

Job: The Riddle of Human Suffering in a World Ruled by a Loving God

Job Bible Study Series

A companion to the sermon series on suffering, wisdom, and the
God who redeems

Preaching Plan for the weeks ahead

DATE

SERMON

6th September We are Changed in Jesus
Ephesians 4:17-32

JOB

13 th September	The riddle of human suffering in a world ruled by a loving God
20 th September	What Job teaches us about wisdom
27 th September	God, the beneficent Creator and Provider
4 th October	Satan, the enemy who seeks to destroy God's goodness
11 th October	The inadequate answer of Job's friends
18 th October	How Job points us to redemption in Christ

25th October We are God's Children in Jesus
Ephesians 5:1-20

1st November We are Responsible in Jesus
Ephesians 5:21-6:4

8th November We Serve in Jesus
Ephesians 6:5-9

15th November We Stand in Jesus
Ephesians 6:10-24

Study 1: The Riddle of Human Suffering in a World Ruled by a Loving God

Passage: Job 1:1–22

Opening

1. When something painful or unexplained happens to a good person, what do we instinctively want to know — and why is "why did this happen?" often the question we ask first, even before "what do I do now?"

Observing the Text

2. Read Job 1:1–5. List everything we're told about Job's character, his family, and his practices.
3. Read Job 1:6–12. Who is in control in this conversation?
4. What does Satan claim is the real reason for Job's righteousness (v.9-11)? What is he accusing God of?
5. What limits does God place on Satan's actions (v.12)? Why might this detail matter?

6. Read Job 1:13–19. Describe the pattern in how the disasters arrive. What do you notice about their scale and timing?
7. Read Job 1:20–22. How does Job respond? What does he do *and* say — and what does verse 22 tell us he does *not* do?

Seeing it in Christ

Jesus — the only truly innocent sufferer who ever lived — cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46) at the cross.

8. How does the fact that God himself, in Christ, walked the path of unexplained suffering change how we view *our* unanswered "whys"?

Applying the Text

Job suffers immensely without ever being told why, and so — in a deeper way — does Jesus.

9. How helpful do you find it to know what Job doesn't? Does it help you to sit with your own unanswered "whys", or not?
10. Thinking back to Question 1 — what questions about suffering would you like to take to God this week?

Study 2: What Job Teaches Us About Wisdom

Passage: Job 28:1–28

Opening

1. Where do people usually go looking for wisdom — good advice, a clear plan, a sense of "what's really going on" — when life falls apart?

Observing the Text

2. Read Job 28:1–11. What is being described in these verses? What lengths do people go to in order to extract precious things from the earth?
3. What is the point of listing all this human ingenuity and effort (v.1-11) before verse 12 asks its question?
4. Read Job 28:12–14, 20–22. Where does the chapter say wisdom *cannot* be found? Who else, besides humans, admits they don't have access to it (v.22)?
5. Read Job 28:15–19. Why can't wisdom be bought, even with the most valuable things humans possess?
6. Read Job 28:23–27. Who alone knows where wisdom is? What did God do with wisdom "when he established... searched out... and confirmed" creation?

7. Read Job 28:28. After 27 verses building toward the question "where is wisdom found?", what is the surprisingly simple answer given to humanity?

Reflection

8. Given everything Job has lost and still doesn't understand by this point in the book, why might "the fear of the Lord" be a more realistic definition of wisdom than "having all the answers"?

Seeing it in Christ

Despite all the Old Testament predictions of Jesus, what he reveals is very different to what anyone expected. In the end he is the "Wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24) revealed unexpectedly for us.

9. What is an example of how Jesus shows the wisdom of "fearing the Lord" instead of seeking to "have all the answers"?

Applying the Text

10. In what areas of your life are you currently digging like the miners of verses 1-11 — working hard to extract understanding or control — when what's actually needed is to receive what God has already revealed to you in Christ?
11. What would change this week if you defined wisdom not as "figuring it out" but as trusting the wisdom God has revealed in Jesus, even where it still surprises or unsettles you?

Study 3: God, the Beneficent Creator and Provider

Passage: Job 38:1–41

Opening

1. Think of a time you felt genuinely small — standing somewhere vast, or learning a fact about the universe that made your problems feel tiny. What did that feeling do to you?

Observing the Text

2. Read Job 38:1–3. After 37 chapters of human speeches, who finally speaks? How does God's opening question set the tone for what follows?
3. Read Job 38:4–11. What images does God use to describe creating the earth and containing the sea? What is the effect of asking Job "were you there?"
4. Read Job 38:12–38. What natural phenomena does God ask Job about?
5. Some people think of God winding the world up like a clock, and then walking away, or only stepping in occasionally. What strikes you about how God describes his relationship with the natural world, weather events, animals?

6. What is God's relationship to the stars, the constellations, and the "laws of the heavens"?

7. Read Job 38:39–41. What does this final section reveal about the scope of God's care?

Seeing it in Christ

God never explains why Job suffered — instead he describes how he intimately runs the universe. In Jesus, that same Creator "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14) — the one who commands the sea and feeds the raven entered his own creation as a vulnerable infant.

