

The Story of Job

Have you ever noticed that sometimes wicked people are rich and in good health, while some good people are poor or sick? That may seem unfair to us, but the story of Job explains why God makes some people rich and others poor, and why He gives some people good health and makes others sick. The answer may surprise you!



Although the book of Job comes after Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther in our Bibles, Job probably lived some time during the years between Abraham and Moses. Many people think Moses actually wrote the book of Job.

Job was a good man who lived in the land of Uz, somewhere south and east of the Dead Sea around Edom. The Bible says Job was *"blameless and upright, one who feared God, and turned away from evil"* (Job 1:1). Job was married and had 7 sons and 3 daughters, thousands of animals, and many servants. He was the greatest of all the people who lived in his country.

Job's Adversaries Want God to Destroy Him

Some people who knew Job thought that he only served God because God had given him so much. They thought that if God took away Job's riches, his family and his health then he would become wicked and quit serving God. The Bible refers to one of the people who felt this way about Job as *"Satan"*. The Hebrew word *"Satan"* means *"adversary"*, and these people were certainly adversaries to Job because they wanted God to destroy him!

God decided to prove to Job's adversary that Job was really sincere and that Job would serve God no matter what happened to him. So God brought a series of disasters on Job to take away his riches, family and health. First, the Sabeans came and killed his servants. Then the fire of God fell from heaven and burned up his sheep and some servants. The Chaldeans took his camels and killed more servants. Finally, a strong wind blew over the house where his children were and killed them all.

What a series of disasters! Yet even after all these terrible events, Job worshipped God and said, *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"* (Job 1:21).

After all this, God gave Job a terrible disease with boils on his skin and fever in his bones. This illness continued for many days. Job's wife even said "*curse God, and die!*" But Job held fast to his belief in God and reminded her "*shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*" (Job 2:10)

Job's 3 Friends Come to Visit

While Job was sick and suffering, three of his friends came to see him. They were **Eliphaz**, **Bildad** and **Zophar**. These 3 men, like Job, misunderstood the reasons God brings suffering upon people. **They thought God punished everyone with suffering according to how bad they sinned.** So if a person did many bad sins then God would punish them during their life with lots of terrible suffering. On the other hand, the 3 friends thought if you serve God and do good things then God will bless you with riches and health. These men misunderstood why God brings suffering on good people.

Job's friends looked at him suffering from his illness and heard about all the disasters that had happened to him. They told Job that he must have done some really bad things for God to punish him like this. Job didn't understand why all this evil was happening to him, but he did know that he had not done some real bad thing for which God was punishing him. His 3 friends kept telling him to confess his great sins, but Job kept responding that he had not done any great evil. After talking with his friends many times, **Job finally decided that God must be wrong!** He wanted to talk to God and defend himself. Job was wrong to claim that God had made a mistake.

Elihu Explains God's use of Suffering to Prevent Sin

At this point, a young man named **Elihu** stepped in and explained to Job and his friends that *God sometimes uses suffering to prevent people from falling away from the Truth and to increase their faith in God.* Elihu explained that Job's suffering was not any punishment at all! It is so hard for God to keep us from getting involved in the evils of this world that sometimes God has to put us through terrible circumstances like accidents and sickness so we will not get involved in bad things. Job and his friends had never looked at suffering this way.

God Tells Job that He wants to Save Many

After Elihu talked to Job, God spoke to Job too. God explained to Job that He loves all men and wants everyone to be saved. *Sometimes God has to make good people suffer so He can convince everyone that good people serve God because it is the right thing to do,* and not because God gives them health or riches. God reminded Job how clearly He has demonstrated this lesson in nature every time an innocent lamb dies so that a wild lion can have food and live.

God Required Jesus to Suffer for Himself and Us

God's best example of this use of suffering came many years later when *He gave His son Jesus to suffer and die for us, to show us the way to live.* Jesus didn't do anything wrong, but God required him to go through the agony of crucifixion *to prevent Jesus himself from sinning during his life, and to convince us and other sinners that we must join with Jesus and destroy our own evil desires to live for God.*

When God was finished explaining to Job why he had to suffer, Job was really sorry that he had ever questioned that God was right for everything that had happened to him. Job finally understood how hard God was working all the time to save people. God's love for all people is very great and He uses many different ways to try to convince people to hate sin and to live for the kingdom.

God Proved Job's Adversaries were Wrong!

Through everything that happened to Job, God proved to Job's adversary that *Job served God and lived the way he did because he believed it was the right thing to do, and not just because of his riches, family or health.* God hoped this would cause Job's adversary and others like him to learn from Job the right way to live. Job's experiences helped the people in his day and in the days to come to understand how *God uses suffering and trouble to help save us.* Even Jesus Christ probably learned a lot about his own suffering by reading through the story of Job.

Job Restored and Given Twice as Much as Before

In the end, God restored Job to good health, gave him twice as many animals and servants as he had before, and blessed him with 10 more children. Thanks to the patience of Job as he endured all his troubles, we can now better understand how God uses troubles and calamities in our lives to save us and many others as well. When we go through bad times in the future, think of Job, all that happened to him, how he patiently endured, and *the life of Job will help us endure our troubles so we will be ready to meet Job in God's kingdom!*