I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

Job 42:2
“Why is there suffering in the world?”

I think of this question each time I watch the evening news. And it hits even closer to home—as a husband, father, and now grandfather, I have seen suffering affect my family. We have experienced loss, illness, and death. Life for all of us can be excruciatingly difficult.

How do we as believers reconcile the reality of suffering with our belief in a good and just God?

The book of Job explores this dilemma by chronicling the life and trials of one man. While some have argued that Job was merely a fictional illustration, the Bible points to his existence as an actual person. The prophet Ezekiel mentions Job as an example of righteousness, along with Noah and Daniel (Ezek. 14:14). In the New Testament Job is named as an example of perseverance and God’s blessing (James 5:11).

Taken individually, Job’s troubles are not unlike those encountered by the average person. What is notable is that Job suffers all of them in one horrific day. Here is a man who did not “deserve” suffering.

Scripture tells us Job was “blameless and upright” (1:1).

Although Job feared God and shunned evil, God allows Satan to put Job to the ultimate test. Satan went on the attack, taking away Job’s sons, daughters, servants, animals, and crops. The devastation eventually causes Job to fall on the ground, not in self-pity but in worship (v. 20). Job’s response is famous: “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised” (v. 21).

Rather than curse God in response to his suffering, Job holds on to faith in God. He provides us with an example of how to request answers from God while still trusting in Him as the source of our strength. God responds in a way we don’t expect. He does not answer Job directly, but asks him a series of questions: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?” (38:4) and “Do you know when the mountain goats give birth?” (39:1).

God’s answer underscores our limited understanding of His sovereignty. The book of Job does not offer easy answers to our questions about suffering, but it pushes us to try to understand God more fully.

Job is at peace at the end of this book, not because his family and wealth have been returned, nor because he has received any answers, but because he has “seen” the Almighty God and learned more about who He is and how He cares for us (42:5).
The majority of the book of Job focuses on Job’s dialogue with his friends about God and the nature of suffering. But the first two chapters describe a dialogue between God and Satan, which sets Job’s great trial in motion. This exchange is one of the most detailed portraits of Satan found in Scripture. It depicts Satan as a personal being who joins the angels as they assemble in the presence of the Lord. He is portrayed as one of their number but also as one who is apart from them (Job 1:6). This reflects Satan’s status as a fallen angel (Luke 10:18). He is an intruder in the presence of God and is the accuser of believers (Rev. 12:10; cf. Zech. 3:1).

Satan’s two conversations with God also reveal that he is subject to divine authority. Although he is in rebellion against God, Satan must answer to God. For example, when he is asked, Satan must give an account of his actions (Job 1:7; 2:2). Satan can do nothing to Job without divine permission. When Satan is given permission to interfere in Job’s life, the boundaries of his authority are clearly defined. Satan does not have the power to go beyond the limits that God sets for him (Job 1:12; 2:6). The conflict between God and Satan is not a battle between two equals. God’s power is far greater than Satan’s.

God’s superior authority in this contest is demonstrated by the fact that it was the Lord who drew Satan’s attention to Job. God was not a passive and unwitting responder to Satan’s evil scheme but the one who initiated Job’s test. God was not being manipulated by Satan in this exchange. God is completely in charge. In Job’s story, Satan is merely a bit player. We often think that the aim of trials is to teach us something about God, but the purpose of this particular trial was to teach Satan (and probably the host of heaven) something about Job.

Jesus characterized Satan as a murderer and a liar (John 8:44). Satan is still at work in the world today, promoting his agenda through those who are disobedient to the gospel. He blinds the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot embrace the gospel’s truth (2 Cor. 4:4). He seeks to further his evil agenda by working through those who are disobedient (Eph. 2:2). But the good news is that Satan has already been defeated. Satan’s plans were thwarted by the obedience, death, and resurrection of Christ. Satan’s destiny is destruction (Heb. 2:14). At the end of time he will be thrown into the lake of fire along with the fallen angels who serve him (Rev. 20:10).

For Further Study

To be more aware of Satan’s schemes, read Satan by Lewis Sperry Chafer (Bottom of the Hill Publishing).
A Champion at 90

A few days ago, when I passed by the desk of our executive editor, Paul Currie, I saw two little books one titled To Him, and the other For Him. Both books were poetry. I was interested. Paul told me he received these books as a gift from the author, Shirley Rugen, a reader and supporter of Today in the Word for the last twenty years. My interest grew. A few days later, I had the privilege of talking with Shirley over the phone, and I’m glad to tell our readers about her and highlight a few of her poems as part of our series, The Creative Pursuits of Our Readers.

Shirley Rugen’s life, as well as her family’s, has been connected with Moody for many years and in many ways. She’s been listening to Moody Radio since she was a teenager. After she got married and had children, she started reading Today in the Word and attended Moody’s evening school in the 40s. “Today in the Word gives me the opportunity to go deep into the Scriptures,” she said, “I also like to read all the columns in each issue, and then I go through the whole page of the devotional.” Her family saw Today in the Word issues around the house and listened to the sounds of Moody Radio programs. That’s why it’s a special pride for her that her son works at Moody Radio Chicago and sees his work as a calling and a ministry.

Shirley’s first collection of poems came out in 1961. The second volume appeared in 2013, and the third one is in the making. Shirley is writing new poems often, sometimes three or four a week, giving them to others as a gift of encouragement. I hope they will encourage you as well.

He Is Nigh
(Matt. 10:29–31)
The hairs on your head are numbered—
God knows how many are there;
A sparrow can’t fall without Him
To know, to see, and to care.

So why hesitate to trust Him?
To God, your value is high.
There’s nothing to fear tomorrow—
If today, you know He is nigh!

A Friend
A friend is like a precious jewel—
It’s never valued by a fool;
For there are those who fail to see
The true worth of a rarity.

A friend is like a gleam of light—
It brightens up the darkest night;
For when you’re lost or gone astray,
Its brilliance helps you find the way.

A friend will always faithful be—
Bound to you by loyalty;
And though the others pass you by,
A friend stays with you ’til you die.

Continued on page 38
Job: Faith, Humility, and Worship

The book of Job can hardly be called easy reading. Even though we know God will restore Job at the end, our hearts still sink when we read about the calamities that befell this man. How do you survive the loss of your possessions, of all your beloved children, and your health? Nobody wants to be in Job’s place!

And yet, Job speaks to all of us. We all experience loss. We all grapple with what C. S. Lewis called “the problem of pain”—life in a world of pain and suffering, a world we know was created by a loving and just God. This month in Today in the Word, as we study the book of Job that contains both poetry and prose, we’ll learn about wisdom and lament, grief and joy, friendship and faith. We’ll gain deeper understanding of interactions between God and man, and we will see that weeping does not hinder worshiping.

One of the possible meanings of Job’s name is “he who turns back to God.” Our prayer is that we would be the people who turn back to God through life’s difficulties and devastations, as well as in prosperity and blessings.

We’d like to express our gratitude to the readers of Today in the Word. Your prayers, financial support, and your love of the Word of God make our devotional possible month after month. Thank you for your faithful partnership with this ministry!
Introduction: Job’s Blessed Life

The book of Job, the topic of our month’s study, is a personal and theological drama of suffering and faith. In addition to giving us a snapshot of this period in Job’s life, this story provides a behind-the-scenes glimpse of God’s throne room. Ultimately, this book gives us insight into God’s mind and character.

Job likely lived in or before the days of the Patriarchs in the land of Uz, east of the Jordan. His knowledge of God probably came from oral tradition passed down after the Flood, although the text doesn’t tell us explicitly how he had come to know and fear God. He was a wealthy man, as seen in his flocks and herds. He was middle-aged, having lived long enough to have ten children and achieve high social status (v. 3). More importantly, today’s reading affirms him as a “blameless and upright” man who “feared God and shunned evil” (v. 1). As the spiritual leader of his family, he functioned as a kind of priest, offering sacrifices to atone for the sins of his children (v. 5).

This divinely inspired story of Job is told through a highly artistic structure and format. Some have compared the structure to a three-act drama, and most of the book is poetry (3:1–42:6). As it grapples with issues of justice, evil, sovereignty, blessing, faith, wisdom, and hope, it does so in vivid poetic imagery and using poetic techniques such as parallelism. Key questions include: Does everyone get what they deserve? Why do the innocent suffer? What does this mean about God’s governance of creation? Is He unjust or uncaring? Is He less than sovereign or all-powerful? What are His priorities, and what brings Him delight?

Job, a prosperous and respected man who walked closely with the Lord, had no idea he was about to be involved in such a complex narrative.

Apply the Word

Much later in Israelite history, Job was still known as an example of righteousness (Ezek. 14:14, 20). To be known as a “blameless and upright” person who fears God and shuns evil would be a great life goal for us as well. Pray that the Spirit will reveal truths about God through the study this month and will use that truth to help you pursue righteousness in your own life.