8. How does God "coming close" in Jesus offer more comfort than the whirlwind speech he gave to Job?

Applying the Text

9. Where in your life do you find it hardest to trust that God is actively, personally providing — the way he provides rain for uninhabited land or food for ravens?

10. How does it change things to know that the same God who is vast enough to set the stars in place also drew near enough to live among us in Christ?

Study 4: Satan, the Enemy Who Seeks to Destroy God's Goodness

Passage: Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7

Opening

1. If someone wanted to convince you that a person's love or loyalty wasn't real, but purely self-interested, how might they go about "proving" it?

Observing the Text

2. Read Job 1:6–12. What is Satan's relationship to the earth?
3. What is Satan really questioning when God praises Job?
4. Summarise Satan's theory in your own words: what does he claim is the *actual* reason for Job's godliness?
5. What is Satan permitted to do, and what is he explicitly *not* permitted to do? Who sets that boundary?
6. Read Job 2:1–7. After Job passes the first test, what does Satan claim will finally break him (v.4-5)? How does this raise the stakes from chapter 1?

7. What does Satan actually do the moment he's given permission?

Seeing it in Christ

Read Matthew 4:1-11.

Just as Satan questioned whether Job's devotion to God was really about God's goodness, he tempts of Jesus to doubt the Father's reliability and provision.

8. Where do you see Satan inviting Jesus to doubt God's goodness in his temptation?

Applying the Text

Satan's strategy with both Job and Jesus rests on the accusation that trust in God is conditional on getting what we want from him.

9. Where might that accusation be possible in your own heart?

Jesus resisted the temptation to doubt God's goodness where Job (understandably) wavered and where we so often fail.

10. In what ways do you find it helpful to Jesus when Satan is questioning your willingness to trust God no matter what?

(If you're struggling to an answer, consider 2 Timothy 2:11-13)

Study 5: The Inadequate Answer of Job's Friends

Passage: Job 4:1–9; 42:7–9

Opening

1. Recall a time someone tried to comfort you with advice or an explanation that, however well-meant, actually made things worse. What went wrong?

Observing the Text

2. Read Job 2:11–13 (briefly, for context — not the main passage). What do the friends do right, before they say a single word?
3. Read Job 4:1–9. How does Eliphaz begin? Is his tone gentle or confrontational at first?
4. What theological claim is Eliphaz making in 7-9? In your own words, what does he believe is the link between suffering and sin?
5. Reflect on Eliphaz's logic (v.7): "Who, being innocent, has ever perished?" If this statement were universally true, what would it mean about Job — and what would it mean about anyone who suffers?

6. Read Job 42:7-9. After 40+ chapters of speeches, what is God's verdict on what the friends have said about him, compared to Job?

Seeing it in Christ

The friends aren't wrong that God is just and sin has consequences — they're wrong to apply that principle rigidly to Job's specific case. Unlike Job's friends, Jesus doesn't offer sufferers a tidy explanation for their pain. In fact, passages like Mark 8:34 and Philippians 3:10 suggest Christians should expect to suffer simply for following Jesus.

7. To what extent do you find "you get to share in Christ's suffering" comforting (especially compared to the theology of Job's friends)?

Applying the Text

8. Out of this study, what is a better way to respond when someone we love is suffering instead of trying to explain their suffering or identify a cause?
9. Is there someone in your life right now who needs your presence — and perhaps an invitation to share their suffering with Christ — more than your explanations? What would that look like this week?

Study 6: How Job Points Us to Redemption in Christ

Passage: Job 19:1–27

Opening

1. If you were completely misunderstood and abandoned by everyone around you, but knew *one* person would still vindicate you in the end, how would that change how you endured the situation?

Observing the Text

2. Read Job 19:1–27. How does Job describe the way his friends have treated him? What has this "comfort" actually done to him?
3. Job says even God has turned against him. List the images he uses — what do they suggest about how trapped and attacked he feels?
4. Who has abandoned Job? How complete is his isolation by this point?
5. What does Job ask of his friends? What does he want permanently recorded?

6. In the midst of total loss, what does Job declare he knows for certain? What does he expect to happen even after his body has decayed?
7. What is significant about Job's choice of the word "Redeemer" (v.25) — one who buys back, vindicates, or rescues a person from a desperate situation?

Reflection

Job has no full picture of Christ, yet he reaches for a living Redeemer who will stand on the earth and vindicate him beyond death.

8. How does the gospel answer and complete the hope Job is grasping for here?

Applying the Text

Job's friends misjudged him, but he trusted that his Redeemer would ultimately set the record straight.

9. How does knowing Jesus is *our* Redeemer change the way we can face being misunderstood, suffering unjustly, or even dying?

Looking back across this whole series — Job never got the explanation he wanted, but he got something else instead.

10. What has this series shown you that God actually gives sufferers, and how does Christ secure that for us fully?



S H O R E H O P E
A REDLANDS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH