



Job

Job. When we think of this Biblical figure, usually the term “patience” comes to mind. However, in my personal Bible study I’ve been reading in the book of Job this week, and his story is so much deeper and more complex than just his patience. The book is included in what’s often called the “Wisdom Literature” in the Old Testament and contains a number of foundational messages for us today.

As a quick recap, Job has a deep faith in God, and is praying continually for himself and his family. He has been blessed immensely. In a meeting between God and Satan, God holds up Job as one of His most faithful servants. Satan responds that Job has been protected by God, and that if he experiences trials, he will lose his faith. God allows it, resulting in immense loss and suffering on Job’s part. His wife and friends are additional discouragements, and Job defends himself repeatedly, and ultimately asks God why in very straightforward terms. God’s response is fascinating – He never answers Job’s questions; rather, he spends four chapters explaining how His ways are higher than Job’s, and that Job cannot fathom the complexity of God’s working and His universe. Job’s response to God is literally “I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know I repent in sackcloth and ashes.”

Lessons that spoke to me in reading this wisdom literature:

- **Bad Things Happen to Good People.**

Job’s friends were utterly convinced that there is always a cause-and-effect relationship between suffering and sin. Job’s story shows that it is far more complex than the simplistic view his friends had. God ultimately reproves Job’s friends for trying to make God a simple rule-maker.

- **Sometimes We Don't Know Why Things Happen.** God never answered Job, and Job had to learn to be contented with not knowing. This is a strong message for us today; all too often we may not understand why we are experiencing trials, suffering or grief. Sometimes we will understand later in life; sometimes we may not ever understand in this life.
- **God Is In Control, Even When We Can't See It.** In the four-chapter response to Job, God provides a number of glimpses of how "His ways are higher than our ways". From Creation to His working in our daily lives, God clearly messages to us, as well as Job, that He is watching over us and caring for us in ways we cannot understand. And, that we need to see our own personal trials in the much greater context of the universe and time.
- **God Says "Trust Me", Even When That's Hard.** God through His Spirit recorded the message of Job for us today, as a means of encouragement when we experience difficulties, when our faith is weakened, and when questions about God's love and care come into our lives.
- **God Wants Us To Come To Him With Our Questions.** In the end, God praises Job for speaking rightly. This seems odd, since Job in his pain and suffering accused God of injustice. However, in his faith Job addressed his questions and suffering to God directly, seeking answers. His friends on the other hand were relying on their own wisdom and were quick to judge Job by overly simplistic standards that they had set.

As you go through your daily lives with its struggles, I'd encourage you to look to the book of Job for encouragement and strengthening. God loves you, regardless of what you're experiencing at any given moment.

--David Shaw