

Welcome to the Church at Bethel, where we gather because of the **gospel**: Jesus in our place! To those watching online and all our guests here in person, we are honored that you are with us. Bethel family let's welcome them warmly.

Today we continue “**Asking for a Friend**,” one of our favorite teaching moments of the year. In this series, we take your real questions about faith and examine them through the lens of Scripture.

I am thankful for a church who does not ask easy questions. You don't want superficial answers to big/eternal problems – issues that originate deep within your soul and the ones that keep you up at night. Today, we let the Bible speak to the weightiest inquiry.

Why does God allow suffering/evil?

Why Suffering – The oldest question in the Bible. First, you are not crazy. The question that you, church, ask in 2026—the problem of suffering and evil—is one of humanity's oldest questions. If I had only one portion of Scripture to point you to in your moment of need, it would be the wisdom book of Job.

Job is a biblical book that devotes 42 chapters and some 18,000 words to the suffering of one family. **Even more, Job is often considered the oldest book in the entire Bible. Job's wealth is measured in livestock, and he is a non-Israelite living in Uz. All of this places him in the patriarchal world of Abraham.**

Now, this is more than a history lesson. Why does it matter that perhaps the oldest book in the Bible addresses suffering in the world? Because this is one of humanity's oldest questions. And praise be to our God and Father—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—He does not give us anecdotal or trite answers to the deep questions of the soul. Rather, He answers us through real-world experience. **Read Job 1:1–5 and 1:12-22.**

Let's pause and let that sink in. In one day, this man lost all ten of his children and all his wealth. Oh, the depth of his suffering!

Why Suffering– What did I do to deserve this? The first question I ask, and often the first on your lips is this, “**What did Job do to deserve this?**” And if you have ever thoughts these words, or heaven forbid, uttered these words, you are not alone. Ever heard the phrase a man “**reap what he sows** (Galatians 6:7; Proverbs 11:18)?” This comes from a proverbial (Deuteronomistic) mindset, that if you do good you will receive good and if you do evil, you receive evil. It's the same worldview asked of Jesus by his disciples, “**As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind (John 9:1-2)?”**

On a human level we are ok with an evil doer suffering. What if I told you that there was a horrific crash involving a drunk driver and the intoxicated individual was the one seriously hurt. But, now what if it was the innocent driver who was hurt? When we ask why suffering, we are not asking, “Why do evil people suffer.” We are asking, “Why does God allow the innocent to suffer?”

And Job is the canonical answer to our question. Listen to how Job is described, “perfect integrity, fears God, turns away from evil (1:8).” He is even called “my servant (a title only given to Abraham, Moses, and David). Suffering is not always the punishment for a particular sin; often it is the pain of living east of Eden. What did Job do to “deserve his suffering?” Nothing. Maybe suffering in your life is not punishment but a means for the glory of Christ, His eternal weight of glory to be worked and reshaped in your life.

Take-Home: Without Jesus, we suffer because we suffer. In Christ, no suffering is wasted; God can redeem every sorrow for His glory and your eternal good.

Why Suffering – Because I don’t understand. You might ask, “Well, if Job did not deserve to suffer as he did, then I don’t understand at all!” And you would be asking a thoroughly biblical question. Job’s friends sit with him for seven days and seven nights, and no one says a word (2:13). When Job finally speaks from his pain, he says, “May the day I was born perish!” Job would rather have never been born—he wants the day of his birth wiped from the calendar—than suffer with such intensity. Later he asks, “Why was I not stillborn?” (3:11). And later still, he cries, “I will say to God: Let me know why you prosecute me” (10:2). Fierce suffering requires brutally honest questions.

If you think you cannot ask the Lord “Why?” from the depths of your pain, you can. If you think suffering must silence your honesty before the throne of heaven, it must not. And if you think God despises the deepest questions of your heart, He does not. He hears everyone.

