

The Jobs: Living With Losses



SABBATH—AUGUST 25

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Job 1:1–2:10.

MEMORY VERSE: “He replied, ‘You are talking like a foolish woman. We accept good things from God. So we should also accept trouble when he sends it’ ” (Job 2:10, NIV).

THE BOOK OF JOB WAS WRITTEN IN A STYLE THAT MAKES IT SEEM A LOT LIKE THE BOOKS CALLED WISDOM LITERATURE.¹ The names of the people in the story of Job suggest an Edomite² setting. The name that comes the closest to Job's name in the Bible is Jabob, who was an Edomite king (Genesis 36:33).

Job's wife's name is not given. In fact, not much is said about her at all. In the whole Bible, she is quoted in only one verse. She has been remembered for her famous curse, which she spoke out of pain and tragedy. She may have been the model wife in every way. She may have cared for her household. She may have ministered (helped) her suffering husband. She may have taken food to him at the dump. She may have nursed his boils. But those good acts are not written down in the Bible. Instead, the focus is on her husband and his suffering. She appears only once in the Bible, urging her husband to do the very thing that Satan wanted.

Both husband and wife, as a couple, suffered from their losses. We are not called to judge Job or his wife. We are called to learn from their experience.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY UP CLOSE: Job and his wife suffered terribly. Sadly, because of sin, suffering is a part of life here on this earth. Like Job and his wife, we may never know the reasons why we suffer. But we can take comfort from their story that God knows our pain. And our suffering draws Him even closer to us. He will give us peace and strength to make it through the hard times, even as He gave peace and strength to Job.

1. wisdom literature—the books of the Bible that are about wisdom or sound judgment. This group of books includes Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.

2. Edomite—belonging to the neighboring nation of Edom. Edom was southeast of the nation of Israel.

SUNDAY—AUGUST 26**THE STORY OF JOB (Job 1:1–2:8)**

For thousands of years the story of Job has inspired and puzzled readers. It has made them think deeply about the question of good and evil. God alone knows how many books, research papers, and essays have been written on this very old book. The book of Job and the book of Genesis are the two oldest books in the Bible. Both were written by Moses in Midian. “The long years spent being alone in the desert were not lost. Moses was gaining a preparation [training] for the great work ahead of him. But during this time, under the inspiration³ of the Holy Spirit, Moses also wrote the book of Genesis and the book of Job. They [Genesis and Job] would be read with the deepest interest by the people of God until the close of time.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Feb. 19, 1880.

What does Job 1:1–2:8 tell us about the kind of person that Job was? What is it about Job that makes all the things that happen to him even harder to understand?

The book of Job, along with the book of Genesis, was one of the first books of the Bible to be written. This is because the Lord knew that one of the great questions facing human

beings (people) would be the question of evil. If the God of heaven is so loving and so powerful, why is there so much pain and suffering on earth? For many people, this question brings up the greatest challenge to faith. The books of Genesis and Job help answer this question.



The book of Job helps answer the question, If God is so loving and powerful, why is there so much suffering?

The Lord gives us the background of the great controversy⁴ in the very beginning of the books of Job and Genesis. We are taken behind the scenes to see what is really going on. All our telescopes⁵ and other fancy scientific equipment⁶ would never be able to show this to us. The book of Job does not answer all the questions about evil. But it shows us that suffering, pain, and trouble have never caught God by surprise. So, they should not take us by surprise either. And they certainly do not give us good reasons for turning away from God.

3. inspiration—the act of the Holy Spirit giving someone a certain feeling or thought.

4. great controversy—the war between Jesus and Satan over good and evil.

5. telescopes—tools that allow people to see things very far away; used to study stars and other planets.

6. scientific equipment—tools and machines used by scientists to collect information and facts.

Write in your own words why you think suffering appears in the world, even though God loves us. Be ready to bring you answer to class on Sabbath.

MONDAY—AUGUST 27

REMEMBER JOB’S WIFE (Job 2:9)

Read again the terrible things that happened to Job and his wife. Now put yourself in Job’s wife’s place. What must have been going on in this poor woman’s mind?

The story of Job centers on him and his sufferings. But we must not forget his wife. Her servants, too, were destroyed. The property she lived on was destroyed. Her children were suddenly killed. And her husband was suddenly struck down with terrible sores and boils. Whatever Job suffered, his wife suffered the same, maybe even more. One should easily understand her deep sadness and gloom. As the Bible tells the story, she has been given only one line out of 42 full chapters. Clearly, more went on behind the scenes than what is shown to us here.

Focus on the question Job’s wife asks in Job 2:9. What does this question suggest?