Pray with Us

Today, please uphold in prayer our undergraduate faculty in the Bible department—John Goodrich, Ernest Gray, John Hart, and Gregory Jenks—who give their talent, time, and effort to training our students in the knowledge of the Word of God.
According to the NIV Study Bible, Satan’s accusation in today’s reading targeted “one of humankind’s greatest temptations: to love the gifts rather than the Giver, to try to please God merely for the sake of his benefits, to be ‘religious’ and ‘good’ only because it pays. If he [Satan] is right—if the godliness of the righteous can be shown to be evil—then a chasm of alienation stands between God and human beings that cannot be bridged.”

True faith and worship do not depend on material or other blessings but respond to who God is. This is what is at stake in the testing of Job—and Job didn’t even know it!

Though we as readers are privy to the heavenly council scenes, Job knew nothing of them, and it is not recorded that this information was ever revealed to him. With the main character of Job introduced, the narrative moves swiftly to Satan’s first accusation. Satan, or literally “the Adversary,” was apparently permitted at times to be present in God’s throne room. When God directed His attention to Job, Satan, who had been “roaming throughout the earth” looking to make trouble (v. 7), responded scornfully. He accused Job of worshiping God in order to be blessed. That is, he denounced Job’s worship as self-centered and thus of not being authentic worship at all. With the glory of His name at stake, God granted permission for Satan to test Job. A devastating series of tragedies followed, wiping out Job’s wealth and family.

Job passed the test with flying colors. Satan was dead wrong (v. 22). Despite his losses, Job’s faith didn’t waver (cf. Ps. 26:1). He responded, “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised” (v. 21).

An encouraging truth we can glean from this passage is that God in His sovereign power puts hedges and limits on Satan (v. 12). We may not understand what is happening to us—God didn’t promise that we would. But we can trust His faithful love and absolute power. He has our best interests at heart, and whatever is happening to us remains firmly under His control.

We are grateful for the work of the Bible professors in the undergraduate school on Moody’s Chicago campus: William Marty, Gerald Peterman, Kerwin Rodriguez, and Ronald Sauer. We pray God would minister to them as they mentor their students.
How is it that God allows Satan to exist at all, much less to attack Job? It seems that God, aware of evil, turns its intentions to His glory as part of His perfect plans. Satan wanted to expose Job’s faith as a sham, but God in His sovereign wisdom acted to achieve an opposite result for His greater glory. This is an important theological perspective to keep in mind while reading Job: God has worthy purposes for permitting evil and suffering in this present age.

As we see in today’s passage, Satan didn’t know when to quit. In a second heavenly council scene, when again challenged by God to consider Job’s integrity, the Adversary didn’t admit his failure. Instead, he brought a second accusation—that Job’s faithfulness was due to his own life being saved, and thus still self-centered (vv. 4–5). Once again Satan was trying to discredit Job’s worship of God.

So God expanded the test, setting aside the previous limitations and allowing Job to suffer personally (v. 6). Though not permitted to take Job’s life, Satan assaulted his physical health and social status, stripping them away and leaving him a broken man. At that point, Job’s wife had had enough, and she urged him to “Curse God and die!” (v. 9). From her perspective, he had nothing to lose by doing exactly as Satan hoped he would.

Yet the outcome of the second test was the same as the first. Far from cursing God, as Satan had predicted, Job remained faithful. He rebuked his wife, who is not mentioned again in the book, as a “foolish woman,” meaning that she lacked sense and discernment. By contrast, he responded, “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (v. 10). Job’s worship was not a bargain for blessings, as Satan had alleged, but founded upon trust in God’s sovereign care.

**Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?**

*Job 2:10*

---

**Apply the Word**

Be encouraged! We know what Job didn’t: “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith . . . 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 Peter 5:8–10).

**Pray with Us**

As we conclude our time of prayer for the Bible department faculty, please ask God to encourage by His Word and strengthen by His Spirit these professors: Andrew Schmutzer, Timothy Sigler, Michael Vanlaningham, Michael Wechsler, and Ben Wilson.
Victorian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins mourned in one of his “Terrible Sonnets”: “I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.” Although he cried out to God many times, God remained silent. The poet’s words were like “dead letters” that no one answers. He lamented, “I am gall, I am heartburn.”

Job’s opening lament similarly conveys the pain of God’s unresponsiveness. Why was this previously close relationship now seemingly broken? According to the theology of his friends, the reason for suffering was sin. Disaster had come to Job; therefore, he must be guilty. But Job knew he hadn’t done anything sinful to deserve what had happened to him. He felt confused and distant from the relationship with God that had given his life meaning and purpose.

Job’s lament in chapter 3 poignantly expressed his physical, psychological, and spiritual suffering (3:24–26). He grieved that he had ever been born (3:1–10). The day of his birth should be relegated to gloom and darkness—in fact, Leviathan himself, symbol of cosmic evil, should be roused to destroy it. Life was a curse and he looked forward to its end.

Job further wished he had been miscarried or died at birth (3:11–19). Death, the great equalizer of kings and beggars, would give him rest from the burdens of life. Far from being a gift filled with blessings, life was bondage. Oblivion and death, which he expected soon, would bring freedom and relief.

Job lamented his suffering and questioned God (3:20–26). Why am I still alive? What are You doing to me? It’s important to note here that lament is a legitimate way to cry out to God in Scripture, used by David and Jeremiah, among others. God can handle the most extreme expressions of our emotions, doubts, and sufferings.

Apply the Word

Even in the depths of Job’s despair, he did not choose suicide. He knew that our time of death is not ours to determine but God’s, and so though he longed to die he did not take matters into his own hands. If you feel despair and are tempted by thoughts of ending your life, we urge you to cry out to the Lord and also seek professional help from a Christian counselor.

Pray with Us

Moody’s president, Dr. Paul Nyquist, always appreciates the prayers of the Moody family for Moody Global Ministries and for his service here. Your prayer will be an encouragement in his numerous leadership responsibilities.
Most of the book of Job is a poetic debate. This kind of debate is contested rhetorically, through the power and imagery of the poetry, not primarily through the persuasiveness of logical arguments. The language of poetry includes figures of speech such as metaphor and simile, as well as literary devices such as sarcasm and irony. As we move forward in the debate, we’ll see themes are often repeated—what changes is the nature and tone of the poetry. The book’s poetic language is essential to its meaning and should guide our interpretations.

Job’s three friends had arrived intending to offer him comfort. Though they initially joined him in mourning (2:11–13), they were overwhelmed by the scope of the tragedy and the bitterness of Job’s lament. According to their worldview, no one would suffer this much unless he deserved it (4:7–11).

So the oldest and wisest friend, Eliphaz, stepped forward to persuade Job to repent of his hidden sin and to accept God’s corrective discipline (5:17–18). The debate began when Job refused to take his friends’ advice. He knew he was innocent and had nothing to confess, despite the “evidence” of his tragedy. In his initial speech, Eliphaz eloquently stated the principle of reaping what you sow (4:8; 5:6). From his perspective, his call to repent was a kind thing to do and Job’s only option for being restored to God’s favor.

How are we to read the friends? They give voice to human wisdom and say many things that are true, such as Job 5:13, quoted in 1 Corinthians 3:19. In both Job and 1 Corinthians, however, the wisdom of the world is foolishness to God. Unaided human wisdom will be shown in the book of Job to be incapable of making sense of suffering.
In another of his “Terrible Sonnets,” poet Gerard Manley Hopkins affirmed, “Thou art indeed just, Lord” but also “what I plead is just.” He demanded to know, “Why do sinners’ ways prosper?” What he was experiencing felt so unfair that it seemed God was acting as an enemy rather than as a friend. Though he was fatigued and discouraged, he ended the poem with a prayer, “Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.”

Hopkins’s poem captures the spirit of many of Job’s speeches. According to the limited theology of the three friends—which Job agreed with to some extent—suffering resulted from sin, and since Job was suffering, he must have sinned. But he knew he had done nothing to deserve the appalling tragedies he had experienced.

Therefore, Job’s response was not the humble confession that Eliphaz was expecting. In chapter 6, addressed mostly to the friends, he reiterated the heaviness and intensity of his suffering but rejected the implication that it was deserved (6:24–30). He felt like God was attacking him. The words of Eliphaz were “tasteless food” (6:6–7) and undependable streams in the desert, that is, no help at all. He hoped death would come quickly, and his only comfort was that he had kept faith and “not denied the words of the Holy One” (6:9–10).

In chapter 7, addressed mostly to God, Job continued to speak of his imminent death (7:6–10). It would be a rest from futility and misery and an escape from what God was doing to him. Though he wouldn’t curse God, he would lament and complain. Why won’t God leave me alone (7:16–20)? Why is He treating me like an evil sea monster?

Apply the Word

In the illustrations for June 4 and today, we quoted from two of the “Terrible Sonnets” of Gerard Manley Hopkins, regarded as one of the greatest Christian poets in history. These and other devotional poems by Hopkins are widely available on the Internet and are well worth reading in their entirety. These poems can bless us through a fellow believer’s words of struggle and praise.

Pray with Us

As we continue to pray for Moody’s Residence Life staff, please add Bruce Norquist, Sarah Youssef, and David Chizum to your prayer list. Ask God for good teamwork, trust, as well as open and effective communication with students.

Read: Job 6–7 [shorter: 6:1–10]
Most wind-related idioms in English are negative. A person who talks too long is a “windbag” or “full of hot air.” A boastful person is said to “blow his own horn.” An individual who’s bluffing or hiding something is “blowing smoke.”

In exactly this way, Bildad mocked Job, “Your words are a blustering wind” (v. 2). Less patient and more accusatory than Eliphaz, Bildad escalated the debate, a pattern that we will see continue until chapter 26.

Job’s complaints alarmed and angered Bildad. Since it was unthinkable that God would be unjust (v. 3), someone must have sinned and deserved what had happened. He was willing to believe it was Job’s dead children rather than Job himself, but the solution was the same. Confession would lead to God restoring Job to a state of blessing (vv. 4–6). Bildad appeared to be assuming what Satan had assumed—that Job would do anything, even condemn his own children, to save his own skin.

While Eliphaz had claimed authority based on a strange vision (4:12–21), Bildad claimed authority based on tradition (vv. 8–10). Tradition said that for every effect there is a sufficient cause. Blessing results from goodness, and disaster from sin. Since Job’s circumstances testified against him, the implication is that Job was being arrogant to resist the obvious conclusion.

A plant might appear to be thriving, but then it withers or gets uprooted. In the same way, an evil person might appear to be prospering, but justice will be done and wickedness exposed. Sin is as foolish as leaning on a spider’s web.

Bildad ends as Eliphaz had, by calling on Job to repent and promising that if he did so his blessings would be restored.

Apply the Word

This month could be the start of a deeper study of Job. Several resources are available: (1) The section on Job in the Moody Bible Commentary; (2) Job, by Roy Zuck, in the Everyman’s Bible Commentary series; and (3) Job: The Wisdom of the Cross, by Christopher Ash, in the Preaching the Word commentary series. You can order these through your local Christian bookstore or online.

Pray with Us

Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, welcomes your prayers for our media ministries: Moody Radio and Moody Publishers. Thank God for trustworthiness and theological depth that have distinguished these ministries over the years.
A key truth to remember in suffering, wrote Phil Ryken in *Loving the Way Jesus Loves*, is that “Jesus is never early and never late but always right on time. He is not indifferent to the suffering of a fallen world, any more than he was indifferent to Lazarus and his sisters [John 11]. In his love, he has a plan to bring all our sufferings to an end. His great day will come at exactly the right moment. … Then we will know that he was in control all along, working everything for good.”

Traditional wisdom said that suffering was deserved punishment for sin, so understandably Job struggled to keep trusting God as he kept suffering. But while he grows increasingly emotional as this debate continues, he maintains strong faith and perseverance. We should never confuse stoicism or a stiff upper lip with faithfulness.

Job agreed with his friends about God’s greatness, power, wisdom, and justice. But he denied Bildad’s claim that the righteous are always rewarded and the wicked always punished. In fact, we do see evil people prospering and innocent people suffering. From this perspective, God appears to be awesome but also arbitrary, sovereign but also threatening (9:4–13, 23–24). If Job were to take his claim to court, there is no way he could win against the Almighty. The situation felt hopeless. If only a mediator could be found between him and God!

So in chapter 10, a despairing Job again addressed God directly. Why was God doing this? In the past, He had shown care and kindness, but now He seemed to be stalking and torturing him. Job wondered, Is He using my sins as an excuse? Did He make me only to unmake me?

The “problem of evil” has troubled many people. If God is good, why doesn’t He end injustice and suffering? Asaph meditated on this question in Psalm 73. It seems the wicked often seem to lead carefree lives while God does nothing. While worshiping, though, he realized that ultimately justice will be done (vv. 16–17), and the best place for any of us is to stay close to God (v. 28).

Apply the Word

Please focus your prayers on Moody Publishers’ Marketing department that strives to serve our readers with high quality Christian books. Janis Backing, Parker Hathaway, John Hinkley, and John Matsuoka appreciate your prayer support.

Today in the Word • 13
In the novel *Barnaby Rudge* by Charles Dickens, the main character’s father, Barnaby Rudge Sr., was guilty of murder. In one memorable scene, he heard a large bell tolling, ringing continuously in his ears. He fled but could not escape the condemning sound. At length, he realized: “[A] hundred walls and roofs of brass would not shut out that bell, for in it spoke the wrathful voice of God, and from that voice, the whole wide universe could not afford a refuge!”

That was Job, according to his friends. He was guilty—the suffering proved it—and so he should repent rather than making absurd claims to innocence. But in using the principle of sowing and reaping, also called retributive justice, to explain everything, they had essentially reduced God to a moral formula or mechanism.

Zophar, the third friend, now stepped forward to argue their case. He angrily characterized Job as a prideful person claiming to be perfect (vv. 2–4). This was simply untrue. Job had never claimed to be perfect—in fact, he had admitted to sinfulness in the previous chapter. After all, who can be righteous compared to God? Job’s claim to innocence was instead based on his overall integrity, which we already know was a true claim because God said so (1:8; 2:3). Ironically, Zophar wished God would speak to Job directly. This happens at the end of the book, but not in the way Zophar imagined!

Zophar appealed to mystery, that is, to God’s ways being higher than ours. This is true (Isa. 55:8–9), but Zophar manipulates that truth to then exhort Job to stop foolishly rejecting the friends’ advice, repent of his hidden sin, and be restored (vv. 10–20). In other words, Zophar claimed to understand God’s ways well enough to condemn Job—talk about pride!

**Apply the Word**

Job’s three friends believed in a kind of prosperity gospel in which a relationship with God is viewed as a formula to receive blessings and benefits. This is a self-serving worship of God for what He can do for us rather than for who He is. It was the very focus of Job’s test. Since the friends reduced God to a formula, no wonder they had no love or compassion for Job.

**Pray with Us**

Bruce Everhart, VP of Donor Development and Channel Strategy, requests your prayers for God’s guidance, help, and wisdom as he and his team of Scott Veigel, Teri Vaughn, and Stephen Asare reach out to Moody’s friends and increase our donor base.
“I want to blaspheme and I can’t quite manage it,” said a suffering character in Elie Wiesel’s novel The Town Beyond the Wall. “I go up against Him, I shake my fist, I froth with rage, but it’s still a way of telling Him that He’s there. … The shout becomes a prayer in spite of me.”

Job could have said the same. Though he was confused, grieving, and protesting against God because of what was happening to him, his speeches trend toward affirmations of faith. That was certainly the case in today’s reading!

First, though, Job responded sarcastically to Zophar: “Doubtless you are the only people who matter, and wisdom will die with you” (12:2). The friends “smear [him] with lies” yet cannot charge him with a single specific sin (13:4, 19). Even worse, they dishonored God by basically telling lies to “defend” Him (13:7–8).

Job’s point has been that evil, injustice, and suffering exist under God’s governance (12:5–10, 13–25). Being human is thus quite miserable; it appears that even trees have happier lives (14:7–12). Therefore Job again expressed his desire to argue his case with and before God (13:3, 20–23). He knew this was a dangerous request, but he firmly believed God would vindicate him eventually: “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” (13:15).

Job was both protesting and faithful. He simultaneously felt hopeful (trust in God) and hopeless (despair over circumstances). He asked God to leave him alone (13:21) and mourned that God was hiding His face from him (13:24). As he saw and experienced injustice, he continued to believe in God’s justice, even speculating on the possibility of resurrection, justice, and forgiveness beyond the grave (14:13–17).

Apply the Word

Job’s friends were “worthless physicians” (13:4). His situation frightened them, because it didn’t fit into their traditional wisdom and theology. So instead of comforting Job, they blamed the victim, gave easy answers, and made excuses for God. Don’t betray friends in need by following such a terrible example. Encourage them with the comfort of the gospel we have in Christ (2 Cor. 1:3–5).

Pray with Us

Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him. 
Job 13:15

Would you include in your prayers Donor Resource Management on Moody’s Chicago campus? We value the service of Sharon Cluff, Norma De Jesus, Patricia Fletcher, and Kyella Gilliam as they process the gifts of our donors and send receipts.
At the start of a Calvin and Hobbes comic, Calvin refuses to get off a playground swing when threatened by Moe the bully. Moe then punches him off. A battered Calvin grumbles, “It’s hard to be religious when certain people are never incinerated by bolts of lightning.”

Like Calvin, many of us want to believe in retributive justice, just as Job’s three friends did. Goodness is rewarded and sin punished, simple as that. Baffled and threatened by Job’s arguments, the friends had to continue the debate. They needed what had happened to him to make sense within their narrow worldview, which didn’t allow for innocent suffering.

As the friends’ frustration grew, they became even more insulting and accusatory, as Eliphaz’s second speech demonstrates. He called Job a fool who led others astray. He accused him of pride for not submitting to traditional human wisdom, boldly described as “God’s consolations” (vv. 7–11). He was deeply shocked by Job’s bitter feelings. “Do you listen in on God’s council?” (v. 8) is a particularly ironic line, for if any of the three friends had done so (as we did in chapters 1–2), they would have had a very different understanding of the situation.

Job shouldn’t claim innocence, argued Eliphaz, because all people are sinful before God. This is true (see Rom. 3:23), but it misdiagnoses the situation for Job, who had asserted general blamelessness but not perfect sinlessness. It also puts the friends in an impossible position: If sin is always punished and everyone sins, then no one should be blessed, for no one deserves any reward from God. Everyone (including them!) should be suffering like Job.

Nonetheless, Eliphaz went on to vividly describe the fate of the wicked. His description is rather pointed—Job was cruelly meant to see himself in this picture (especially vv. 24–26, 29–30).

Apply the Word

In offering God’s comfort to those who suffer, how can we do better than Job’s friends? Where they were sarcastic, we should listen. Where they were self-righteous, we should be humble. Where they pushed God into their moralistic box, we should go to the Word for a larger view that includes redemption and grace. To offer comfort is to point others toward the Lord’s unfailing love (Ps. 119:76–77).

Pray with Us

Again, please keep in prayer Donor Resource Management: David Kocourek, Dona Lorance, Amelia Mendez, and Hector Quiles. Pray that God’s love and grace would strengthen them in their important work behind the scenes.
Pastor and author Charles Swindoll tells the story of friends whose young son died in a drowning accident. Trying to make sense of it, the father drove for hours all over Los Angeles. During those hours, he said: “I screamed out to God expressing all the grief and the anger and the sadness and the confusion from deep within my soul. I said things to Him in that car that I’d never said before to anybody. I screamed it out, and it wasn’t very nice. I just vomited everything out to God.”

This perspective helps us understand the emotions fueling Job’s speeches. He was increasingly frustrated with his “miserable comforters” because they delivered canned speeches and ignored his arguments and feelings (16:1–5). His life felt like a horrible joke, all he had to look forward to was death, and still they kept making their insulting, pat-answer speeches.

Job also continued to grieve the loss of his close relationship with God (16:6–14). It felt as though God was using him for target practice. He believed completely in God’s sovereignty and knew that ultimately God was the Author of what was happening to him. This was no comfort, though, for he saw nothing good in any of it. He was suffering, surrounded by “mockers” (17:2), and had become an object of scorn.

Finally, Job continued to insist on his integrity: “My prayer is pure” (16:17). Like Abel (see Gen. 4:10), his fate was undeserved. Nonetheless, he spoke again of his hope that a mediator or even an advocate could be found in heaven to support his case.

It looked and felt hopeless, but surely God and His justice would prevail in the end.

**Apply the Word**

Even in his sorrow and complaint, Job clung to God’s character (16:14). The metaphor of God as a Divine Warrior is meant to be comforting. When He fights on our behalf, the victory is already won (Ex. 15:2–4)! “The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing” (Zeph. 3:17).

**Pray with Us**

Moody has provided a tuition-paid training for ministry to thousands of young people who love God. Dr. Larry Davidhizar, VP and dean of the Undergraduate School, invites you to thank God for giving us this unique opportunity and asks for His continued guidance.
Why did Job’s friends attack him so fiercely? In *Character in Crisis*, William P. Brown answered: “Job is nothing less than a monstrosity in the eyes of his friends. His situation and his character do not fit within any schema of moral and theological coherence with which they are familiar. In their eyes, Job’s consistent protestations of innocence cannot be tolerated in light of his suffering condition. … To the friends Job represents nothing less than moral and cosmic disorder.”

In other words, the three friends said what they did against Job because their very worldview was at stake. If the righteous were not rewarded and the wicked punished, then what sense did anything make? What could justice mean? Who was God? With so much hanging in the balance, no wonder Bildad lashed out at Job in his second speech. He, Eliphaz, and Zophar were respected wise men, and Job’s refusal to heed them was downright offensive (vv. 1–4).

The rest of the chapter is another poem on the destiny of the wicked. And again, their destiny sounds suspiciously like what Job has been enduring. Punishments for sin include sudden tragedies (v. 11), painful skin disease (v. 13), loss of home and family (vv. 14–19), and loss of social status and respect (v. 20). To have earned such suffering, Job must have been especially wicked. Had he thought God wouldn’t notice? By the principle of retributive justice, Job had set a trap for himself, and now that it had been sprung, he had no one to blame but himself.

As you may have noticed, by this time the friends had stopped calling on Job to repent. They no longer offered enticing visions of blessing if he did. All they had left was the negative side of their limited theology.

---

**Apply the Word**

How important is your theology to you? At its best, theology is a humble, lifelong pursuit of the knowledge of God, but at its worst, theology can become a stick to beat people with. Are your theological convictions more important than people, than obedience, than God Himself? Are they worth the angry disputes that sometimes disgrace God’s people (Prov. 17:14; 1 Tim. 2:8)?

**Pray with Us**

Our students apply their classroom knowledge at dozens of ministries across Chicago. Please pray for Practical Christian Ministry’s Donald Martindell, Unity Ostercamp, Roberto Rivera, Katie Christopher, and Nathan Strand who oversee students’ service.
Following the powerful “Hallelujah Chorus,” Part III of Handel’s Messiah opens with perhaps the best known verses in the entire book of Job: “I know that my redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand on the latter day upon the earth. And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

Job had been working toward this climactic affirmation. His speeches were like waves rolling up the beach, getting a little farther each time. Job didn’t use the terms resurrection, grace, or redemptive suffering. Nevertheless, his faith in God’s love and character was so strong that he had been driven to suggest possibilities that didn’t fit into the worldview of his day, such as a legal case against God, a heavenly advocate, and justice after death. How amazing that in the aftermath of Bildad’s vicious second speech, Job could speak of a “redeemer” who would vindicate him, and of complete reconciliation with God.

He salted his response with harsh rebukes of his supposed friends (vv. 1–3, 14, 19, 21–22, 28–29). Though they had come to comfort him in his suffering, they had done nothing but attack and torment him relentlessly. Even if he were guilty of all they had accused him of, that wouldn’t excuse their pride, self-righteousness, lack of empathy, and nasty words.

For Job, the bottom line was that he was innocent and so God had treated him unjustly, according to the prevailing concept of justice (vv. 5–6). This separation from God—the sense that he no longer understood God’s character—was what tortured Job most (vv. 7–12). Had he been wrong about what God was like? Why was He now seemingly treating Job as an enemy? In the end, Job rejected such thoughts: “I know that my redeemer lives … How my heart yearns within me!” (vv. 25–27).

**Apply the Word**

Job’s talk of a “redeemer” was prophetic and transcended the limited theology of the friends. The book Job: The Wisdom of the Cross, by Christopher Ash, explores the theme of Job as a foreshadowing of our Savior. Christ, the only perfect person who’s ever lived, suffered more than anyone who’s ever lived, as part of the greatest act of love the universe has ever seen!

**Pray with Us**

Moody Radio West Michigan has been broadcasting the truth of God’s Word from their studios in Zeeland, MI, since 1989. Lift up in prayer today’s staff, Scott Curtis, Jack Haveman, and Perry LaHaie, who continue the station’s mission with power and purpose.
I have often wondered about the use of the word jealousy in the Bible. Sometimes it seems to be a good thing, and at other times it seems to be evil and dangerous. God is described as a jealous God, and He certainly can’t be evil. When is jealousy right, and when is it wrong? And is jealousy the same thing as envy?

I appreciate your question about the layers of meaning in a word, a thoughtful approach to Scripture. Envy and jealousy are different, though at times they are used interchangeably. One writer makes the following distinction: “We’re jealous of things that are ours or we feel should rightfully be ours, and envious of things or lifestyles that belong to others.”

Envy is always bad, while jealousy can be bad or good depending on the motivation. Certainly God’s jealousy is always good. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel belongs to Him as His treasure, so when Israel worshiped other gods or was seduced into unfaithfulness and disobedience, God is said to be jealous. Exodus 34:14 is vivid: “Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” God sees Israel as His wife, a concept illustrated unforgettably in the book of Hosea where He speaks of betrothing her to Himself “forever” (2:19). Just as principled husbands and wives value their marriage covenant and so are jealous for their relationship, so too God wants to be first in our hearts in word and practice. That is righteous jealousy. The New Testament refers to God’s jealousy for His people too. After talking about idolatry in the church of Corinth, Paul asks, “Are we trying to arouse God’s jealousy?” (1 Cor. 10:22).

James 4:1–10 addresses the wrong kind of jealousy, also called covetousness. This causes “quarrels and fights” because we “want something [we] don’t get”; we ask “with wrong motives” so that we “may spend what [we] get on [our] pleasures.” Such behavior makes us, says verse 4, “adulterous” to God, who is to be our first love. This envy is based on the “wisdom from below” and affects our relationships with others and our view of God. It infects us with dissatisfaction.

It is difficult not to be envious in a world that stresses physical, emotional, and material perfection but gives little credit to character. James 4:7–10 provides the daily discipline we are to practice to deal with an envious spirit: “Resist the devil … Come near to God … Grieve, mourn and wail … Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”

Deuteronomy 9:18 says that Moses neither ate bread nor drank water for forty days and forty nights. I can believe that a person might go without food for that length of time, but how could anyone go without water? Is this a miracle?

Continued on next page
The short answer is yes. This passage parallels Exodus 34:28, which reads beautifully, “Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water.” He was there with God—a striking reality. The occasion was the giving of the Ten Commandments. This is high drama. Moses is having close communion with God of a kind we can only begin to imagine. His mind is taken up completely with what he is hearing and seeing. He was sustained for that extraordinary time by the miraculous power of God.

I often hear preachers and teachers of the Word talk about the importance of reading the Bible. I believe this and have experienced its life-giving reality in my life. I often feel a kind of dullness creeping over me, however, when I go to open it. Or, I just read mechanically without feeling anything and without remembering what I’ve read. Sometimes I even feel like I’ve heard it all before. I’m not living in any active disobedience to the Lord, so this is discouraging. What can I do?

I think many Christians understand this feeling. Many of us today have extensive exposure to Bible teaching. We have an explosion of television and Christian radio programs, conferences, live streaming on the Internet, and podcast availability—not to mention actually attending church and Bible study in person. As a result, we are almost over-taught, and our hunger becomes dulled through familiarity and swallowing truth whole without digesting it carefully. And not all the teaching is handled with imagination and dimension; sometimes it can be unadorned truth unintentionally thrown at us, numbing our spirits.

As Alan Jones once wrote, “For many the Christian story no longer bears the mystery. … The Christian way of looking at, interpreting, understanding the world has lost its power, its fragrance. It has become sterile, lost behind a mountain of custom, habit. … There are precious few living characters in its half-forgotten and emaciated plot.”

We cannot confuse listening to Bible teaching with lively, personal interaction with the living Word of God. Yes, there will be dry times when we must continue the habit of reading anyway. However, we must also bring attention to the text, as I said, lively attention. It can be surprisingly moving, maddening, and stunning to look at Scripture anew, as a story, a drama, and God’s sovereign work in the lives of flawed individuals. Reading a different version, looking up things you don’t know in a good Bible handbook, using maps, thinking about conversations, engaging with the characters’ vices and virtues, and seeing God’s discipline and mercy are a few ways that you can recover the vitality of Scripture in your life and whet your hunger for it.
What does life look like to an honest atheist? English poet Philip Larkin gave us a glimpse: The inevitability of death “Flashes afresh to hold and horrify / . . . the total emptiness for ever, / The sure extinction that we travel to / And shall be lost in always.” To Larkin, the idea of eternal life was a pretense, a religious trick. Death was the ultimate reality.

Though Job never lost faith, he confronted the bleakness of a world that no longer made sense or offered hope. The idea of retributive justice proclaimed by his friends wasn’t true, or at least it wasn’t the whole picture. The God in whom he trusted seemed absent at best, capricious at worst. The moral order of creation had been turned upside-down, or so it felt.

Zophar had nothing new to offer in his second and final speech. He, too, was stung by Job’s censure. He, too, defended retributive justice by eloquently portraying the fate of the wicked (20:4–29). The poetry is vivid and repulsive: “He will perish forever, like his own dung” (20:7). Commentator Norman C. Habel observed, “Zophar seems to have deliberately borrowed language and terminology from Job’s description of his own plight to create a satirical collage.” His portrait, then, is one “which mirrors Job’s plight and thereby indicts him.” Implicitly, Job was said to be guilty of pride (20:6), dishonesty (20:12), and oppressing the poor (20:19).

Job’s response concluded the second round of the debate. Once again, he ridiculed the friends. Once again, he vehemently denied their position as “nonsense” and “falsehood” (21:34). The fact is that the wicked often prosper, despite refusing to worship God (21:7–21, 27–33). This thought terrified Job, as it suggested that the moral order of creation was actually arbitrary. Why would God govern the world in such a way?

Apply the Word

When nothing makes sense, we can take our questions to God, as Job did. God is big enough to handle them! He doesn’t promise us answers, least of all answers we can understand. But it’s faith-building to know that He’s bigger than our doubts and problems, and comforting to know that He welcomes us to come to Him with all our questions and grief.

Pray with Us

As the end of the fiscal year is approaching, our financial team headed by chief financial officer, Ken Heulitt, thanks every friend of Moody for your support this year. Let’s ask God, the great Provider, to keep His hand of provision and protection on Moody’s ministries.
Last year, Florida pastor Zach Zehnder broke the world’s record for the longest sermon. It clocked in at 53 hours and 18 minutes, raising money for charity and breaking the previous record by nearly five hours. Zehnder combined about 45 sermons and preached on God’s commitment to His people, from Genesis to Revelation. Despite such a wonderful topic, few of us would like to sit through such an interminable sermon!

As we begin round three of the debate between Job and his friends, you might be feeling the same way. Haven’t we heard this before? Will it never end? In his third and final speech, Eliphaz escalated to the only place left to go—directly accusing Job of sin and firing off a volley of unsupported accusations (22:5–11). Job was generally wicked and had oppressed the poor. He was greedy, harsh, unjust, and exploitative. As far as Eliphaz was concerned, the tragedies that had happened to Job were irrefutable evidence of this. Retributive justice was simply the way it was—the righteous get blessed, the wicked get punished (22:12–20)—and had been obvious since the Flood. Job should stop acting like an idiot and repent (22:21–30).

Sowing what you reap is true (see Gal. 6:7–10)—but it is far from the whole truth. The friends erred by thinking one truth could be isolated to explain the entirety of how God works. They therefore badly misunderstood God’s moral governance.

Job rejected Eliphaz’s charges, asserting that he would “come forth as gold” by God’s standards (23:10). If only he could gain a hearing, God would agree he was innocent and suffering undeservedly. God might seem absent and inexplicably passive about doing justice, yet Job was confident He would vindicate him in time. Though confused and frightened by his suffering, he continued to call upon the Lord.

In Psalm 26, David, too, called upon the Lord to vindicate him. Though he had been the target of some unjust accusations, the psalmist said he was blameless and trusting God to defend him: “I have always been mindful of your unfailing love and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness” (v. 3). Meditate on and pray over this memorable psalm of worship today.
Three Friends Debate Job, Round 3: Bildad and Job

American poet and playwright Archibald MacLeish penned a drama titled *J.B.*, a modern retelling of the story of Job, that won a Pulitzer Prize in 1959. But MacLeish wrote the play as satire and reached different conclusions about the problem of suffering. At the end of the play, *J.B.* rejects advice from both the God and Satan characters and instead seeks meaning in human love with his wife, Sarah.

In the biblical narrative, Job held fast to faith in God. As we’ve seen, his faith was not a smiley-button faith but a confused, desperate, and sometimes bitter faith. The bitterness was increased by his so-called friends, who defended a narrow, mechanistic idea of retributive justice at Job’s expense.

Bildad did nothing to improve matters. In his brief speech, he argued for the greatness of God, which Job had never denied—quite the opposite—and restated the conclusion that no one could stand righteous before Him. It doesn’t follow, though, that human beings are maggots or worms (25:6; cf. Gen. 1:27, 31)—this image doubtless reflects Bildad’s rage toward Job.

Job’s response also focused on God’s greatness, but in a different way (26:5–14). God is so far above us that no one can grasp His sovereignty. Even so, and despite his personal experience, Job showed his hope in God’s goodness by affirming, “By his wisdom he [God] cut Rahab to pieces... his hand pierced the gliding serpent” (26:12–13). “Rahab” and the “serpent” are symbols of cosmic evil (and Satan), so this was quite a statement of faith.

And so the debate ended, collapsing under its own weight. Bildad’s last speech sputtered out, and Zophar didn’t take his final turn, suggesting that there was nothing left to say. Human wisdom holds no answers to Job’s questions.

Who then can understand the thunder of his power?
Job 26:14

Apply the Word

In the larger reality of Christ’s redemptive sacrifice, we can be thankful that God can redeem our suffering to produce blessing in our lives. Some hardships are God’s loving discipline (Heb. 12:4–11). Testing and trials yield spiritual maturity (James 1:2–4). Suffering for the name of Christ, endured with the strength of the Holy Spirit, produces perseverance, character, and hope (Rom. 5:3–5).

Pray with Us

Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, requests your prayer support for the ministry of training tomorrow’s Christian leaders at Moody and asks God for wisdom in charting the course of Moody education.

Read: Job 25–26
[shorter: Job 26:7–14]
Julian of Norwich did not need to understand God’s doings immediately. She knew such knowledge would be given eventually: “When the end comes and we are taken for judgment above, we will then clearly understand in God the mysteries that puzzle us now. Not one of us will think to say, ‘Lord, if it had been some other way, all would be well.’”

