamin Martin, *Through the Eyes of the People* (Colorado Springs, Co.: Meriwether Publishing Ltd.), p. 1.

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By Kari Roosenberg, an occupational-therapy student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

# Way to Go, God

## LOGOS

### Job 42:6

I find Job's friends alive and well. In sermons and commentaries I find that often they say, "Although Job spoke what is right about God . . ." they point out verses in which they see Job as wrong. They also tend to pick out one of Job's friends and defend his message. They use today's text about Job repenting as an excuse for their views.

Relating to today's text, *Strong's Concordance* points out that more than one word is translated "abhor" and "repent"<sup>1</sup> and the two words used here are quiet and mild. "Abhor" is a reaction to an action (such as God abhorring His people because they rejected Him.)<sup>2</sup> And the word here for "repent" simply means a change, and often indicates finding comfort.<sup>3</sup>

Job seems to want two things. First, he simply wants someone to listen to his complaints with a kind, listening ear. This seems to be a big desire and would have satisfied him. The other thing he wants is to find out why God is doing these things to him.

Sadly, instead of listening, his friends jump to the conclusion that these things happen because Job isn't converted, and each tries his own method of evangelism. Eliphaz would make a good Sunday morning TV preacher, offering "prosperity theology" as the solution to Job's problems. Bildad and Zophar hit closer to home as both are very evangelical and would feel at home among us, Zophar especially with his more "conservative" views.

Job insists that he is already born again—that he does trust and obey. He knew that before God, his righteousness is like filthy rags (Job 9), but he also knew that he had a relationship with God so he could come boldly before the throne of grace. He also had stated that his words were exaggerated to try to show the depth of his pain (Job 6). Since Job was born again, his friends' solutions were too simplistic.

Elihu then spoke. His message was, "OK, Job, so you are born again. Then just be a humble servant. Who are we to question God's incredible ways. God is too great for us; just humbly obey, and hopefully He won't notice us. We are sinners in the hands of an angry God. Who can stand before such an awesome being?"

This was too much for God, and He showed that despite His infinite greatness, those in relationship with Him are able to stand before Him. God comes in full power. No, God is not humbling Job. He is answering, sympathizing, and encouraging him.

First, God reassures Job and his friends by word and demonstration that He is the all-powerful King and Creator of the universe. Included in this is a description of controlling the sea, of saying, "thus far shall you come and no further, and here shall your proud waves be stopped" (Job 6).

To these ancient people the sea represented evil and pain. Here we find God having all power, but not everything is easy. He has to decide how far the waves of sorrow will come. He would prefer them not to come at all, but because of choices made on an imperfect planet, the troubles must come. Instead of their

coming out of control, however, God stands there to decide how far. We find in this task a foretaste of Gethsemane in which God allowed the waves to go unchecked over Himself.

God goes on to demonstrate and tell Job about His power and wisdom. In the middle of God's speech comes the important point that one of God's creations is freedom (Job 39:5-12). God then describes His power and wisdom and closes with two interesting creatures, Behemoth and Leviathan.

Many commentaries interpret these as merely a hippopotamus and a crocodile. This interpretation has been described as "closing this ancient poem with the most trivial and superfluous anticlimax in literature."<sup>4</sup>

---

## **Eliphaz would make a good Sunday morning TV preacher, offering "prosperity theology" as the solution to Job's problems.**

---

To the ancient mind, these again are from the familiar myths. Leviathan is a biblical symbol for Satan, the dragon of Revelation 12. Behemoth is an evil power working with Leviathan. Could he be the beast of Revelation 13 who represents the history of humanity in rebellion against God?

God gave a threefold message to Job, which correspond to the three angels of Revelation 14:

1. I am the Creator and I am judging evil.

2. I created freedom (suggesting it can be misused and people can choose to fall from grace).

3. I can't use mere force, despite My power, to force the fallen angels (Leviathan?) and fallen man (Behemoth?) to obey. I must work with freedom and choice. This takes longer, and people like you will be casualties of this war. But trust in Me, and I will make it up to you. I promise it.

In this speech, God takes the blame for evil. He says, "Job, I'm doing this to you, and do you want to know why?" Then He tells the story of the great controversy and the three angels' messages, and the good news of the triumph of God's love.

In response, Job did change—not from a sinner to a saint, but from a saint who asked, "Why is my Friend doing this to me?" to a saint saying, "Now I know and, Wow, what a message!" He had an attitude of casting his crown down at the feet of Christ, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb!"

---

1. *Strong's Concordance* (McLean, Va.: MacDonald Publishing Co.).

2. R. Laird Harris, et al., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 488, 490; vol. 2, p. 570.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

4. *Job and the Devil*, p. 125.

