

**Sermon Transcript from May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
How to Go Through Pain & Suffering  
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Job is a book that has a tremendous amount of suffering in it. Job loses all his kids, all his property and all his health, covered with sores at the end of chapter 2, inside and out, from head to toe, where he breaks a piece of pottery, grabs the sharp shard of the pottery and is scrapping off his sores in dust and ashes as he's weeping and weeping and mourning in lament. This is all in the first two chapters of Job. The only thing Job doesn't lose in this book is his wife, but she's a bummer. She's like, "Curse God and die."

And Job's like, "Really? This is the only one that's left?"

It's a total bummer. It's not uncommon for people to turn to Job in a time of suffering. I have a close friend of mine who went through a tremendous amount of suffering; not unlike Job, actually. And everyone encouraged him to read the book of Job. "You should read the book of Job. You should read the book of Job."

He was like, "I've read it before. I know what it says. I'm not going to read it again, especially right now."

But, he had not read it under the amount of suffering that he was under. So, he read it. He did. He was hoping to find maybe answers, new answers, that he hadn't known before but, when he was in the midst of going through suffering, all this new text would be illuminated to him and he would understand it, and it was like the worst thing ever for him. I remember talking to him on the phone and he's like, "Everyone told me to read Job."

And I go, "And?"

And he goes, "And I read it."

And I'm like, "And?"

"It's the worst book in the Bible. There's more questions in it that I don't even know what to do. I don't even know if I agree with the conclusion of Job. This is not a helpful book."

Many who go to Job in time of suffering find the book unsatisfying. Why? Well, they think it's a book that will explain why they or their loved ones are suffering or why there is so much pain and suffering in the world. They also expect to learn why God acts the way He does, why He allows or even causes righteous people to suffer. And, spoiler alert, since you haven't finished the book and you won't until tomorrow, none of these questions get answered. None of these questions get answered in the book of Job. Peter Kreeft, a professor of philosophy at Boston College, in his book "Three Philosophies of Life" where he talks about Ecclesiastes and Job and the Song of Songs, he says this about Job:

"Job is a mystery. A mystery satisfies something in us, but not our reason. The rationalist in us is repelled by Job as Job's three rationalist friends were repelled by Job. But, something deeper in us is deeply satisfied by Job and nourished. When we read Job, we are like a little child eating spinach. Open your mouth and close your eyes. Job, like spinach, is not sweet tasting, but it puts iron in your blood."

How does Job do that? From a rationalist perspective when we're looking for answers, it gives us none and makes us so angry. But, when we dive into the mystery of Job and the complexity of Job, it's deeply satisfying like iron in our blood. How does it do this? Well, let's look.

Job, first of all, is an ancient poem. You might want to write that down if you're taking notes. This is very important. So, we can't read it – and we've said this a lot in our series "The Year of Biblical Literacy." You can't read it literally. But, as we've said before, you must read it literarily. That is, according to its genre and its place in the Scriptures. This book is an ancient poetic wisdom book. It fits into ancient poetic literature and, therefore, it uses a ton of imagery. Like the opening scene; the prologue. The prologue in this poem is in chapters 1 and 2. The prologue sets up the entire rest of the book, and it takes place in this heavenly throne room. God is on the throne and His subjects come to Him and report in on how things are going under the authority of what God has in the world.

But then there is this other character, an almost sinister character, that barges in on this scene. He shows up unannounced. Almost like in Genesis 3. Unannounced. Shows up. And the text calls him "Ha-Satan" or "The Satan" or "The Accuser." Some of your Bibles have "The Accuser" or "The Satan."

Now there is – let me nerd out for a second. So, just bear with me. There is a lot of debate about who this character is. A lot. There is a lot of academic scholars that say that this not Satan like you and I would think of Satan or the devil. This is not the devil. But, this is just a fairly neutral character in this story that is there to help set up the problem of the book. So, this isn't Satan, this isn't the devil, this is just kind of a neutral character in the book that's there that's placed in the book by the author of this book to set up the problem in the book. That's it. That's the only function that this character has.

Now, I do not think that we're allowed to put too much emphasis on this character, "The Satan," and blame him for everything that happens from here on out. That would be too easy, in my opinion. This book is not black and white. You cannot say, "Well, it's all Satan."