In Job 1:1, Job is described as someone who was *tam vyahsar*, meaning “blameless and upright”

(NIV). It is interesting that the question Job’s wife asks her husband is “Do you still hold fast to your integrity⁷ [honesty]?” (Job 2:9, NKJV). The word for “integrity” is from the same word for “blameless” in Job 1:1. In Hebrew, *integrity* also means “complete” or “perfect” (read also Genesis 6:9; Genesis 25:27; Psalm 37:37; and Psalm 64:4). *Integrity* is also the same word that God uses to describe Job once in Job 1:8 and twice in Job 2:3 (“perfect,” “integrity”). But Job’s wife now questions his integrity. How can you still stay so “blameless” before God with all these things happening to us? Again, we must not forget that this couple suffered through these terrible times together. What happened to Job was not much different from what happened to his wife.



Whatever Job suffered, his wife suffered the same, maybe even more.

7. integrity—the quality of being honest and trustworthy; honesty.

The idea behind the question Job's wife asks is that bad things should not happen to us if we are "blameless" before God. What is wrong with that kind of thinking? At the same time, in what ways does being "blameless" bring good results even now to our lives?

TUESDAY—AUGUST 28

SATAN'S TEMPTRESSES⁸ (Genesis 3:1–13)

How is the story of Genesis 3:1–13 a lot like the story of Job and his wife? What things are almost the same in both stories?



Satan used the wife of Job to tempt her husband to sin just as he used Eve to tempt Adam to sin.

Several things are almost the same in the story of Adam and the story of Job. First, both men were "perfect" and

"complete." Second, both were facing tests that came from outside this world. Third, both their wives were tricked by Satan, but in different ways. Fourth, in both cases Satan used the wives as tools of temptation⁹ against their husbands.

Read again Satan's charges against Job in Job 1:7–11 and Job 2:3–5. In what way is Job's wife being used by Satan against her own husband?

Job's wife surely did not know any more about the war between Christ and Satan in heaven than did her husband. Satan was tricking her and using her for his goals. Satan tricked Eve during the peace and happiness in Eden. But he came against Job's wife during much pain and suffering. Satan is cruel. He will use whatever he can and whomever he can to lead us into sin and away from God. We should also note that Adam was sinless and lived in the happiness and the perfect beauty of Eden. But Adam fell into Satan's trap. Job, a fallen person suffering from terrible pain and tragic (sad) events, did not fall into Satan's trap. This shows us how much integrity Job had.

Ask yourself, What can I do to make sure I never tempt someone close to me to do the wrong thing?

8. temptresses—women who try to get men to do or want something that is wrong or forbidden.

9. temptation—anything that tries to turn us away from God and tries to get us to do, think, feel, or say what is wrong.

WEDNESDAY—AUGUST 29**HE WILL CURSE YOU TO YOUR FACE! (Job 1:11)**

Satan's whole point against God was that Job was "blameless" only because God was so good to Job. Satan felt that the moment things went bad, Job would turn against God. Twice Satan said that Job would "curse" God to His face. As we saw, the exact thing that Satan said Job would do was the same thing that his wife told him to do. Again, how careful we need to be with the words we speak, especially during times when we are very upset or angry.

What do Proverbs 13:3; Proverbs 25:11; Ecclesiastes 10:12; Matthew 12:36, 37; and John 5:24 say about the power and importance of words?

Bible writers on the book of Job have noticed one very interesting point. Satan says twice that Job will "curse" God to His face. Job's wife also tells him to "curse" God. But the usual Hebrew words for "curse" are not used. Instead, the word for "curse" in these verses comes from the root *brk*, which means "bless" (Genesis 12:2; Exodus 12:32; Ruth 2:4; Psalm 26:12). The psalmist¹⁰ writes about "blessing" (from *brk*) the Lord (Psalm 16:7;

10. psalmist—a person who wrote a psalm.

11. sarcastic—using mocking or sneering words to make someone feel bad or seem foolish.

12. idioms—words or phrases that have a meaning far different from their usual or actual meaning. For example: "She is the apple of her father's eye." This is an idiom that means the girl's father is very proud of her. (But it does not mean the girl is an apple or that apples grow out of her father's eye!)

13. unexpected—surprising.

Psalm 26:12; Psalm 34:1). But now in Job, the same word is translated "curses." (In Job 1:5 the word "curse" is also from *brk*. Also in 1 Kings 21:10, the same use of *brk* appears.)

Read those verses again in Job 1:11 (NIV) and Job 2:9 (NIV) where the root *brk* is translated "curse," but put the word "bless" in instead. What happens?