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*By Kevin Neidardt, a nursing student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.*

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# The Flesh Is Weak; the Spirit Is Willing

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Matt. 26:41; Rom. 4:7**

Right after Thanksgiving Beth lost her grandma. They had been very close, so it was a difficult loss. Just two days after the funeral, a friend named Sallie told Beth that she had been emotionally draining to their friendship. This added greatly to her pain. What Beth failed to comprehend was that Sallie had followed her words up by squeezing Beth's hand and telling her, "I'll be glad when you're better."

Beth felt greatly angered and hurt. Over the next eight months she privately struggled to put this behind her. From the start she wanted to forgive, but she found she could not. She repented often of her anger, yet simply could not forgive, even though she continually prayed for guidance.

Finally, in late June something happened that made Beth realize that she could no longer continue trying to hide her pain. Unfortunately, up till now her shame and humiliation had prevented her sharing. A week later she finally opened up to a friend, and in an odd sort of way Beth asked for comfort. She asked, "Have you ever hurt so badly that you wished your friend would put an arm around you and say, 'It's OK?'" In her dazed, confused state, she found herself being hugged, and that hug broke her. The next morning she prayed that the Lord would help put this behind her, and that evening He did.

---

## **Just two days after the funeral, a friend named Sallie told Beth that she had been emotionally draining to their friendship.**

---

"From the depth of discouragement and despondency Job rose to the heights of implicit trust in the mercy and saving power of God."<sup>1</sup>

"Most pitiable is the condition of one who is suffering under remorse; he is as one stunned, staggering, sinking into the dust. And many who suppose themselves to be righteous, become exasperating comforters; . . . In manifesting this hardness of heart in offending and oppressing, they are doing the very same work which Satan delights in doing. . . . There is many a poor soul who is misunderstood, unappreciated, full of distress and agony."<sup>2</sup>

## **REACT**

1. What is the most effective way to overcome feelings of unforgiveness?
2. How can a Christian help someone overcome such feelings?

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1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 163.

2. *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 350, 351.

---

*By Caren Gee, a business student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.*

# Once I Heard, but Now I See

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text:** Job 42:5

For 40 chapters in the book of Job we read about the speculations of others about God. When Job concludes his discourse in the final chapter of the book by saying he had “heard of [God],” we know he has heard plenty. But his final word is not about what he has heard. Instead he concludes by saying that he has finally “seen” God. Why is that important?

Most of us have friends like Job’s—people who have opinions *about* God. Yet something within yearns really to *know* God. And Job confirms our best dreams when he says he has finally *seen* God. That is the goal.

What Job saw was simply an uncluttered view of God. Where once he only heard hearsay, now he sees clearly. Now he sees what God *wants* him to see. Now God is getting through.

---

## In the midst of being ruler of the universe, God still seems to see even little me.

---

The lessons I learn from this passage of Scripture are threefold. First, I see that God is looking for me. This is a great relief, for how often have I despaired in the midst of my difficult circumstances of ever finding Him? And not only is God looking for me, but in the midst of being ruler of the universe, He still seems to see even little me. Though some have been fearful that God sees the little things of their lives, for those who wish to see Him to be noticed in the little things is wonderfully good news.

Second, God gives us the power of free choice to look other directions and even to hide from Him. One anecdote about our relationship to God states that when we first come together with God we each have our part to play: He does His part; He comes looking for us, and we do our part; we try our best to run away! Yet when we stop running, God finds us.

Finally, God seems to appreciate our need for process in coming to Him. Rather than merely placing a flashing billboard at the edge of town for us to read about His will, He gives us options and processes to go through to learn about Him and then come to love Him. Thus when I see God, I will have really discovered Him.

To hear about someone is one thing. But to see them is another.

## REACT

1. When I see God in my imagination, He looks like . . .
2. I’m going to share my picture of God by . . .

---

*By Charlie Liu, campus chaplain at Loma Linda University and pastor for campus ministry at Campus Hill Church, Loma Linda, California.*

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# Finding God

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Matt. 4:2**

The “Introduction” to this week’s lesson spoke of how God is seen by humans. Kari wrote about people viewing God from many perspectives, then concluded that we must “look for God today.” I would like to suggest four ways:

For centuries humans in search of God have practiced what are today called “inward spiritual disciplines.” These have been defined by Richard Foster as fasting, meditation, study, and prayer. Many long-time Christians are well acquainted with study, since our belief is based upon tangible written evidence from the Bible. And prayer is something Christians have learned at least a little bit about. But the other two disciplines are much less explored.