We can't do that. Especially at the end of the book where the end of the book says that God had something to do with Job's troubles. So, it's not as black and white and go, "Well, blame everything on Satan. It's all Satan. He did this all."

The fact that he's only mentioned in the first two chapters says something as well. I do agree that this Satan character is there to set up the problem. However, when we place Job in the context of the canon of Scripture, which every book of the Bible must be placed in the context of the canon of Scripture, I don't think we're allowed to just say that this is a neutral character that sets up the problem of the book. The Satan is indeed a character that we see at the very beginning of the Scriptures (Genesis) and one that we see, finally, at the end of Scriptures (the book of Revelation) under God's judgment, ultimately.

This is really important, that when we place Job in the canon of Scripture, we have to deal with the "Ha-Satan," we have to deal with "The Accuser," we have to deal with "The Satan." We have to do something with him. We can't just say, "Oh, he's just a neutral character."

You can't do that. You're not allowed to. I mean, if you took Job out of the Bible and go, "Well, it's just ancient wisdom," great. Then do whatever you want to it. But, when you place it in the canon of Scripture, you cannot do that. Okay? So, that's, again, my opinion. If you don't agree with me, you can be wrong. That's fine. And look at the characteristics of this character. When God asks him where he's from, he responds by saying, "I've been around. I've been doing my thing. I'm going where I want."

Almost like "none of your business." He doesn't even answer the question, really. Like, "Where are you coming from?"

"To and fro. Just doing my thing. What do you mean? Don't even ask me questions."

That's kind of his attitude. And then verses 8-11 set everything up. So, let's just stop really fast in verses 8-11 and read this again. This sets everything, the whole book, up.

Job 1:8: **"Then the Lord said to the Satan [Ha-Satan], 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him;'"**

What it's saying is God is saying, "Job is the best. There is no one that I know of on all of the earth that shows someone who is devoted to me, that is devoted to righteousness, that's devoted to justice, that's devoted to holiness. There's no one like Job and his character."

This is what God is saying.

**"He is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."**

And then the Satan says, "[Pshh]. **Does Job not fear God for nothing?"**

Like, "The reason why Job fears you is because you've placed a hedge around him and you're protecting him and then you're blessing him. Everything he has, you've been blessing him. I guarantee you if you pull that hedge and you stop blessing and you..." – I believe this is what it's saying – "...allow me to curse him, then he will curse you to your

face."

What the Satan does, the accuser, Ha-Satan, he publicly calls God out on His policy. He puts God's policy on trial. It's important to remember that this is a book that is primarily about God. Job's not on trial as much as God's policies are on trial. Satan puts it this way: "Yes. Job is righteous and Job is devout and he's the best follower you have. I agree with you. But, only because you make his life so great. That's the only reason he loves you and that's the only reason he follows you. Take that away and he will curse you to your face."

And this sets up the question of the whole book. This interaction between God and the Satan sets up the whole book. And it says this. Basically this is what's going on. This is the question that the whole book is trying to answer: "Can human beings have a disinterested faith in God?" That is, "Can humans believe in God without looking for rewards and fearing punishments?"

Can we love God for God? That is the point of the book. I've been listening to a lot of hip-hop lately. I don't know if you've noticed. And there's this idea that permeates a lot of hip-hop, especially artists that have Christian roots or religious overtones. The idea is this: when you live a good life and a devout life, God has to bless it. When you live a good and devout life, God has to bless it.

So, Kanye has this line in one of his songs where he says, "But I've been talking to God for so long that, if you look at my life, I guess He's talking back. I've been talking to God for so long that, if you look at my life, I guess He's talking back."

What is he saying? He's saying that his success is directly a response from God for his devotion. That's what he's saying. "I've been talking to God. I've been devoted for so long to God. I've been praying so much to God that God is blessing me. He's talking back to me with cash money and diamonds in my teeth. He's talking back. Can you see this?"

This is what he's saying. Chance the Rapper came out with a new album a couple weeks ago and it's incredible. It's so good. In his song "Blessings," he has this hook that goes like this:

"When the praises go up, the blessings come down.  
"When the praises go up, the blessings come down."

And then he says, "It seems like blessings keep falling in my lap."