Listen to how the Lord—from a whirlwind, no less—answers Job: “Who is this who obscures my counsel with ignorant words?” (38:2). Then, in rapid succession, God asks, “Job, where were you when...?” The creation described in Genesis 1 exposes the limits of Job’s understanding. Job cannot possibly know how God laid the earth’s foundation (Job 38:4), determined its dimensions (v. 5), set its foundations (v. 6), or heard the morning stars and the heavenly beings shout for joy (v. 7). There is no way Job could know these things.

And here, I believe, lies the heart of the matter: we may never fully comprehend the dark mystery of suffering and evil beneath the sun. Job received an answer, but not the

explanation for which he pleaded. The Lord revealed not the reason for Job's suffering, but the majesty of the One who ruled over it. And even if every "why" were answered, would the answer bind the broken heart or restore what sorrow has taken away?

Take-Home: To the sufferer who is walking beneath a cloud you cannot explain, you are neither forgotten nor forsaken. When you cannot trace His hand, you may still trust His heart.

When Suffering Changes Everything—Will My Life Ever Be Full Again? Oh, how Job must have felt this question in his soul. He lost all ten of his children. And here, right now, many of you are suffering. Some have lost husbands or wives, and today you carry the crushing weight of grief. Some bear the scars of losing a child—scars you will carry for the rest of your life on this earth. Others carry shame from your past or sins you committed. Some bear the weight of abuse and trauma committed against them.

Is it too late? Can your life ever be full again?

Read Job 42:10-17. Job died "old and full of days." It is easy to read this passage and conclude, "Of course Job's life was full." The Lord restored his fortunes, doubled his possessions, and gave him more children. But, friend, God's restoration did not erase Job's suffering. His later children did not replace those he buried. Nothing could make his losses unhappen or remove the scars from his body and soul.

Yet the book concludes with this remarkable statement: Job died "old and full of days." The man who had been full of suffering was also made full of days.

And I think of Jesus Christ, the Man of Sorrows who was acquainted with grief. He is the One who promised, "I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance" (John 10:10). The Man of Sorrows came so that sorrow would not have the final word over your life.

Scripture does not promise that suffering will leave your life unchanged. Some wounds will remain until glory. But a wounded life can still become a full life in Jesus Christ. Job suffered as one afflicted; Jesus suffered as our substitute. Job entered death "old and full of days," but Jesus entered death, conquered sin and the grave, and rose again. Because He lives, suffering may change your life, but it cannot destroy your hope.

Take-Home: Even in your darkest moments, Jesus came that you may have life and have it in abundance.

Why Suffering?—Does God Even Care? There is one more holy question we must ask in suffering. **Read Mark 4:35–41.**

This was no fire drill. The disciples were in anguish and believed they were about to die. Worse still, Jesus was with them, yet it seemed as though He did not care. So, they woke Him and blurted out, “**Teacher! Don’t you care that we’re going to die?**”

The bluntness of Mark’s wording reflects the way **frightened and desperate people speak**. Remarkably, these are the first words the disciples speak together in Mark’s Gospel. How is that for an introduction?

It may be the most painfully honest question anyone asks Jesus in the Gospels: “**Don’t You care?**” It is a question we all must bring to Him. Perhaps today, for the first time, your wounded heart needs to cry out, “**Jesus, do You even care that I am suffering?**”

Jesus arose, rebuked the wind, and commanded the sea, “**Silence! Be still!**” Then He asked His disciples why they were afraid—and they became **more afraid** than before. They discovered that the One in their boat was Lord even over the storm.

Peter was in that boat. He would endure many trials and eventually die for his faith. Yet after a lifetime of suffering, Peter wrote these enduring words: “**Cast all your cares on him, because he cares about you**” (1 Peter 5:7). Peter learned that Christ’s care is not measured by the absence of storms, but by His presence with us in them.

God’s answer to suffering is ultimately His presence and His character. Job received no detailed explanation, but he encountered the living God. We may not receive every answer either, but we have received something greater: Jesus Christ. At the cross, the Man of Sorrows entered our suffering, bore our sin, and proved forever that God has not abandoned us.

Now What?

Dear suffering soul, have you hidden your pain long enough? Come honestly before the Lord and cry, “**My God, do You even care?**”

Do you need today, like Job confess, “My ears have heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you.”

Your suffering may never have an earthly explanation but through it God may give you a clearer vision of Himself—and one sight of Christ is worth more than a thousand answers to our “whys.”

Notes

Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” –C.S. Lewis

Do you even care?

The account of Jesus calming the wind and waves appears in all three Synoptic Gospels:

- **Matthew 8:23–27**
- **Mark 4:35–41**
- **Luke 8:22–25**

Big Idea:

³⁸ He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So, they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher! Don’t you care that we’re going to die?”

My God my God why have you forsaken me?

Where Glory Once Dwelt (Jeremiah 39:1-10)

Good Grief – A Night of Mourning and Hope

See Job.

Notes from Job – Why does God allow suffering/Evil?

No where in Scripture does Yahweh confront our questions of suffering and evil more than in the book of Job.

Job, his name means “to repent, or penitent one (if Arabic origin). It can also mean hostility or “the one whom Yah treated as enemy.” Albright suggests “where is my Father?”

Job is most likely the oldest written book in the OT. The date of the action of the Book of Job is set in patriarchal times - evidence:

1. Job sacrificed for children
2. Job's wealth measured by sheep, camels, servants
3. Job's land raided by pillaging tribes
4. Job's life span of 140 years matched by patriarchs
5. Thus, Job appears to be a historical figure from patriarchal times – 2000-1300 BC

Thus, the people of God struggled with suffering from the beginning.

Job was a righteous man

Job 1:1 “He was a man of complete integrity, who feared God and turned away from evil.”

Job the Man Great Morally – 1:1, 8; 2:3 – the paradigm of a good man

1. Blameless (tam) — complete, whole, a man of integrity – do something to point of being exhausted; Job wore himself out being an honest man

2. Upright (yashar) – to be straight, right, or smooth, without moral deviation; note that this does not equate to “sinless.” The Bible does not say that Job was sinless man; however, if one was looking in the OT for a good man, Job would be the best example. As a result, the DT Formula says that Job would be blessed.

3. Feared God (yare’) – to tremble, be afraid; ranged from reverence to trembling. We must fear God in the sense that we tremble in His presence. This is a religious lifestyle: Job sacrificed for himself and his children (the question for us: do we care for our families because we fear God?)

4. Turned away from evil (sar) – to turn aside or depart from; a religious lifestyle – Job got out of evil's path (same word used in Proverbs for the young man turning away from the harlot). This is an exact corollary of fearing God: we abandon sin as a lifestyle and walk circumspectly in the world.

5. The question of religion or relationship: the emphasis in the entire Bible (OT and NT) is that religion should be based on a relationship with God (through Christ in the NT)

Job 1:8 “No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil.”

blameless... upright... who fears God and shuns evil. The near verbatim repetition by God of the narrator's characterization of Job confirms its perfect authority (Alter, 467).

What is also curious is that God is impressed not by Satan's extraordinary abilities but rather by Job's character. Echoing the narrator's fourfold commendation (v. 1), the Lord agrees that Job is "a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil" (v. 8). Moreover, in God's estimation, Job is more than merely "the greatest of all the people of the east" (v. 3); he is unlike any other ("that there is none like him on the earth"; v. 8). Satan, who has traveled "the earth" (v. 7), is asked if he has "considered" Job, on whom Yahweh bestows the rare and cherished designation "my servant" (v. 8). Job joins Abraham (Gen. 26:24), Moses (Num. 12:7), and David (2 Sam. 7:5) in receiving this title (ESV, 313).

Job 2:3 “He still retains his integrity, even though you incited me against him, to destroy him for no good reason.”

Job's suffering was not God's punishment for some secret life of wickedness. God Himself testified to Job's integrity.

Job initially responded with worship

Job 1:20–21

“Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshiped, saying: Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will leave this life. The LORD gives, and the LORD takes away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

Job's acceptance of his dire fate (which gave rise to the notion of the "patient Job") is cast as a solemn two-line poem. This first line exhibits a link of narrative development between the two versets: first birth, then death.

The reference of "there" has a loose associative logic: the grave is not the womb, but it is part of mother earth from which the first man was made. There is something "existential" in this brief poetic statement: whatever a man acquires in life—even in the children he begets—is supernumerary to the fundamental condition of nakedness in which he enters and leaves life (Alter, 467).

Job 1:22 “Throughout all this Job did not sin or blame God for anything.”

Job's godliness has been praised by God (v. 8). He has also been praised by the narrator (v. 1). Now, for the third and final time in chapter 1, our author adds approval, as an *inclusio* (v. 22). He commends Job for his godly response to the horrific events of the day ("in all this"). Job is praised not for what he does but for what he does not do: he "did not sin or charge God with wrong"; or, if this is a focused parallelism, the sense is that Job does not sin in that he does not charge God with wrong. This focus on what Job does not do perhaps heightens Job's unparalleled character, as the predictable human response would be to give into the temptation to curse God and accuse him of evil-doing (cf. v. 11; 2:9). ESV, 317.

Job 2:10 “Should we accept only good from God and not adversity?”

Job did not deny the reality of his pain. He grieved deeply, but his grief led him to worship rather than abandonment of God.

“Then they sat on the ground with him seven days and nights, but no one spoke a word to him because they saw that his suffering was very intense.” (Job 2:13)

In the frame-story, the three companions seem deeply sympathetic with Job and respectful of his suffering. This argues for a discrepancy between the frame-story and the poem, where they are

accusatory and even contemptuous of him. One might imagine that after the seven days of mourning, they concluded that he must have been a scoundrel to deserve all this suffering, but that seems forced (Alter, 471).

Job 3:1 After this, Job began to speak and cursed the day he was born. ² He said: ³ May the day I was born perish, and the night that said, "A boy is conceived."

Curse

The initial verb (intransitive in the Hebrew) means to die or to be lost, and therefore "perish," used by the King James Version and several modern translations, is semantically accurate but in regard to diction is a bit fussy and lacks the directness of the Hebrew. A couple of modern translators have opted for "damn," but *yo' vad* neither is an expletive nor does it imply damnation, which is not a biblical idea. The force of what follows is that Job would like to expunge the day of his birth from the calendar, which is a contextual justification for "annul." This choice sacrifices the initial stress but does yield an iambic cadence (Alter, 471).

“However, if I were you, I would appeal to God and would present my case to him.” (Job 5:8)

Eliphaz is now quick to assert his own piety, in contrast to the general rule of troublemaking humankind that he has just expressed. What follows is a celebratory catalogue of God's power and providential acts, cast, as we might expect, in rather traditional poetry—in fact, reminiscent of Psalms (Alter, 477).

Do you always reap what you sow?

Job's friends assume that he suffered because he sinned. **"Since your children sinned against him, he gave them over to their rebellion."** (Job 8:4)

He dispatched them because of their crime. Eliphaz, the first of the three friends to speak, began with a diplomatic gesture toward Job. Now Bildad brutally tells a just bereaved father that his children all were killed by God because they must have committed some great offense (Alter, 485).

And Job himself uttered words of **"I am righteous, why is this happening to me?" "You have said, "My teaching is sound, and I am pure in your sight.""** (Job 11:4)

Three word-related sins are mentioned. First, Job is long-winded ("a multitude of words," paralleled with "full of talk"; v. 2). Second, he has tried to "silence" good

"men" (i.e., Eliphaz and Bildad) with proud claims ("babble," Hb. bad, v. 3a; elsewhere translated "boast," Isa. 16:6; Jer. 48:30). Third, he has ridiculed them with his empty rhetoric ("when you mock"; Job 11:3b). Zophar is intervening now to tame such a tongue, answer Job's accusations, and make sure he is aware of his sins and shamed for them.

In verses 4-6, Zophar comes across as a prophet as he introduces God (mentioned or "present" in all of the following verses) and God's point of view on the matter. Job needs to be quiet, and God needs to speak (ESV, 369).

Proverbs seem to suggest that if you do good then you receive only good.

"No disaster overcomes the righteous, but the wicked are full of misery." (Proverbs 12:21)

"The wicked person earns an empty wage, but the one who sows righteousness, a true reward." (Proverbs 11:18)

The book of Job gives us the canonical corrective, or a fuller understanding, and theology of suffering.

The OT is not alone in its Deuteronomistic view of suffering/reward theology. For instance:

John 9:1 As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Blind

Blindness from birth was considered especially difficult (Keener)

Ancients believed that, under extraordinary circumstances, blind persons could be healed

Some believed the Egyptian goddess Isis cured blindness and made people blind.

“Passed by” implied that he left the temple (8:59) by one of the roads leading from it, the pool of Siloam was near the temple, and no break appears in the text (Keener).

“blind”

the person or his family would have otherwise had to support themselves by begging for charity. The location near the temple makes sense; temples with their broad colonnades provided natural places for begging.

We are not told yet (9:14) but the healing happens on the Sabbath.

Who Sinned?

Blindness was often associated with sin; in many cultures it is natural to associate another’s affliction with a specific avoidable cause to prevent anxiety on the part of those who speculated about the causes (Job 6:21) (Keener).

The historian Dionysius related that Tiresias’s blindness was a judgment from Hera when he failed to perform sacrifices properly (Keener).

The testament of Job supplies a possible sin (pride) for the reason Job’s sons die. If sin could be attributed either to the parents or to a prenatal sin, this thought would have been accepted in the culture of Christ.

John 9:33 If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.”

John 9:34 ¶ They answered and said to him, “You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they cast him out.

The disciples assume, like most Palestinian Jews of their day that sin and suffering are intimately connected (Carson)

Suffering is connected to the fall and to sinful humanity. But when theologians interweave specific sins to individuals they go beyond the biblical evidence.

At this point the disciples have not advanced past Job’s miserable ‘comforters’ (Carson)

Jesus answered

This does not mean that God deliberately caused the child to be born blind in order that, after many years, his glory should be displayed in the removal of blindness (Bruce)

It does mean that God overruled the disaster.

Job expressed honest grief and confusion

Job 3:11

“Why was I not stillborn; why didn’t I die as I came from the womb?”

Job 10:2

“I will say to God, ‘Do not declare me guilty! Let me know why you prosecute me.’”

Job 23:3–5

“If only I knew how to find him, so that I could go to his throne. I would plead my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn how he would answer me; and understand what he would say to me.”

Job’s faith did not prevent him from asking hard questions. Biblical faith leaves room for lament, confusion, and even anguished protest before God.

Job continued to hope in God

Job 13:15 “Even if he kills me, I will hope in him.”

Job 19:25–27 “But I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the end he will stand on the dust. Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet I will see God in my flesh.”

Job could not understand God’s actions, but he continued to place his hope in God’s ultimate vindication.

This famous line, long the subject of Christological interpretation, in fact continues the imagery of a legal trial to which Job reverts so often. The redeemer is someone, usually a family member, who will come forth and bear witness on his behalf, and the use of "stand up" in the second verset has precisely that courtroom connotation (Alter, 514).

God answered by revealing His wisdom and sovereignty

Many readers over the centuries have felt that God's speech to Job is no real answer to the problem of undeserved suffering, and some have complained that it amounts to a kind of cosmic bullying of puny man by an overpowering deity.