Job certainly did not understand God’s doings in his life. Even so, he clung to what he did know about God’s character. Speaking to his friends in today’s reading, Job summarized his position: “I will not deny my integrity.” He knew he didn’t deserve what he was suffering, no matter what his friends said. To follow their advice and confess guilt would in fact be a lie (v. 4), so to maintain his virtue he would use the very “breath of God” in him (v. 3) to deny their judgment (v. 5) and demand justice from God (v. 2). Even if the result was that he would die rather than speak a lie before God, his conscience would remain clean (v. 6).

Sarcastically, Job demonstrated that he, too, could compose a poem on the “fate of the wicked” (vv. 8–23)—especially when the wicked were his friends-turned-enemies (v. 7). When God vindicates him, as Job firmly believed He would, complete justice meant that He would also condemn the friends for their slander and cruelty. Though he felt relationally separated from God, Job thus continued to express faith in God’s ultimate justice.

Job ended the debate where he had begun, with one “consolation—my joy in unrelenting pain—that I had not denied the words of the Holy One” (6:10). Despite his fluctuating emotions, sense of despair, and doubts about divine governance, he had held on to faith in God, believing Him to be just and good.

Apply the Word

Though they didn’t deserve it, the friends in the end would receive God’s forgiveness, as prayed for by Job (42:7–9). This is the definition of grace—receiving a blessing from God that we don’t deserve. Grace is at the very heart of salvation in Christ (Eph. 2:8–9). If you’ve never received God’s gift of salvation through faith in Christ, we urge you to accept His grace today!

Pray with Us

Library on our Chicago campus is a valuable information resource for the Moody community. As we pray today for its staff—James Preston, Nicole Tochalauski, April Nelson, and Christopher Ullman—we thank them for their dedicated service.
Biblical commentator Christopher Ash explained about wisdom: “Wisdom is the fundamental underlying order according to which the universe is constructed.” This order governs all dimensions of existence, including material, moral, and spiritual. Therefore, believers live “in the conviction that it is not a chaotic universe but one built upon a fundamental underlying and majestic order. It is this conviction that is being so sorely challenged in the life and experience of Job.”

Job 28, though read by some as another speech by Job, can also be interpreted as a meditative interlude by the book’s author. In this chapter, we learn that wisdom is hidden (vv. 1–11). Human beings have an amazing ability to search out hidden and valuable things, such as precious metals or jewels, from deep mines in the earth. If this had been written today, this passage might be a vivid description of mapping the stars or the human genome. Despite all our knowledge and abilities, however, people often fail at finding wisdom.

We also learn that the worth of wisdom is incalculable (vv. 12–19; Prov. 3:13–18). It cannot be bought with earthly treasures—the resources mined in the previous section. Indeed, we cannot even begin to grasp or comprehend its worth.

Finally, only God knows the way of wisdom (vv. 20–28). Creation cannot contain its own wisdom or ordering principle, which was imparted by the Creator (see Prov. 8:22–31). Therefore, human beings can obtain wisdom only through fear of the Lord (see Isa. 33:5–6).

In the end, this is the central wisdom offered in the book of Job: We can trust God, even in the midst of incomprehensible circumstances, pain, and suffering. The Creator does not make mistakes, but in all things works for the good of His people (Rom. 8:28).

Apply the Word

In the context of Job’s story, today’s chapter amounts to a call to hold fast to faith in God. Though He seems absent, or though the created order appears to have turned random or evil, it is not so. The Creator remains in sovereign and loving control (Rom. 8:31–39). If you’re suffering physically, psychologically, or spiritually, we encourage you to hold fast. God is on your side!

Pray with Us

Collin Lambert, vice president of Moody Radio, and Doug Hastings, general manager, are grateful for your prayer support. They lead Moody Radio’s teams in creating programming filled with biblical insight and practical applications.
Job’s Final Statement: The Pain of Lost Closeness With God

Jon Bloom, president of Desiring God, wrote of Job 30:20–21: “I love the fact that almost all of the Bible’s heroes are unvarnished, clay-footed sinners. … I love that sometimes they even wonder if God is just plain being cruel. Because that’s what we shortsighted, weak, doubting, clay-footed, sinning stumbling wonder at times when we’re suffering. It means there’s hope for us when we feel overwhelmed and disappointed and confused and disillusioned. The frankness of the Bible is a great mercy to us.”

Job 29 through 31 are Job’s final statement to God, just as chapter 27 was his final statement to his three friends. This is the final version of his “legal case” against God, that is, his plea for justice and answers in the face of undeserved suffering. Among all his troubles, the loss Job grieved most was the loss of closeness with God. The secondary blessings were secondary, and not once in this book did he ask for them back. As much pain as his losses brought, a deeper anguish lay in feeling abandoned by God.

Job framed his lament with nostalgia. Once upon a time, “God’s intimate friendship [had] blessed my house” (29:1–6). Once upon a time, Job had been a wise and respected leader who worked for social justice and lived with compassion (29:7–17, 21–25). His prosperity and well being were gifts from God and the expected outcome of a righteous life (29:18–20). Job wasn’t boasting here, only remembering the way his life used to be.

Then Job lost everything—health, wealth, children, and social status. It seemed God’s wrath had been poured out upon him. But why? God had fallen silent. So Job flung his questions into the void where he trusted that God would hear him and answer (30:20–23): Why are you attacking me? Why are you killing me?

Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God’s intimate friendship blessed my house.

Job 29:4

Why not follow the advice given in today’s illustration? Job can provide us with a model for honestly expressing our feelings to God. His words can be used by us to express our own pain and confusion in the midst of tragedy, loss, and suffering. Faith does not require stoicism. As Jesus promised, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matt. 5:4).

Apply the Word

Pray with Us

Please support in prayer vice president of Information Technology Services, Frank Leber, and his leadership team as they guide ITS in providing technical support to Moody Global Ministries.
C. S. Lewis wrote the book *A Grief Observed* following the death of his wife. As he wrestled with faith and suffering, he observed: “Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not, ‘So there’s no God after all,’ but, ‘So this is what God is really like. Deceive yourself no longer.’”

Similarly, Job went from questioning the pain and injustice of his personal experience to wondering if God did not care and was possibly even malicious. In light of his undeserved suffering—which was unfathomable according to the theology of his friends—how was he to understand God? Had the moral fabric of creation come undone?

Job’s basic assertion here remained unchanged. He was innocent of the kind of wrongdoing that would call down such punishments (the traditional understanding for his sufferings) on his head. He didn’t deserve the “ruin” and “disaster” that had happened to him (v. 3). He knew himself to be a man of integrity and even blamelessness, as illustrated in how he famously resisted the temptation of lust (v. 1). How could a God who knows everything (v. 4) allow this to happen to a man like him?

The rest of the chapter follows the pattern, “If I have done sin X, then may I be accursed.” The sins he denied doing include lying (v. 5), sexual immorality (v. 9), injustice (vv. 13, 21), trusting in wealth (vv. 24–25), and idolatry (vv. 26–27). Such actions would be unfaithful to God and worthy of judgment (v. 28). But since he wasn’t guilty, why was he suffering? Job emphatically closed his case against God: “I sign now my defense—let the Almighty answer me” (31:35).
The problem of evil is poignantly expressed in the lyrics of the song “Why?” by folk singer Tracy Chapman: “Why do the babies starve when there’s enough food to feed the world? Why when there’re so many of us are there people still alone? Why are the missiles called peacekeepers when they’re aimed to kill? Why is a woman still not safe when she’s in her home?”

Job had posed similar questions, and clearly Elihaz, Bildad, and Zophar had failed to answer him successfully. Now one more speaker, Elihu, stepped forward. Unlike the other three friends, neither Job nor God responded to Elihu, and he’s rather a mysterious character in this unfolding drama. He’s interpreted here as one last effort to solve the puzzle of Job from a human perspective. Despite some good moments, his speeches turn out to be an exclamation mark on the inadequacy of human reasoning to address the problem of suffering. Elihu was motivated by anger—anger at Job for justifying himself above God, and anger at the three friends for losing the debate (32:1–5, 12–13).

He described himself, rather unappealingly, as a new wineskin “ready to burst” under the pressure of waiting his turn to speak (32:18–20). He also claimed to be motivated by empathy, a desire to come alongside Job rather than to preach at him. Unfortunately, he began by misrepresenting Job, who had claimed general righteousness as a faithful follower of God but had never asserted that he attained sinless perfection.

Elihu also opposed Job’s mischaracterization of God as silent. In fact, even if we don’t understand Him, God speaks to us in various ways. Perhaps God was speaking to Job through his pain, that is, suffering might have a redemptive purpose (33:19–26, 29–30). Unfortunately again, Elihu rather proudly pictured himself as an “angel” at Job’s side (33:23) and as a teacher of wisdom calling Job to repent from sin (33:27–28, 33).

Elihu’s Attempt: God Is Not Silent

It takes many people and many departments to maintain and develop Moody’s infrastructure. Steven Mogck, executive VP and chief operating officer, oversees the work of all these departments, and today he asks the Moody family for prayer for his teams.

Interpretations of Elihu vary widely. Some see him as a prophetic preparation for the vision of God in chapters 38 through 41. Others see only yet another failed “friend” who’s young and hotheaded. Still others think Elihu is at least somewhat positive in that he helps pry Job loose from his former theology and view of God. We encourage you to study Elihu’s speeches and decide for yourself.

Apply the Word

Pray with Us
As we’ve mentioned, the book of Job is mostly poetry—in fact, very well-crafted and artistic poetry. American statesman Daniel Webster called it a “work of literary genius” and “one of the most wonderful productions of any age or of any language.” Victor Hugo, author of Les Misérables, said: “If all literature was to be destroyed and it was left to me to retain one work only, I should save Job.”

Elihu’s speeches are particularly beautiful poetic passages. In his second and third speeches, he again called on Job to listen (34:1–4), summarized his previous words (34:5–9; 35:1–3), refuted them (34:10–30; 35:4–15), and passed judgment (34:31–37; 35:16). While his citations of Job’s words were relatively accurate, concluding that Job “keeps company with evildoers” (34:8) was a viewpoint rooted in the friends’ worldview. Like them, Elihu defended the principle of retribution rejected by Job. So despite the fact that Job had never complained about his lost blessings, and despite Elihu claiming he had something new to say, this sounds mostly like the same old thing.

Elihu’s speeches do affirm God’s greatness, holiness, and just governance of creation (34:12–13, 17). He emphasized God’s transcendence or distance from us (35:5–8). God is portrayed as omnipotent and omniscient (34:21–24), but not necessarily as good or loving. He is so far above human moral standards that though He enforces justice, He scarcely seems to care (35:12–14). Job needed to get off his high horse and stop being so prideful and presumptuous (34:7–8, 35–37; 35:16).

As before, Elihu made some generally true statements—but he didn’t realize that they didn’t apply to Job’s situation specifically, and they certainly were of no comfort to him.

---

**Apply the Word**

Though Job had cried out to the Lord in every speech, Elihu cruelly implied he hadn’t (35:9–11). His words were often self-assured and callous. When we’re called on to offer comfort to others, how do we compare? Do we glibly quote a Bible verse and move on? Are we willing to enter the pain and doubt and “mourn with those who mourn” (Rom. 12:15)?

---

**Pray with Us**

Kenneth Bugh and Walter McCord on the Strategic Partners team, maintain contacts and form relationships with Moody’s donors across the country. Pray for strength, safety in travels, and God’s grace in all interactions.
Elihu’s Attempt: God’s Greatness

A Far Side cartoon humorously depicts the greatness of God. Drawn as a luminous old man with white hair and a flowing beard, God is a game-show contestant, answering trivia questions for points. Naturally, he gets every question right. In the one-panel cartoon, the host is saying, “Another 50 points for God, and… uh-oh, looks like Norman, our current champion, hasn’t even scored yet.”

God’s greatness is the main theme of Elihu’s fourth and final speech. There’s some truly beautiful poetry on this theme in these chapters (especially beginning at 36:22), and Elihu seemed highly motivated to defend God’s name. He vividly praised attributes of God such as His wisdom, justice, knowledge, and power. Unfortunately, he did so with an overall attitude of pride and presumption (the very line he had accused Job of crossing), for example, by boasting about himself to Job, “one who has perfect knowledge is with you” (36:4).

Job had never denied God’s greatness, so it’s hard to see how even the true things Elihu said applied to his situation. In addition, Elihu remained clearly committed to the friends’ theology—he can barely conceive of justice in any other way (36:5–12). Even worse, he became increasingly accusatory toward Job, implying and asserting that Job was a hardened, resentful, bitter sinner ignoring God’s call to repentance (36:13–21).

God’s greatness includes creation, providence, His sovereignty over all nations, and His worthiness to be feared and worshiped (37:24). Job had no hope of making a case against the Almighty, any more than one can look directly at the sun (36:23; 37:19–21). Unfortunately for Elihu, Job knew and had already said this (9:2–3, 14–20; 23:13). What Job knew was true that Elihu denied was Job’s innocence. The stage was set for God Himself to speak!

How great is God—beyond our understanding!
Job 36:26

Apply the Word

One important lesson from the story of Job is, other than specific leadings of the Spirit, to let God call sinners to repentance. We can be arrogant and dangerous, and even when we are correct about general truths, we don’t always have the specific knowledge about someone’s guilt or innocence before God. It remains true that only God knows the heart (Ps. 44:20–21).

Pray with Us

Please join us in praying for the Mail Service department on the Chicago campus. Due to the faithful service of its staff—Brenda Mclemore and Nga Tran—all Moody’s bulk mailings arrive to their destinations on time.
In the spring of 2005, Death Valley in California was covered with white, purple, pink, and gold flowers, something that happens only once every half-century. Desert flowers have seeds with coatings thick enough to survive for decades if necessary, waiting for enough moisture and sunshine to trigger growth. God’s care for creation is seen even in the desert!

The goodness of His creation is the main theme of God’s first speech. One wonders if Elihu’s poetry in chapter 37 was inspired by God’s approach in the storm (38:1). That would be ironic, for just as Elihu declared God “beyond our reach” (37:23), God Himself was about to speak. The storm reference indicates God appeared as a Divine Warrior, an ancient Near Eastern image used many times in Scripture (Isa. 29:5–8; Hab. 3:11–15; Zech. 9:14–16).

This theophany (appearance of God) was not in response to Job’s “court summons.” Interestingly, the Lord had not come to defend Himself against Job’s charges. Those charges and complaints lacked validity, based as they were in finite human knowledge and experience (38:2; 40:2). So God flipped the script—He would be the One asking the questions! What follows is a long series of rhetorical questions, with the answer to each being, “No, I am not/do not/cannot—but God is/does/can.”

In this way, God taught Job the essential goodness of His creation—including both material creation (38:4–38) and animal life (38:39–39:40, see Gen. 1:31). His creation is good despite the presence of disorder, danger, predation, and phenomena beyond human control.

The bottom line is that when God fashioned the world, “the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy” (38:7).

Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?
Job 38:2

Apply the Word
Scripture teaches that creation provides enough evidence for all people to believe in God, though they choose instead to “suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Rom. 1:18–20). The natural world contains abundant proof of His handiwork! As the psalmist wrote: “The heavens declare the glory of God … their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world” (Ps. 19:1–4).

Pray with Us
It is our privilege to pray for Christine Gorz, vice president of Marketing Communications. Ask the Father to give her peace, strength, and endurance as she leads several teams, directs our communications strategies, and oversees Moody’s brand.
Job’s Response: Humility

The term biomimicry captures an approach in which engineers seek to imitate designs found in nature. Hypodermic needle tips are shaped like rattlesnake fangs. A brand of house paint uses properties discovered in the “self-cleaning” leaf of the white lotus. Mangrove trees that turn salt water to fresh water are studied for possible applications to wastewater treatment systems. Christians might view the idea behind biomimicry as an attempt to create products that take their cues from the wisdom of creation.

Job responded with humility to God’s revelation of the order and goodness in creation—an order and a goodness that exist despite the inclusion of wildness, danger, and evil. These elements are not a threat to or a failure in God’s governance but rather part of His sovereign purpose and design. God is both powerful and good. This is what God wanted Job to learn from His first speech—that His person and governance are so much greater and so far different than Job imagined (38:33). He also wanted to assure Job that his faith in God’s goodness and love is well-founded.

By putting his hand over his mouth and falling silent (vv. 4–5), a chastened Job humbly acknowledged the rashness of his words. He formally gave up his “court case” against God, agreeing that the wisdom of the Creator trumps the “wisdom” of human tradition and the inadequate theology of the friends.

Compared to the friends’ indignant anger and self-righteousness, God had made His points to Job rather gently. Even by appearing as a Divine Warrior, God comforted Job and gave him confidence that nothing was out of His control, despite appearances and circumstances. God wasn’t the random, heartless, or tyrannical Being Job had wondered about and feared in his speeches. He remained the same loving God whom Job had known before.

Job lived several millennia before us, but there’s at least one way in which his culture reflects the spirit of our age: We, too, tend to treat personal experience as the basis or authority for what we believe and how we act. If we can’t “relate to it personally,” we often reject or ignore it. This is a finite, foolish, and ultimately sinful way to live!

Would you include Moody’s Customer Service Center staff in your prayers today? We value their expertise and their willingness to help everyone who calls Moody Bible Institute and we ask for God’s blessing on their lives and service at Moody.
In today’s reading, God alluded to a future day in His sovereign plan when evil will be defeated and done away with forever. In Revelation 19 and 20, He granted the apostle John a more direct vision of that glorious day. Babylon will fall. Christ as the Divine Warrior will ride forth and throw the Beast and later Satan into a “fiery lake of burning sulfur.” A great multitude will thunder, “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!”

In His second speech, God continued to engage with the issues at the heart of Job’s anguish—His justice and its relationship with evil. Elihu had been right that Job justified himself at God’s expense (see 32:2), and that attitude needed to change.

After inviting Job to conquer evil himself (40:9–14), which was obviously absurd, God continued using rhetorical questions to describe two animals—real animals, but animals also embodying a higher moral and spiritual symbolism. The first was Behemoth, perhaps a hippopotamus (40:15–24). Behemoth is a created thing that feeds on grass, has a tail, and so on, but it is also more. Given that God approaches it to do battle, and that it is paired with a symbol for cosmic evil (Leviathan), it likely symbolizes death.

The second animal was Leviathan, perhaps a crocodile. Again, Leviathan is an actual animal, but also more. It symbolizes evil and by inference Satan, the “king over all that are proud” (41:34). To God, though, Leviathan is no threat. He is its absolute master. The implication is that the world as it is now is not always the way it will be. God is in control, and in His own time evil will be defeated once and for all (cf. Ps. 74:12–14; Isa. 27:1).

As we struggle against evil in our own lives and in our world, we must remember that ultimately we alone cannot and will not defeat it. The God who controls Leviathan and Behemoth will be victorious, not our own might or power. Keep His greatness or awesomeness in view, and also His goodness, that is, how He performs or enacts His justice.
The words of the classic hymn, “Be Still, My Soul,” inspired by Psalm 46:10, counsel: “Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side. Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain. / Leave to thy God to order and provide; In every change, He faithful will remain. / Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend / Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.”

Job had responded to God’s first speech with humility. His response to God’s second speech was worship, indicating that his doubts and questions had been powerfully and persuasively answered. “I know that you can do all things,” Job replied, “no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (v. 2). Though part of the current order, suffering and evil are not out of control. Sometimes the innocent do suffer, but this doesn’t mean we live in a cruel, chaotic, or morally senseless world. One day in God’s plan, such things will end! (If Behemoth and Leviathan were merely animals, Job’s response doesn’t make any sense. It’s virtually impossible to go from God’s greatness and power over mere animals to Job’s worship.)

Job also repented of accusing God of injustice (v. 6). To “despise” himself didn’t indicate self-hatred, but rather complete submission and a recognition of his own smallness in relation to God. The conclusions he had drawn from his personal experience and theology were flat wrong (v. 3). He now knew again that he worshiped not only a powerful God but also a just and good God.

Thanks to God’s gracious intervention, Job gained a larger vision of God and His governance of the universe (v. 5). In the words of commentator Christopher Ash: “This God who knows how to use supernatural evil to serve his purposes of ultimate good can and will use the darkest invasions into my own life for his definite and invincible plans for my good in Christ. Hallelujah! What a Savior!”

A fitting response to today’s devotion would be to sing the hymn, “Be Still, My Soul.” If you don’t have a hymnbook, full lyrics and even basic keyboard accompaniment are available at websites such as Net Hymnal. Adding music to your personal devotions—or at least making a “joyful noise”—is a great way to expand and deepen your walk with the Lord.

Would you mention in your prayers our Investments department staff? Today, praise God for James Chadwick, Barry Cole, and Jeffery Knapp and their contribution to financial responsibility and integrity at Moody.
Christian musician and author Michael Card wrote a series of songs entitled the “Job Suite.” In one song, Job laments, “These friends of mine are no comfort to me / So deafly they listen, so blindly they see / Their words and their doctrine, they all sound so true / The problem is, Lord, they’re all wrong about You!”

In today’s verses, God emphatically agreed with Job. Two verses in a row, He said to the friends, “You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has” (vv. 7–8). Job had believed God would vindicate him, and He did! God as Judge rendered His verdict, finding in favor of Job, who was indeed innocent, and against the three friends. They had behaved so badly, in fact, that they were required to offer substantial sacrifices publicly confessing the sinfulness of their speeches. In addition, in a perfect example of poetic justice, their former target Job offered intercessory prayer for them in order to obtain God’s forgiveness. Job had spoken rightly about God. The Lord is no clockwork mechanism of retributive justice, as envisioned by the friends. He is personally involved, He cares about us, and His plans reflect these truths despite our failure to understand. Even for the friends—who by their own rules deserved punishment—God made a way for them to be reconciled to Himself.

You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has.
Job 42:8

Though Job and his foolish friends were unaware of the behind-the-scenes drama in the heavenly throne room, God’s verdict also sealed the case against Satan. Job had passed Satan’s test, as God knew he would. He had held onto faith in God, despite personal suffering and the stripping away of his secondary blessings. By contrast, the upside-down theology of the friends valued God’s blessings above God Himself. They were thus guilty of Satan’s accusation (1:9–11); ironically, given their claims to speak for God, they had often represented Satan’s perspective during the debate.

Apply the Word
Listening to Michael Card’s “Job Suite” would be an excellent way to review and meditate on the book of Job and our month’s study. This 10-minute biblically focused composition was originally on his album The Way of Wisdom, which itself was the second in a trilogy of albums about the Old Testament. It has since also appeared on another album, An Invitation to Awe.

Pray with Us
Again, we pray for the Investments department at Moody and ask that you put Trevor McCarter, Charles Moeri, and Cherise Wilson on your prayer list. We value their competence, commitment, and professionalism in the workplace.
One day two years ago, a Pennsylvania man temporarily became the world’s richest person. He received his PayPal statement and saw a balance of $92,233,270,368,547,800. Then he checked his account online and found a balance of $0. Both were errors, of course, eventually corrected. But for just a moment he had been worth $92 quadrillion dollars!

God’s gifts to Job were more real and lasting. “The LORD restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before” (v. 10). This restoration of material blessings was only a foretaste or pledge of God’s justice and ultimate victory over evil. But it wasn’t just about the future—God loves to bless His people in the here and now, but His gifts should never be valued above Himself. In addition, the restoration of Job’s health, wealth, family, and social status would have eloquently proclaimed his innocence to the community. Even though they saw suffering through too simplistic a lens, they needed to hear God’s verdict of Job’s innocence in terms they could understand.

Scars and consequences remained. His wife could not unsay her advice to “curse God and die” (2:9). Ten children had been killed, though Job was blessed with ten more—including three beautiful daughters who were lavished with their own inheritance, an unusual gesture in that culture (v. 15).

Job had suffered because of his faith in God. Followers of Christ, too, will face that kind of suffering. We shouldn’t pray to be spared the suffering but instead should pray that our faith won’t buckle under pressure (see Luke 22:31–32). Christ has shown us the way through His perfect obedience and endurance of suffering. Because of His redemption, we need not reap what we sow, which would be disastrous for us all. Instead, we can rest in the grace, mercy, and unfailing love of God!

Apply the Word

In the book of Job, the answer to the problem of evil is God Himself. What have you learned about God during our month’s study? Perhaps you’ve learned “the Lord is full of compassion and mercy” (James 5:11). Perhaps you’ve come to a better understanding of God’s justice or His governance of creation. Respond like Job with humility and worship!

Pray with Us

As we conclude our study of the book of Job today, let’s pray that we would be the people with faith like Job’s, that we would always acknowledge God’s sovereignty, and never lose hope. Thank you for praying with us!
Memories Revisited
Today I’m sitting all alone,
As I so often do—
Reliving all those happy years
That I have spent with you.

The Lord, in love, has given us
The gift of memory.
He knew what comfort and what joy
That special gift would be.

Close again
I awoke this morning feeling sad—
And I know it was the dream I had:
You and I were young—
our love was new.
All my heart and hope were
wrapped in you.

It was just as clear as could be—
God had picked the perfect
one for me.
And our lives, entwined,
had much in store—
All we ever thought, or asked,
and more.

But you’re gone now and
I’m left alone.
(How I wish that Heaven
had a phone!)
Yet, the joys that linger in my heart
Bring you close again,
though we’re apart.

When I talked with Shirley on the phone
I heard a woman of verve, vitality, and
courage, who told me in a strong, young
voice: “I’m a long-time champion of
Moody!” It was somewhat of a surprise to
me when I learned that Shirley is 90 years
old. Not only do her poems encourage
others, but her life itself is also an inspira-
tion. A well-known maxim, “Age is just a
number,” is true in Shirley’s life—a testi-
mony that with God, despite all the
hardships and losses, you can stay vital,
creative, optimistic—and a strong cham-
pion! A champion with a great sense of
humor: I’m sure you’ll agree with this
poem from her latest collection.

Chocolate!
Chocolate needs no excuse—
Its benefits are many!
And the pleasure that it gives
Is even more uncanny!
Manage Anger with Clarity and Confidence

- Recognize the difference between “bad” and “good” anger
- Use anger to motivate you toward positive change
- Get rid of long-simmering resentment
- Teach your children how to deal with anger and more . . .

AVAILABLE AT YOUR FAVORITE LOCAL OR ONLINE BOOKSTORE OR CALL (800) 678-8812.
Get Your Daily Dose

Visit our Facebook and Twitter pages for a companion to your devotional guide. We feature links to daily devotions, encouraging Bible verses, and this month’s entire issue of Today in the Word. Once there, post comments on what you read and connect with other Today in the Word readers. See you online!

www.todayintheword.com