

This is an Article on the Book of Job that I found helpful

The Commonness of Tragedy

It can be easy to think of Job as a book you turn to if some unexpected tragedy happens, but can otherwise be safely ignored. Perhaps the most important reason for reading the book, however, is that Job's tragedy—an experience of searing pain and loss which did not make sense within any framework Job had—is all too common.

My experience in teaching the book in academic and pastoral settings is that almost everyone in the room knows someone who has undergone a Job-like experience—or they are suffering one themselves. It seems to be not a question of “if,” but “when” God will allow some tragedy too painful to be borne quietly, and we, like Job, will wonder why God would repay imperfect but sincere service and friendship in this way.

Learn to Interpret Suffering

A related reason for studying the book is that it widens our ability to interpret suffering. Biblically, sometimes God allows pain because of sin (as in [Ps. 38](#)) or to grow us spiritually: suffering produces character, and character endurance ([Rom. 5:3](#)). True as these are, neither can explain Job's ordeal: not even the Accuser could find some sin which would prompt God's punishment ([Job 1](#))!

Painful loss can become an avenue for God himself to reveal himself and draw close in a way he never has before.

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And Job is presented as a mature believer—although he had to confess sins (31:33–34), the description of his spiritual integrity in 1:1 uses biblical terms to describe settled maturity. Further, the book never resolves Job's suffering by pointing to some spiritual growth on his part. Rather, Job's agony ends only in a deeper vision of God (42:5). This is helpful: the book is teaching us that painful loss can become an avenue for God himself to reveal himself and draw close in a way he never has before.

Devotion despite Difficulty

A third reason for reading Job is found in the first chapter: “Does Job fear God for nothing?” (1:9). The Accuser argues Job doesn’t really love God for God’s sake, but only because of secondary benefits which accrue in the relationship (the blessings of 1:1–4). Once those benefits are gone, Job will show how he really feels about God—so the Accuser claims.

This creates the deep drama of the book’s early chapters: will Job hang on to his relationship with God when he has every earthly reason to give up on him? It creates drama for the Christian reader, as well, because all of us benefit from our relationship with God in ways different from the central benefits of the gospel: forgiveness of sins and eternal life. If you had to go to the funeral of one of your children on a Saturday, would your worship the next Sunday be just as enthusiastic? God is worthy of that level of devotion—but would we show it?

The author’s purpose in raising this question is not to shame us, but to help us understand why God allows inexplicable suffering. In chapters 1–2, Job proves the genuineness of his love for God: Job has no ulterior motives and treats God as his own reward. The same opportunity is given to us to tearfully but sincerely affirm that we have no treasure on earth more precious than God ([Ps. 73:25](#)). And a faith of that quality is the only kind of faith which will save you.



JOB

A 12-WEEK STUDY

Eric Ortlund

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Job

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This 12-week study invites us to take an honest look at the agony and pain experienced by Job, which are immediately relevant in many ways to the suffering we all experience while on earth.

Finding Hope in Your Pain

Finally, Job should be studied because it gives tremendous hope and encouragement in suffering and nourishes endurance in the midst of it. The Lord's answer to Job in chapters 38–41, far from blaming him as his "friends" did, paints a picture which is realistic about what is still unredeemed about the world, but shows the tremendous joy God takes in his world without ignoring what is wrong with it.

But the Lord does not leave Job there: the final speeches about Behemoth and Leviathan speak of a coming defeat of a great supernatural enemy when God scours all evil from his creation, and the former things pass away. The poetry of these chapters foster the same vision and hope in Christians who know without understanding why.



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