---

## **Fasting is a means of clearing the communication lines to God.**

---

Fasting is defined in spiritual terms as the withdrawal from sustenance in one form or another as a means of clearing the communication lines to God. When practiced in the Bible, it ranged from partial fasts (only basic foods and water) to absolute fasts (nothing ingested, including water). Fasting has been traditionally practiced when people are in dire need of connecting with God. But regular partial fasts have been practiced by many with remarkable results. Today, many serious Christians are practicing weekly fasts as a means of focus in a special way on God. And they are finding God in deeper ways than they did before practicing this discipline.

Meditation is defined as purposefully focusing one’s mind on God through such methods as intense thought on a biblical text, reflection on nature, bringing thoughts of God into everyday aspects of life, and control of the physical senses toward God.

This spiritual discipline has been controversial in recent years because of its distorted use by so-called “New Age” practitioners. Nevertheless it is still a valid means of reaching out to God and, in fact, is viewed both by the Bible and Ellen White as one of the key resources for communicating with God.

Ellen White suggests in several places that an hour spent in meditation on various biblical themes or on the creation work of God will regularly bring one closer to God. In fact, the idea of God’s waiting for human beings to focus their minds on Him is a strong part of Ellen White’s writing.

In the past decade a number of new Christian books on spiritual disciplines have been written. If you are interested in learning more about how to find God through the classical inward spiritual disciplines, contact your local Christian book store and ask for books on the spiritual disciplines.

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*By Charlie Liu, campus chaplain at Loma Linda University and pastor for campus ministry at Campus Hill Church, Loma Linda, California.*

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## A Lousy Answer?

### OPINION

**Key Text: Job 13:15**

By the time God finished His discourse on His omnipotence, Job still had not learned the answer to his why question, but he had learned to have no misgivings. In this age this seems to be a hard lesson to learn. How could Job just take this kind of answer from God and still believe that He cared?

After the trials were over, Job realized that unconditional trust was all that really mattered. The why was not really important. In fact, knowing why can at times even be detrimental. Furthermore, God does sometimes try to show us why, but we often cannot comprehend, so we either become angry, fearful, or it goes right over our heads. Consider when God spoke with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai or tried to explain His death to His disciples. In both cases they did not understand, and the desired change did not occur.

---

### **God does sometimes try to show us why, but we often cannot comprehend, so we either become angry, fearful, or it goes right over our heads.**

---

After so trustingly losing her first husband to death, Catherine Marshall lost a grandchild not so trustingly. In this instance, she had prayed hard and felt as if God told her that the baby would be healed. But it was not to be. The baby died. From outright anger Catherine moved to complete apathy. God would not answer her question of why. Finally, she prayed her life-changing prayer, "I need You and Your presence in my life more than I need understanding. I choose You, Lord."<sup>1</sup> And He answered her with "infinite love for my present need, . . . step by step guidance for my future walk . . . instead of explanations He gave me Himself."<sup>2</sup>

God responded to our sufferings by the incarnation, the cross to overcome evil, and the great resurrection finally to overcome "unfairness." God did not expect that His final reward to Job would heal the previous tragedies. He simply loved Job so much that He couldn't help pouring out His love to him after what he had been through. God wants the same for us. He loves us—you and me. He can't wait to reward us; but on this earth, for whatever reason, that is not always possible. That is why there is heaven, so, even though we die before God gives us our "earthly reward," we shall awake to that great resurrection morning where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. . . . Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:4, 5).

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1. Catherine Marshall, *Light in My Darkest Night*, p. 202.

2. *Ibid.*

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*By Leanne Langham, a pediatric nurse at the Loma Linda faculty medical offices, Loma Linda, California.*

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## Next Quarter's Lessons

### 1 Timothy and Titus

If you have not yet received a copy of CQ for third quarter 1993, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

#### **Lesson 1: The World of Timothy and Titus**

*Scripture:* 1 Tim. 1:1, 2; Titus 1:4

*Theme:* In the epistles to Timothy and Titus we rediscover the apostle Paul's deep love for two of his sons in the faith. He is concerned for their spiritual well-being and for their faithfulness to the divine calling. Who were these young ministers? What was the climate in their churches—Ephesus and Crete? What special relevance do Paul's introductory words to them have for us today?

#### **Lesson 2: Teach Sound Doctrine**

*Scripture:* 1 Tim. 1:3-11

*Theme:* False doctrine destroys Christian love between believers and leads them away from faithful conformity to the law of God.