Clearly the verses would not make sense if *brk* here were to mean "bless." Maybe one could argue that Job's wife was being sarcastic¹¹ (as was Satan when he spoke to God about Job): Sure, Job, why not bless God for all His goodness to us and then die! Seeing how *brk* is used, for example, in Job 1:5, makes it clear this is just one of the idioms¹² of language. In idioms, words are used in unexpected¹³ ways.

How careful are you with your words? What can you do to make sure that you do not say things that will make you feel sorry later? Are they things that can bring suffering upon yourself and others?

THURSDAY—AUGUST 30**HELPING EACH OTHER (Job 2:10)**

Job's wife must have stood by him in

most ways during his suffering. She must have suffered as she cooked his meals and bathed his sores. Job's thin body and peeling skin must have made her feel heartsick. She alone was brave enough to come close to Job, only to get hit by his foul breath (Job 19:17). When she finally broke down, it was not against him. She was upset, not for her own sake, but for his. The Bible does not show her complaining when her ten children were killed in one blow. But the sight of her suffering husband was more than she could take. Hers was a righteous¹⁴ disgust and anger.



Job's wife stood by him during his suffering.

What was the important lesson of Job's action in Job 2:10? What do his words say about his faithfulness¹⁵ to God, even though he was going through great pain?

In answer to his wife's outburst of anger, Job does not call her foolish. He says she speaks like one of the foolish women. She is not a foolish woman, and this is not how she usually acts. So, Job's words seem to show something good about her. They show that she was, under normal situations,¹⁶ not one of the "foolish" women. But this was not a normal situation at all.

What wrong idea did Job have about why he was suffering?

Job wrongly blames God for his suffering, but he tries to stay faithful¹⁷ to God anyway. The words Job uses for "good" and "evil" are the same Hebrew words used in Genesis 2:17 to describe the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹⁸ Humans¹⁹ were never to know evil, only good. Evil does not come from God. It comes only from falling away from God. Evil gets into everything so that even the "blameless" suffer from it. Of course, of all the "blameless" ones to suffer from sin, none was more "blameless" than Jesus. And no one suffered from evil more than Jesus did (Isaiah 53:3–6; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 4:1).

What message does 1 Peter 1 have for us? How is this message a

14. righteous—fair and just; doing what is right; virtuous (pure in heart).

15. faithfulness—the act of being true and loyal; the act of being someone that others can trust and believe in.

16. situations—the way things are as a result of things that have happened.

17. faithful—being true and loyal; being someone that others can trust and count on.

18. the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit of this tree after God told them not to. This one act of not obeying God brought sin and suffering and death into the world.

19. humans—men, women, or children.

lot like the message in the story of Job? Now ask yourself, How well do I hold up under suffering? What lesson do I need to learn that will better help me remain faithful,²⁰ no matter what happens in my life?

FRIDAY—AUGUST 31

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “A Happy, Successful²¹ Partnership [Marriage],” pp. 105–113, in *The Adventist Home*.

“We know very little about Job’s wife. We may have been too quick to think of her as an evil woman. We can be sure Job’s suffering caused her to suffer too. Losing all her wealth was painful. But even more heartbreaking would have been losing all her children. Her pain may have been even greater than her husband’s. But in the story, she carries her pain quietly. She loved Job. It must have been very painful for her to see her husband going through great pain of mind, soul, and body. And she could not do anything to end his pain. There seems to be only one way left for her. She speaks to Job from the depth of her love and concern for him. She does not know that, like Peter, she is repeating Satan’s words. No, she is

not a foolish woman, but that day she spoke ‘like’ one.”—Adapted from Ángel Rodríguez, *Adventist Review*, April 13, 2000, p. 27.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ As a class, read aloud what you wrote at the end of Sunday’s lesson. What can you learn from one another? How good are the answers? What questions remain unanswered? How can we help one another live with unanswered questions about pain and suffering?
- ❷ How can spouses work to encourage, uplift, and help each other grow in Christ, rather than being tools of temptation?²²
- ❸ Has someone in your church recently suffered a sad event? What can you do as a class to give that person hope and to help him or her work through the sad time?
- ❹ As a class, talk about the idea of taking the name of the Lord in vain. What are examples of how we might be guilty of that sin? Think about phrases, curses, idioms,²³ and slang words in your own language as you discuss the answer.

20. faithful—being true and loyal; being someone that others can trust and count on.

21. successful—turning out well; having the result or outcome that was hoped for.

22. temptation—anything that tries to turn us away from God and tries to get us to do, think, feel, or say what is wrong.

23. idioms—words or phrases that have a meaning far different from their usual or actual meaning. For example: “She is the apple of her father’s eye.” This is an idiom that means the girl’s father is very proud of her. (But it does not mean the girl is an apple or that apples grow out of her father’s eye!)