I want to play this song right now. It's so good. Now, is this wrong? Is this wrong? It's not entirely wrong. We're told that we reap what we sow. Galatians 6. That if we sow righteousness and faithfulness and worship and love, we will reap good things for sure. But, that's a formula, and this is important. That's a formula. That's a cause and effect formula. That book of Job is undermining and subverting this very formula. It's asking the question: is that the only reason why you worship God, because He has the best formula? That because when praises go up, blessings come down? Is that why you worship God? What if praises go up and curses come down? Will you still love Him? Will you still be devoted to God or will you curse Him to His face?

And Satan goes, "I think people will curse you to your face, God."

So, the whole book is set up like a bet, and it's betting against this formula. Now, the idea that it's a big cosmic bet makes me very uncomfortable, I'm going to be completely honest with you. You're like, "Whoa whoa whoa wait wait. You're saying that this whole thing, Job, it's just a cosmic bet?"

This is what the book is kind of doing. It makes me uncomfortable, but it's the Bible and the Bible makes us all uncomfortable somewhere. All of us. And this makes me uncomfortable that it's a bet, but it is. But, remember, it's poetry. So, it's not necessarily historic. It's poetry. It's supposed to be taken as poetry.

Now, question: why did God take this bet? Why did God say yes? Why does God say yes to the Satan walking in saying, "I bet you if you lift your hedge of protection and let me throttle Job, he will hate you."

Why did God say, "Pshh, you're on. I bet you."

Why would that happen? And this is what I believe right now. Again, like I told you, this book, every year I kind of return to this book somehow and it works on me. But, right now, this is what I believe. Why God said yes to this bet: I believe it's because God truly believed that Job already loved Him. I believe that it's because God believed Job really loved Him with no strings attached. God said yes because He believed that Job loved Him. Not because of the things, but because Job loved Him.

And, in the process, Job, from a human perspective, steps into the universal experience of all humanity. See, Job 1, the very beginning, that's not the universal experience of all humanity. Not everyone is like everything you touch is gold. That's not the human experience. The human experience is one of suffering, and even the suffering of the innocent when there doesn't seem to be any cause for the effect. Because, what did Job do wrong? We all know the answer is nothing. He did nothing wrong to deserve the suffering he was under. That is clear by God's account, by Satan's account. Everyone in the book knows he did nothing wrong. He was righteous by all accounts, from everyone's perspective at the beginning. I mean, his friends have a different perspective but, according to Job and God, the author and Satan, Job was righteous.

But, he suffers. He still suffers. And this is a reality of our world this side of God making all things new. This is a reality in our world. People suffer and people suffer in disproportionate amounts to what they have sown. There are people in this room that will suffer more than you "deserve" to suffer, and you know this. You know this to be true. You might say, "Hey, I'm not perfect, I'm not completely righteous, but I don't know if I deserved that. That's just wrong."

We all live with that. That is the human experience. And Job steps into this experience and is our archetype of someone who steps into suffering that he cannot explain at all. So, what's the answer to all this? Why does it happen? Why does this happen? I'm sorry to say that we're not really told. We're not told why; not exactly. But, I can tell you – and I want you all, if you are a follower of Jesus, please take note of this. Please. I can tell you this: what we learn from the book is that overly simplistic answers to our pain and suffering will not do.

When you give trite answers to your own heart or a friend who's suffering, that will not do. Look at Job 1:20. This is one of the most famous lines in Job, if not in the Bible. Job goes through tremendous suffering and this is what Job tries to do.

It says that he fell on the ground and worshipped and said this:

**"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."**

The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. This is what Job says. And all of us are going, "Oh my gosh. I want faith like that. That is tremendous faith."

This is a very very very famous line in the Bible and we might have quoted it to people in tremendous pain. "Yeah, you lost someone. The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Now, we can't beat up Job for saying this, because what Job is basically saying, which makes the point literarily which moves the story along, is that he, Job, will continue to praise and love God. Even though he has experienced tremendous suffering, praises will still go up even though curses come down. I will still praise you, God. I will not leave you. I'm with you. I praise you.

That's commendable. So much so that God brings it back up to the Satan next time the Satan strolls in. Chapter 2, Satan strolls in again and God goes, "Hey. I won the bet. Right? I won the bet. Like, you did all that. He lost everything and he still hasn't cursed me."

