

# SMALL GROUP GUIDE

# THE BOOK OF JOB

**MAKING SENSE OF SUFFERING**

## **JOB: MAKING SENSE OF SUFFERING**

Who is the godliest person you know? For me, the godliest person I know is my mother. She prays daily, trusts the Lord constantly, attends church twice weekly, owns a dozen study Bibles, and never seems to falter in her faith. Spiritually, she's as strong as an ox or even a Triceratops. Since she's so faithful, you might think her life would be wonderful, right?

That's not the case. My mother has battled cancer twice. She tragically lost her husband to illness. She's found herself near poverty on numerous occasions. And she had to put up with me as a teenager. To say the least, my mom has been through a lot. However, she's kept her head held high the whole time. She's continued to serve the Lord, praise His name, and wear a smile on her face.

She handled everything in stride. I, on the other hand, have not. I fought with God on numerous occasions while examining her life situations. "Why do so many awful things happen to my mother? She lives in such a loving way," I would ask God. It's a fair question, isn't it?

I'm not alone. This is the question humans have been wrestling with from the beginning of time: Why do bad things happen to good people? It's at the center of philosophy, religion, and sociology. There's a book in the Old Testament designed to answer that exact question. The Book of Job, the oldest writing in the Bible, tells the story of a faithful man who suffered a devastating string of tragedies. The book of Job attempts to examine God's character against the dark backdrop of our suffering.

### **READ: Job 1:1; 7-12**

"In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. [...] The LORD said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered the LORD, 'From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.' Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.' 'Does Job fear God for nothing?' Satan replied. 'Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely

curse you to your face.’ The LORD said to Satan, ‘Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger.’”

This story makes most people scratch their heads because it starts with Satan. It’s not where his name appears, though; it’s where he appears. Satan is not in a pit of fire or surrounded by smoke. He is in heaven. The book of Job kicks off with a scene from a heavenly control center in the clouds where God and the angels are watching over the earth. Suddenly, Satan invites himself into the meeting unannounced. I imagine he kicks through the door, props his feet up on a golden desk, and points directly at a target named Job.

The job was an upright man who worshipped with all his heart and served God with his entire being. Simply put, he was a good guy. That made Satan angry. Why? Because Satan doesn’t like good guys. He wants to see them corrupted. The adversary snapped at God, “Job only serves you because you’ve blessed him. Take away all those good things, and he’ll surely curse your name.” God allowed it with the condition that Satan not permanently harm Job.

The devil unleashed his sinister plot, but Job remained upright. Satan inflicted pain, but Job continued to praise. Satan took his health (Job 2:11), but Job raised his wounded arms to the sky. Satan beat Job to his knees, but he knelt before God in gratitude (Job 1:20). This deeply complicated story teaches us four lessons for facing life’s hardships head-on. Job teaches us how to live faithfully despite calamity, which brings us to four principles that help us make sense of suffering.

### **Suffering Is Inevitable**

Your life will not be a cakewalk. You will face sickness, loss, and hardship. Your body will grow weak, and your bones will grow weary. You may find yourself a victim of someone else’s sin or on the receiving end of someone else’s anger. Life will produce suffering, but God will remain steadfast.

Imagine all the struggles you’re facing right now. Don’t ignore them; embrace them. God allowed them for a reason. Really strive to see what He is showing you. This story proves that God may not have caused the situation, but He can use it. Every single

struggle will prove that Satan's schemes can overwhelm you but he cannot overtake you. Like Job, you will stand strong in the end.

We often buy into a lie. We falsely assume that suffering is punishment for evil. Job reveals the fallacy in that mindset. Honestly, the Bible teaches that Christ-followers are more likely to suffer in this life. We can't escape suffering. We just need to reframe our perspective on it.

When you face complications, seek God's transformation. Like Job, God will protect you, draw near to you, and advocate for you. Life is like a blank canvas. God, a skilled artist, creates dazzling art from a bleak backdrop. Simply embrace your suffering and watch as God brings beauty from the tragedy.