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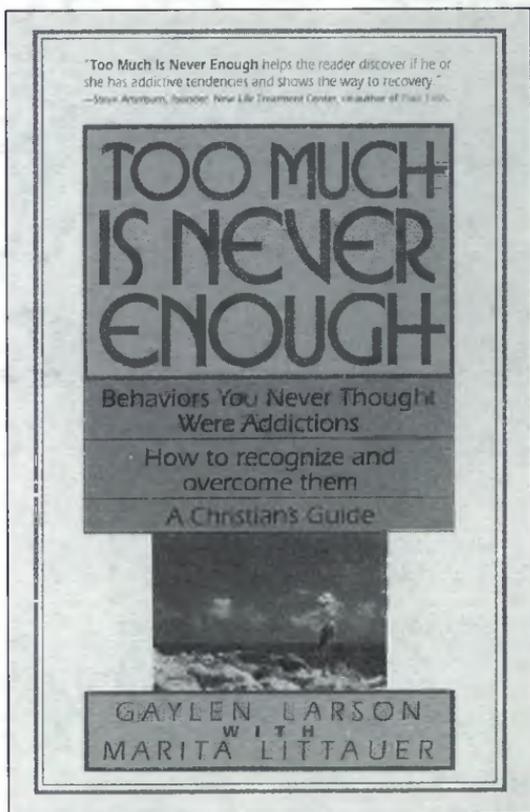
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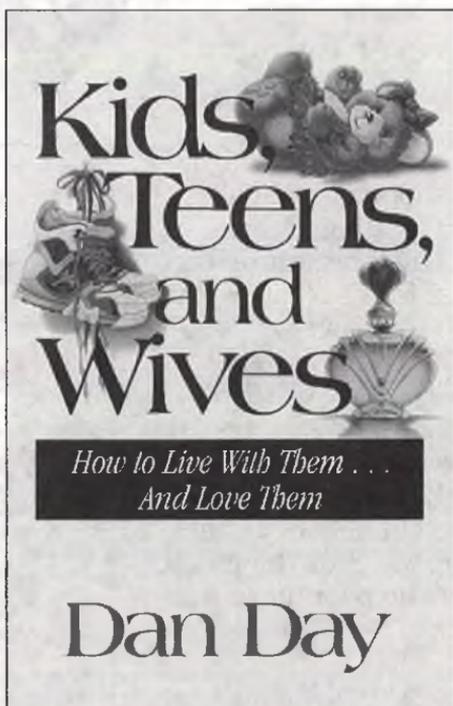
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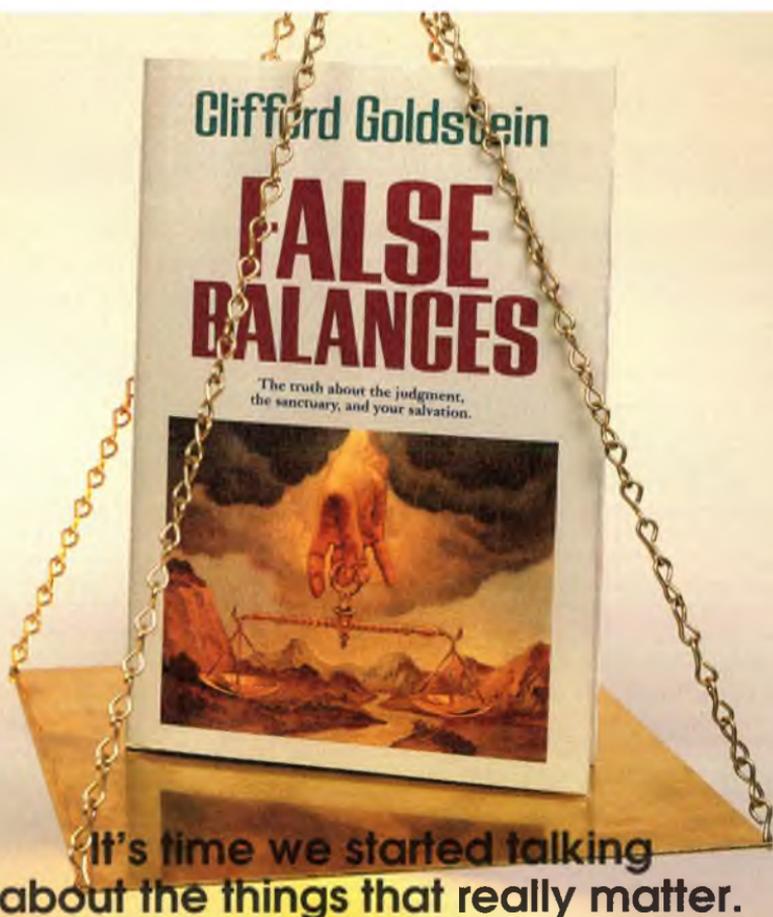
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