God thinks this is commendable because curses came down but praises still went up from Job. However, Job doesn't know what we know. What Job is basically saying is God did all this. "The Lord gave and the Lord took. The Lord gave me kids and the Lord killed my kids. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Is that true? No. That is not true. The Lord didn't really kill His kids, that's not what happened. That's not what the narrative said. It was the Satan who did that. That's explicit in verse 12. God's like, "Okay. I'll take the bet. But, I'm not going to do that. I'm not

going to kill. I don't do that. I'm lifting my hedge, but that's on you."

The Satan – when you don't give place to the Satan in this, you have, actually, a lot bigger problems. When we don't understand evil, we blame evil on God. We have to realize that there's evil in this world and there is an Accuser, there is the Satan and he is real. Which brings up a very important point. One of the things this book is doing – and it's doing it a lot – is showing us that there is more going on behind the scenes of our suffering than we realize, and simple answers will not do. You cannot just say, "Well, God did that," and you cannot say, either, "Well, Satan just did that."

Well, it's all God or all Satan. You can't do that. They're like, "It's way more complex than that."

Well, then, give me an answer. Let's keep reading. How about that? Now, the rest of the book from chapter 3 all the way to chapter 38 is a poetic, beautiful, funny at times and really sad at other times, a poetic back and forth debate between Job and these three friends of his. Which, at the beginning, are awesome. They just sit with Job. They see how much suffering Job is under and they just sit with him for a week. They just are mourning and with him. But, after that, they're going, "Job, dude. You need to repent. Something's wrong with you."

Which is not the best thing to say when someone's suffering. It's like, "What did you do?"

Like, "I didn't do anything!"

"Well, you must've done something, because God just doesn't do that."

Don't be that friend. Please. And don't say, "Hey, the Lord just took away."

That won't work either. If you read the rest of the book, that won't work either. And here is where they structure the debates. Let me just talk about the whole center of the book of Job. Okay? One team of scholars call this "the triangle of tensions" in the book of Job, and it looks like this on the screen. In the book of Job, you have these three things working at any given time. So, you have – and when these things are all in balance, everything's great. So, let me explain this. You have God's justice on the top. God rules the world according to justice. God is just and He rules the world according to justice. Okay?

Then you have the retribution principle, which is basically "praises go up, blessings come down." Like, if you're good, you will receive good things. If you're bad, you will receive bad things. That's how the world works. That was accepted wisdom during the time of Job. That's the way the world worked. God is just and the world is cause and effect. If you do good things, good things will happen. If you do bad things, bad things will happen.

And then you have Job's righteousness. So, as long as Job's righteous and he still continues to get blessed by a just God, everything works great. This is the triangle that starts the book of Job. Okay? God's just, the retribution principle is in place, Job keeps getting good things because he's righteous. Everything makes sense and everything is good. Until Job starts suffering. As soon as Job starts suffering, one of the corners of the triangle have to be given up because it doesn't make sense anymore. And the debates between chapter 3 and chapter 38 are defending certain corners of this triangle. Okay?

Let me show you how this works. Example one. Next slide. Job's friends keep arguing that Job is not righteous. They're saying, "Okay. It's you that's the problem because this triangle makes perfect sense, Job. God is just, there is a retribution principle. This is a real thing. People get what they deserve. If you are wicked, you will be cursed. If you are righteous, you will be blessed."

And they keep telling Job, "It's your fault, Job. You've done something wrong. You must repent. Fess up, man. Fess up. What'd you do?"

Job's like, "I didn't do anything."

"What did you think?"

"I didn't think anything."

"What are you looking at online?"

"Not anything!"

"Business trip. Last year. You took an extra day. What were you doing?"

"I went to church."

"No. You're lying. Fess up."

And he's like, "I'm righteous. I'm telling you I'm righteous."

"No no no. You cannot be righteous. The world doesn't work that way. God is just and you're getting punished for something you've done."

So, the "Job is righteous" thing collapsed. Next slide. This makes Job so mad because he knows he's righteous. Something the story does not deny. Job basically tells his friends, "Hey, I used to think like you guys did. I used to think that this triangle was perfect. But, now that I'm suffering, I see the world differently."