### **Suffering Is Easier with Good Friends**

God essentially gave Satan the green light to test his servant. Job's story ties our hearts into knots. As we read through chapters 1 and 2, our souls ache for him. His wealth went up in flames, his offspring died, and his healthy body was engulfed in painful boils. Sick and suffering, Job ripped his robe in mourning. He pronounced, "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised" (Job 1:21).

He praised God in the middle of his pain and suffering. While that's a powerful lesson, Job also needed something practical. The guy needed some support. After all, he was going through the most difficult season he'd ever faced. Conclusively, he went to his wife for comfort. She remarked, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9-10).

Slow your roll, Mrs. Job. As her husband looked for support, she unleashed intense negativity on his situation. Can you imagine if she comforted him, assured him, or simply cried with him? That would have felt so much better than a demand to disown his faith.

This pushed Job to open up to his friends. When they saw his devastation, "They sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was" (Job 2:13). Why seven days? This is a

Jewish practice called “sitting shiva.” *Shiva* is derived from the word *sheva*, which means seven, signifying the seven days of mourning. Its purpose is to provide a time for spiritual and emotional healing, so mourners join together with their suffering friend.

While their response could have been better, their approach was far more helpful than his wife’s. At least they wept with their friend. They mourned with him. They didn’t try to explain it away, encourage him to live recklessly, or tweet “thoughts and prayers.” His friends were actually present with him. Walking with a friend through suffering is hard. We often try to come up with the right things to say and the right gift to bring. Here’s the honest truth, though: they don’t need your advice; they need your affection. They don’t need a proverb; they need your presence. When you face pain, rally around your relationships. When your friends face suffering, be there for them—simple as that.

### **Suffering Endures Only a Moment**

For obvious reasons, most people only read the first two chapters of Job. I get it. This book is dense and difficult. Chapters 3–40 contain complicated conversations between God, Job, and his friends. There are angry outbursts, tears shed, and theologically complicated discussions. However, we should not end Job’s story at chapter 2 . His story is grim, but good is coming.

Take a look at what happens at the end of his story. The Bible recalls, “The LORD blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters” (Job 42: 12-13). God restored Job’s life, increased his blessings, and healed his body. His tragedy was only a drop in the bucket of God’s destiny.

### **Suffering Allows Us to See God’s Blessings Better.**

“I am never going to take breathing for granted again,” I just texted my friend. Here’s a little context: I am writing while dreadfully congested. Due to a sinus infection, I cannot inhale through my nose. My throat hurts. My breathing is wheezy. My head throbs. I just want to be able to inhale and exhale normally. For now, I cannot. Eventually, my sickness will vanish. My sinuses will be clear, and I’ll be able to take a deep breath through my nostrils. When that day comes, I will be so thankful. Why? Because I know the frustration of congestion.

We live in a world of contrast. Sickness and health. Dark and light. Good and evil. Day and night. Love and hate. In a perfect world, we would only receive the good and reject the bad. That's not possible. How can we appreciate breathing without the difficulty of a sinus infection? How can we appreciate light without knowing the confusion of darkness? How can we know the joy of love without feeling the sting of hatred?

Live like Job. He remained secure despite his suffering. When we experience the bad, it allows us to embrace the good. It's impossible to experience true happiness without the possibility of suffering. Think of a flower in a field. It will die, wilt, and become compost. Eventually, that compost will produce new life with a new flower. Loss becomes life. Your suffering is no different. What's dead and lost will fall to the ground; then God will transform it and bring new life out of it. Your suffering is temporary, but God's work is eternal.

## TALK IT OUT

*Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.*

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week, and what was the lowest part of your week?

Q1: Who is your best friend? How have they helped you through a difficult time in the past?

Q2: What stuck out to you from this message?

Q3: How can a good community help make suffering more bearable?

Q4: "Suffering allows us to better see God's blessings." What does this quote mean to you? How can this give you hope when facing hardships?

Q5: Explain a time you've seen something good come from a bad circumstance.

Application: Do you know anyone going through a tough season? Be there for them, support them, and rally around them. Pray for God to give you guidance to serve them and bless them.

## READING PLAN

*READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY*

Job 1

Job 2

Job 3

Job 19

Job 26

Job 38

Job 42

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.