But God's thundering challenge to Job is not bullying. Rather, it rousingly introduces a comprehensive overview of the nature of reality that exposes the limits of Job's human perspective, anchored as it is in the restricted compass of human knowledge and the inevitable egoism of suffering. The vehicle of that overview is an order of poetry created to match the grandeur—or perhaps the omniscience-of God. The visionary experience that this poetry enables for Job is of a vast creation shot through with unfathomable paradoxes (Alter, 463).

Genesis 1 declares Job guilty. Job cannot possibly know how God created the earth (Job 38:4), the details of its dimensions (v. 5), the depths of its foundations (v. 6), or the first reaction of the highest constellations of heaven or the highest creation on earth.

With verses 8-11, the Bible's first chapter is not done taking the stand. God asks Job if he has any idea who was in charge of the seven seas, making sure that the oceans, which first burst forth like a quickly delivered baby (v. 8), do not flood the land. God also asks how the clouds, which could flood the world completely in forty or so days, are restrained. The answer is God alone (ESV, 513).

Job 38:2–4 “Who is this who obscures my counsel with ignorant words? Get ready to answer me like a man; when I question you, you will inform me. Where were you when I established the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.”

The unusual phrase "darkens counsel" is not merely an indication of speaking ignorantly (as the parallel in the second verset spells out) but a rejoinder to the spate of images of darkness blotting out light in the death-wish poem of chapter 3.

In pointed contrast to that poem, the opening section of the Voice from the Whirlwind introduces images of light and then traces a dynamic interplay between light and darkness (Alter, 465).

Job 38:8–11 “Who enclosed the sea behind doors when it burst from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and total darkness its blanket, when I determined its boundaries and put its bars and doors in place, when I declared: ‘You may come this far, but no farther; your proud waves stop here’?”

Job 40:2 “Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who argues with God give an answer.”

After completing the poetic sweep of the great panorama of creation from the beginning of things to the world of living creatures, God turns in direct confrontation to Job, who now (verses 4 and 5) is abashed and renounces his challenge to God (Alter, 571).

Job 40:8 “Would you really challenge my justice? Would you declare me guilty to justify yourself?”

God never tells Job about the events recorded in chapters 1–2. Instead, He shows Job that His knowledge is complete, His authority is absolute, and His governance of creation is wiser and more complex than Job can comprehend.

Job responded with humility and trust

Job 40:4–5 “I am so insignificant. How can I answer you? I place my hand over my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not reply; twice, but now I can add nothing.”

Job 42:2–3 “I know that you can do anything and no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked, ‘Who is this who conceals my counsel with ignorance?’ Surely I spoke about things I did not understand, things too wondrous for me to know.”

Job 42:5–6 “I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I reject my words and am sorry for them; I am dust and ashes.”

Job’s circumstances were not immediately explained, but his understanding of God was transformed. He moved from demanding an explanation to resting in the character of the One who governs all things.

By the ear's rumor I heard of You, / and now my eye has seen you. "The ear's rumor" is literally "the hearing of the ear," and picks up the imperative "hear" of the previous line. The seeing of the eye is a testimony to the persuasive power of the poetry that God has spoken to Job out of the whirlwind. Through that long chain of vividly arresting images, from the swaddling bands of mist drifting over the primordial sea at creation to the fearsomely armored Leviathan, whose eyes are like the eyelids of dawn, Job has been led to see the multifarious character of God's vast creation, its unfathomable fusion of beauty and cruelty, and through this he has come to understand the incommensurability between his human notions of right and wrong and the structure of reality. But he may not see God Himself because God addresses him from a storm cloud (Alter, 577).

God vindicated Job and corrected his friends

Job 42:7 “I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has.”

The three companions had repeatedly proffered lies—about Job and about the divine system of justice—in order to preserve their pat notion of reward and punishment. They were, in effect, corrupted witnesses on God's behalf. Though the Lord from the whirlwind roundly rebuked Job for his presumption, Job in the debate, unlike his three companions, had remained honest to his own observation of reality and his awareness of his own acts; so, even in his presumption, he had

spoken "rightly" about God, had clung to his integrity. Thus, God pointedly continues here to call Job His "servant," as He did in His exchanges with the Adversary (Alter, 579).

Did Job think he didn't deserve any suffering?

Job 32:1 So these three men quit answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.² Then Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite from the family of Ram became angry. He was angry at Job because he had justified himself rather than God.³ He was also angry at Job's three friends because they had failed to refute him and yet had condemned him.

The Lord answers Job in Job 38-41

Job 40:3 Then Job answered the LORD:

⁴ I am so insignificant. How can I answer you?

I place my hand over my mouth.

⁵ I have spoken once, and I will not reply;

twice, but now I can add nothing.

From Job we learn that the three companions had repeatedly proffered lies—about Job and about the divine system of justice—in order to preserve their pat notion of reward and punishment. They were, in effect, corrupted witnesses on God's behalf. Though the Lord from the whirlwind roundly rebuked Job for his presumption, Job in the debate, unlike his three companions, had remained honest to his own observation of reality and his awareness of his own acts; so, even in his presumption, he had spoken "rightly" about God, had clung to his integrity. Thus, God pointedly continues here to call Job His "servant," as He did in His exchanges with the Adversary (ESV, 295).

Can you suffer and still have an abundant/full life?

Job 42:16 Job lived 140 years after this and saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. ¹⁷ Then Job died, old and full of days.

However old he is when he dies, he certainly does so as "an old man, and full of days" (v. 17). Like Abraham and Isaac, Job is depicted as living a full life, "full of years" (Gen. 25:8) and "full of days" (Gen. 35:29). And, like David, he is viewed (despite all his flaws) as a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22).

The three words (one word in Hebrew: wayyamat) that do not fit with the motif of a happy ending are the words "and Job died" (v. 17a). Job does not live happily ever, or forever, after.

In one of the church's ancient hymns, Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306-373) sings of Job's conquering Satan, but not death, and of "Christ conquering Death where Job could not."

Ephrem also writes of Job's suffering being only on his own behalf, and of Christ's being on behalf of all his people. These are two important insights.

As Christians, thanks to Christ's suffering and conquering of the grave, we can be glad that the end of our stories will not end with merely a final "and he/she died." We can hope for heaven. We can hope for the resurrection and the return of Christ.

In James 5:11, the Lord's brother writes, "You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful." The example of Job is set within the context of the admonition, to

"be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7). On these texts—James 5:7, 11 and Job 42:7-17—Christopher Ash writes these beautiful words and offers a moving charge to the church:

The end comes at the end. The normal Christian life is warfare and waiting and being loved and humbled by God and being justified by God, all in the here and now. But it is the expectation of blessing at the end. Often, we do get blessed now. God graciously pours out all manner of blessings here and now. But the blessings we get now are just a tiny foretaste of the blessings to be poured out at the end.

And the blessings God will pour out on the believer at the end will be every bit as real as the blessings of Job. Job knew real prosperity, real joy and celebration, real fruitfulness and real beauty (his dazzling daughters).

The blessings of the new heavens and new earth will be rock-solid real (ESV, 533).

What Job teaches about why God allows suffering

Job gives several important conclusions without offering a complete philosophical explanation:

1. **Suffering is not always punishment for personal sin. Job is the canonical corrective to Proverbs. See also the blind man (who sinned.?)**
Job was righteous, yet he suffered profoundly.
2. **There may be realities behind our suffering that we cannot see.**
The reader sees the heavenly scene; Job never does.
3. **God permits suffering but evil remains bounded by His sovereignty.**
Satan cannot act beyond the limits God establishes (Job 1:10–12; 2:6).
4. **Human beings lack the perspective needed to judge God's entire plan.**
Our inability to identify a sufficient reason does not prove that God has none.
5. **God's answer is ultimately His presence and character.**
Job receives no detailed explanation, but he encounters the living God.
6. **Faith does not prohibit lament.**
Job worships, grieves, questions, and argues—yet continues turning toward God.

VIEWS OF SUFFERING FROM THE BOOK OF JOB

1. Job's three friends – "Suffering is the result of sin" – Dt. Formula; this is sometimes true
2. Elihu – "Suffering is used to teach and chastise men"; again, sometimes true
3. Yahweh – "Suffering should instruct people of their own insufficiency and teach them greater faith"

THEODICY — (presence of evil in this world) one of the most important perennials

questions throughout history

1. Reasoned theodicy: there is human misery in this world, for both good and bad people. We believe that God is all-powerful and all-loving. So how and why do good people (Christians) suffer?
2. The Book of Job does not answer this question. Instead, it traces one man's struggle to find the answer within his struggle and with his own power. It is important to note that Job continues to cling to God in the midst of the struggle.
3. Deuteronomic Formula (Lev 6; Dt 27-30; Gal 6:7) — in this life, what a man reaps, that is what he will sow The DF is scriptural, but it doesn't answer the entire question as Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar argued. They said that God works in one way, all the time. This simplistic view safeguarded their theology despite the evidence to the contrary.
4. Some would answer this problem by applying the DF to man's inward state, not his outward condition. But this also begs the question in many circumstances.
5. Elihu's theology — suffering is discipline that brings us back to God.

- a. 1. This also is true in some instances, but it is not a categorical statement: it does not describe how God ALWAYS acts.
6. Conclusion: The Bible has no simple theology for this question.
 1. People are social beings and the sin of one person DOES have an effect on others (particularly innocent people). For example, Hitler and the effects on the Jews and the entire world because of his hatred and his actions or starving children around the world suffering the social consequences of others' sins.
 2. Part of the reason is our view of eternity: we know that reward and/or punishment will come after death whether they are meted out in this life.
 3. There is no simple theology for the question of theodicy. Our reasoned theodicy is that (1) we recognize the existence of sin and suffering and (2) the answer lies in the ultimate purpose of Yahweh.

Mark 4:35 On that day, when evening had come, he told them, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the sea.” ³⁶ So they left the crowd and took him along since he was in the boat. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ A great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. ³⁸ He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher! Don’t you care that we’re going to die?”

All three synoptic versions of the story mention that Jesus was asleep, a remarkable enough fact in the circumstances to form an essential part of the corporate memory of the event but mentioned perhaps especially in order to contrast with the disciples' panic. Whether the sleep was due to physical exhaustion or to the untroubled serenity of divine omnipotence Mark does not say (ECNT, 223).

Do you even care? οὐ μέλει σοι ὅτι

And the blunt οὐ unal ool; is the language of panic rather than of respectful address. But clearly, they have already been with Jesus long enough to take it for granted that he will have the solution to a problem beyond their control.

The rudeness of Mark's wording reflects the way frustrated and desperate people speak (cf. Luke 10:40) and is probably a verbatim reminiscence of the disciples' response in the crisis. Matt 8:25 softens the reproach to a prayer, and Luke 8:24 to a plea for help (PNTC, 149).

The fear, even resentment, of the disciples that they may be facing death while Jesus sleeps is vividly expressed in the Markan account (ABC, 275).

They say, "Teacher, is it not a concern to you that we are perishing?" ¹¹⁹ These are, apart from 1:37, the first words addressed by the disciples to Jesus in this Gospel, and they had too strong a tone to suit Matthew or Luke, who soften them down in one way or another (BW3, 175).

But they do nothing till they are urged by extreme danger; and then they are overwhelmed with such unreasonable fear that they do not think they will be safe [539] till Christ is awakened. This is the reason why he accuses them of unbelief for their entreaty that he would assist them was rather a proof of their faith, if, in confident reliance on his divine power, they had calmly, and without so much alarm, expected the assistance which they asked (John Calvin).

Mark 4:39 He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Silence! Be still!” The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ Then he said to them, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

Mark 4:41 And they were terrified and asked one another, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!”