He says in Job 16:4, **"I too could talk as you do, if you were in my place."**

Saying, "I used to believe the way you did and, if I switched places with you and I never went through suffering, I still would. But, now that I'm here suffering, I don't see the world this way anymore. Something's got to give."

So, Job begins to argue that he is absolutely righteous. So, maybe the world doesn't work that way. Maybe the retribution principle is not a thing. He's like, "Nope. That can't be it, because I'm righteous and God is just. Okay, so, the world does not run according to this 'praises go up, blessings come down.' That is not how the world works."

But, this freaks him out. To think that the world is not cause and effect is total chaos to him, and it's more scary than anything. So, he goes somewhere that maybe you've gone before. He says, "God's not just then. Because I'm righteous. The world has to operate like this. God must be unrighteous. God is not working according to this formula. Therefore, God is unjust."

At first, Job doesn't charge God with wrongdoing. It says that in chapter 1. But, in the end, he charges God with a lot of wrongdoing. Throughout the book, he starts saying that God's the one who's guilty, not him. He wants his day in court with God. "Call me to court, God. Let me stand trial. Let me defend my case. I've done nothing wrong and I think it's You."

Look what he says in Job 9:21-24: **"Although I am blameless, I have no concern for myself; I despise my own life.**

**"It's all the same; that is why I say, 'He [God] destroys both the blameless and the wicked.'"**

To Job's mind, that's unjust.

**"When a scourge brings sudden death, he mocks the despair of the innocent.**

**"When a land falls into the hands of the wicked, he blindfolds its judges. If it is not he, then who is it?"**

Job is saying, "God is a blind judge. God destroys the blameless and the wicked. What kind of justice is that? God is not just."

Wow. A whole different Job as he goes through suffering. Job keeps asking for his day in court to defend himself and put God on trial for what's happened to him. He keeps asking God to show up. "God, where are You? Show up. I need to plead my case before You."

And then, finally, in chapter 38, God shows up. Have you gotten there yet? It's a little different than you thought, huh? Like, "God? Finally. Yes."

If you're reading this for the first time and you get to chapter 38, I give you permission,

tonight, if you're like, "I'm on Job 4, I don't know if I'll get there," just go there tonight. Okay? You have permission to jump to chapter 38 tonight and read it. Read chapter 38 and 39. And 40 and 41. Just keep reading.

Finally, in chapter 38, God shows up. And, if you're reading this for the first time, you're probably thinking what the characters are thinking. You're probably thinking, "Finally. Some answers. I'm going to get some answers here. God shows up."

Which is the brilliance of the writing of Job. Job is so brilliantly written because, at the beginning of Job, we know a little bit more than Job knows. But, by the end of the book, we want answers just like Job wants answers. We're like, "Yeah, God. I mean, this is easy. They bring up some good points here. God, You have to answer. Do You run the world justly or not? Are You going to explain to him what's gone on? Say something."

And God finally shows up through a storm; through a hurricane. And, when God finally shows up, Job expected an explanation. Job thought, "Okay. Finally, God's going to explain Himself to me."

Job's friends expected condemnation. "Finally. Job's going to get what he deserves. God, tell Job he's wrong. Tell Job he has been guilty of sin. That's why he had so much curse come upon him."

What they get is neither of those things. God doesn't explain what's going on with Job nor does He condemn Job. God shows up through a storm and asks Job a series of questions about the world and the ocean and animals for two whole chapters.

"Where were you when I did this and that and that? And tell me, can you control this and this and this? I'm sure that you know."

And Job is such a funny book, because God shows up and is like, "Oh, I'm sure you know how the universe is run. I'm sure that you can singe up Orion's Belt. I'm sure you could do that. I'm sure you could tell the waves to stop right there. I'm sure. You've got it, right? You've got it."

He's just doing this and Job's like, "Uhh... I don't... what?"

And Job keeps feeling smaller and smaller and smaller. Finally, Job answers back in chapter 40. God just starts asking him all these questions. He doesn't explain a thing to Job. He just asks Job questions. That's all He does. Job finally says this in chapter 40: "I am unworthy. How can I reply to You? What am I going to say to that? I put my hand over my mouth, I spoke once and I have no answer. Twice, but I will say no more. I'm not talking. I don't know what to say."

He stands before God and he's like, "I... I don't know. I've got nothing."

And then God goes, "Okay. Let me ask you some more questions then if you don't want to talk."

And this time He asks him questions about these two monsters. "Leviathan and Behemoth. Do you know them? I know them."

Now, these animals, creatures – I don't know what they are. These creatures are probably some sort of ancient Near Eastern mythological creature that's symbolic for chaos and evil in the world. So, they would have known what this meant. These creatures symbolize chaos and evil and the world being wild and untamed. That sort of thing. And that's what these creatures represented. And He goes, "Do you know about them? Can you tell them what to do? Do you know how to control them? Is that in your realm? Is that what you're doing?"

And, in the end, God is telling Job that the universe is terribly complex. "This world that you're living in, Job, it's so complex."

He's saying, "I don't rule the world according to a basic formula that you can control."

I want you to listen to this. Because, the whole book of Job is about "is God just?" And the end of the book says, "It's not that easy. See, if there was a cause and effect to the world like you think, a retribution principle that, if righteousness goes up and praises go up

then blessings come down, if that's the way the world worked, then you're in control. Then, all you have to do to control your circumstances and make sure that you're pushing the right buttons and the right output will come out and the right things pop out. If you keep doing that, then good things will happen. But, if you don't do that, then bad things will happen. And that, you can control it. That's simple."

And what God is saying is that's not really how it works. The world has forces at work that you can't begin to understand, but God is ultimately wise and He runs – actually rules – the world with wisdom that we don't understand and He's bringing the world to an expected end that only He really understands how He'll do it and then Job finally gets it. Job gets none of his questions answered at all. He just sees a God who knows that, "I know what's going on in the whole world. At any moment, I know what's happening."

And Job, in the end, says, "That's enough for me."

This is what he says to God at the end.

Job 42:2: **"I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.**

**"You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?'"**

That was him, by the way. He's like, "You asked. That was me."

**"Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.**

**"You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.'"**

And Job says, "I've heard you, but my eyes have not seen you. My ears have heard you, but now I see you. I don't get it, but I get you."

**"Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."**

So, the question is: does Job ever see it all? The reason why Job ultimately surrenders to God is because he sees it all. God's like, "Job, let me explain to you what happened. Satan came in and he put this bet on me and I had to say yes because I knew..."

No. That's not what happened. Did He explain, "Okay. The reason why you lost your kids was that's connected to this and because I'm going to ultimately do this and they're here but now..."

He doesn't do that either. He does nothing to explain. Does Job see it all at the end? No. Does he learn about what happened in that opening heavenly scene? No. Does he learn about why he was chosen to suffer? No. Does he learn the intricacies of how the whole world and the universe works? No. Does he learn about spiritual warfare? No. He never sees it all; He only sees God. And maybe that's enough. And maybe that's much better.

I might have told you this before, but I came to faith in Jesus Christ because I read the book of Job. It was when I was in high school, 17 years old, 21 years ago. Don't do the math. No, not 17. Sorry. 15. No, 16. It doesn't matter. I was young. 15. 16. Somewhere between 15 and 16 years old and I had just gotten kicked out of school for selling drugs and I didn't understand why it was me. So, my questions to God were, "Why me?"

I wasn't really a believer then. I had started dabbling in church a little bit because a friend of mine brought me to church and he bought me a student Bible for Christmas. So, I had never opened this Bible, by the way. It just sat next to me nightstand. So, when I was in this pit of despair like, "Why me? Why? I have other friends that are selling worse things than what I was selling. Why did I get kicked out of school and they didn't get kicked out of school?"

Do you see the dilemma I was working through? I was like, "Why me? I need answers to this."

So, I grabbed this book and I just opened it to the center and, I kid you not, I opened to this page. And, at night church a few weeks ago, the same Bible I had when I was a kid was just laying there on the table and I grabbed it and I opened it to the page and took a picture of it. This is the literal Bible I had and this is what it said when I opened it up. I



want to ask these questions. "When bad things happen to a good person..."

I'm like, "Bro, that's me! This book works! Wow! I didn't know the Bible worked like this, but it works."

It doesn't really work that way, but it did for me. So, I don't know. I can't explain it. Anyway, I opened to this page. "When bad things happen to a good person."

The ironic thing is I thought I was good selling drugs. For some reason, I don't know why, don't ask me. I'm like, "I'm good. I'm good. I'm Job. Oh my gosh. I'm Job."

I didn't know that was name. I thought the book was about how to get a job, by the way, to be honest. I promise. That's why. I'm like, "When bad things happen to a good person. This book is about how to get a job."

So, I read it and I start reading – and I didn't read the whole book, because it's long and I was in high school. So, I read the first maybe four chapters. Maybe two. I don't know. I just read the first few pages of the book of Job. And I wouldn't know this until way later, like now in life, that what happened to me that night was very similar to what happened to Job at the end of the book of Job. I would have no idea until a lot later. I started asking these questions and I never got the answers, I got God. At this really crazy, decisive moment, I heard Jesus speak to me and say, "You're destroying your life. Follow me. Trust me. I know what I want to do with your life. Follow me."

And I had no framework for this. I had no furniture for this. I didn't grow up in church, so I was like, "Okay. God just spoke to me. Okay."

And I never got the answer, what I got was an invitation. An invitation by God to trust Him and to follow Him. And, in the end, God said, "This is exactly what happened with Job. I'm going to invite you, Job, to trust me. You're not going to understand how or why all of this happened. You might not understand this side of heaven. And, on the other side of heaven, you'll see it. But here, you'll never see it. Will you trust me?"

And Job, being a very righteous person, does trust God. And, in the end, God wins the wager. God wins the bet. But, not before God said that all of Job's friends were wrong. I think that was a really important part of the book. Okay? God's like, "I won't tell you how this all works, but I will say this. Your friends were wrong."

That's a great part of the book at the very end. God's like, "Okay. Your friends are wrong."

And then it says this. This is very interesting. "And Job was right."

Which is strange, because we know that Job had wrong theology about God in the middle of the book. So, what is this saying about Job when God says, "Your friends are wrong, but you are not wrong. You were righteous through it all."

What does that mean? That cannot mean, "Job, you had right theology the whole time. I am unjust. That's right."

That is not what it means. It means this: that through it all, Job never stopped praying. He complained, but he complained to God, not about God. When he doubted, he doubted to God. When he lamented, he screamed and he yelled and he did it in God's presence. No matter his agony, he continued to talk to God. So, God, at the end of the book of Job, says, "You're righteous. You wrestled with me."

"The whole time?"

"Yeah, you came before me and told me what was on your heart and that you thought I didn't run the world the way you wanted me to run the world. I get that. But, you brought them to me. You brought all your complaints to me, your laments to me, your anger to me."

Job's suffering didn't drive him away from God, it drove Job towards God. And, for that, Job is commended. For that, Job is righteous. So, there is a place for our lament. There is a place for our questioning God. And that place is before God. That place is to bring all of our lament to God, all of our worry to God, all of our fears to God, all of our complaints to

God, all of it. And there's space there where God's like, I'll go with you. I probably will not give you all the answers, but I'll invite you into trust."

Let's pray.

Thank You for this wonderful book, God. It's so beautiful the way Your wisdom works. I'm humbled by it and I believe that, again, You can call people into trust with You whether they are wrestling through some of the most uncontrollable chaos ever where they feel like something's got to give. "I can't live with this tension any longer. I can't live with this pain any longer. I can't live like this any longer. Something's got to give."

I pray they would be honest before You, God, now. And I know that Your invitation sometimes is subtle and sometimes is not subtle. I pray that, today, You would arrest us with that thunderous thing that You do where You say, "I am God and won't you trust me?"

And may there be found in this room men who say, "Yes, God. I'll trust You."

So, draw us near and draw us close, God. We need You badly in this chaotic world. Thank You that You are, like at the very beginning of the book of Job, still on that throne. Thank You, God. And thank You, Jesus, that You went through some of the worst suffering imaginable and You went through it for us, God, to bring us in and to bring us to You so that there can be a place, a mediator, between God and man that makes our way to You, that makes us righteous before You, that heals us. Thank You, Jesus, that You are a present God. Be with us now as we respond to You. In Jesus' name.