

WHERE DO YOU TURN FOR ANSWERS TO YOUR HARD QUESTIONS?

Job 9

Is God always good? We say, “Yes! God is good!” When the pay raise comes, we announce, “God is good!” When the cancer is in remission, “God is good!” When the university admits us or the final score favors our team, “God is good!” Would we, and do we, say the same under different circumstances? In the cemetery as well as the nursery? In the unemployment line as well as the grocery line? In days of recession as much as in days of provision?

Most people have a sort of contractual understanding with God. The fact that God hasn’t signed it doesn’t keep us from believing it.

I pledge to be a good, decent person, and in return, God will...
save my child.
heal my wife.
protect my job.
bless my business.
(fill in the blank)_____.

Only fair, right? Yet, when God fails to meet our bottom-line expectations, we are left spinning in a tornado of questions. Is He good at all? Is God angry with me? Is His power limited? Is His authority restricted? Did the devil outwit Him? When life isn’t good, what are we to think about God? Where is He in all this? We wonder How could this be? Was this calamity God’s idea? Of course not. God never creates or spreads evil.

Life is filled with these kinds of deep questions. Job gives us a window into his inner struggles and hidden questions. Job would take his hard questions to God. Job is facing some things that don’t make sense to Him. The book of Job is filled with questions from a man whose world is unraveling around him and appears as if it is going to end in tragedy.

- Is God There?

“Oh that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his seat!” Job 23:3

- Is God Fair?

“Why Have You Made Me Your Target?” Job 7:20

- Does God Care?

“Does God care?” is a question that has haunted countless persons over the ages as they have grappled with the problem of evil in the world. “If God is all powerful, then why does He allow evil and suffering? Is God concerned about us? Does He notice all the troubles that take place on our planet?

“If my misery could be weighed, if you could pile the whole bitter load on the scales, It would be heavier than all the sand of the sea!” Job 6:1

Habakkuk prayed and prayed and prayed, and Heaven was silent!

“How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?” Habakkuk 1:2

"I cry out to You, 'Violence.'" Habakkuk 1:2

"Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds." Habakkuk 1:3

If God is just and sovereign, why do the righteous suffer while the wicked prosper? Habakkuk concluded that God was blessing the wrong people. How can a good God allow evil? Habakkuk had a problem with God's reluctance to move when evil was all around them. The way Habakkuk saw it, God was permitting evil by doing nothing about it. A lot of us wonder why God does not move in and do something about the evil in our world. To him, GOD seemed UNCONCERNED!

The prophet Habakkuk lived 1,000 years after Job but he struggled with the same questions.

"I cry out to you, but you do not save?" Habakkuk 1:2

"Why, Lord do you tolerate wrong?" Habakkuk 1:3

"God can never do wrong! It is impossible for the Almighty to do evil." Job 34:10

God is the essence of good, so how can He who is good invent anything bad?

God is sovereign. Scripture repeatedly attributes utter and absolute control to His hand.

"I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. . . .I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. . . . I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear. But now my eye sees You." Job 42:2-6

"The Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will." Daniel 5:21

God is good. How are we to factor in the presence of calamities in God's world? God permits it.

When the demons begged Jesus to send them into a herd of pigs, he *"gave them permission"* (Mark 5:12-13). Regarding the rebellious, God said, *"I let them become defiled...that I might fill them with horror so they would know that I am the LORD."* (Ezekiel 20:26).

God, at times, permits tragedies. He permits the ground to grow dry and stalks to grow bare. He allows Satan to unleash mayhem, but He doesn't allow Satan to triumph. Isn't this the promise of Romans 8:28 *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose?"* God promises to render beauty of "all things," not "each thing." The isolated events may be evil, but the ultimate culmination is good.

Joni Eareckson Tada has spent most of her life attempting to reconcile the presence of suffering with the nature of God. She was just a teenager when a diving accident left her paralyzed from the neck down. After more than forty years in a wheelchair, Joni has reached this conclusion:

"Initially, I figured that if Satan and God were involved in my accident at all, then it must be that the devil had twisted God's arm for permission...I reasoned that once God granted permission to Satan, he then nervously had to run behind him with a repair kit, patching up what Satan had ruined, mumbling to himself, 'Oh great, now how am I going to work this for good?' ... But the truth is that God is infinitely more powerful than Satan... While the devil's motive in my disability was to shipwreck my faith by throwing a wheelchair in my way, I'm convinced that God's motive was to thwart the devil and use the wheelchair to change me and make me more like Christ through it all...He can bring ultimate good out of the devil's wickedness." - Joni Eareckson Tada

One day Jesus' followers spotted a blind man on the side of the road, they asked Jesus for an explanation. Was God angry? Who was to blame? "*Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" John 9:2

Jesus' answer provided a higher option: the man was blind "*so that the works of God should be revealed in him*" John 9:3. God turned blindness, a bad thing, into a billboard for Jesus' power to heal. Satan acted, God counteracted, and good won.

It's a divine jiu-jitsu. God redirects energy of evil against its source. "*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.*" Genesis 50:20

Our choices comes down to this: trust God or turn away. Satan will cross the line. Satan will shatter our expectations, and we will be left to make a decision. At some point, we all stand at this intersection. Is God good when the outcome is not?

Do you want to know heaven's clearest answer to the question of suffering? Look at Jesus. He pressed His fingers into the sore of the leper. He felt the tears of the sinful woman who wept. He inclined His ear to the cry of the hungry. He wept at the death of a friend. He stopped His work to tend to the needs of a grieving mother. He doesn't recoil, run, or retreat at the sight of pain. Just the opposite. He didn't walk the earth in an insulated bubble or preach from an isolated, germ-free, pain-free island. He took His own medicine. He played by His own rules. Trivial irritations of family life? Jesus felt them. Cruel accusations of jealous men? Jesus knew their sting. A seemingly senseless death? Just look at the cross. He exacts nothing from us that He did not experience Himself. Why? Because He is good.

God owes us no more explanation than this. Besides, if He gave one, what makes us think we would understand it? Might the problem be less with God's plan and more with our limited perspective?

This was Paul's opinion. "*Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*" 2 Corinthians 4:17

"*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.*" Roman 8:18

What is coming will make sense of what is happening now.

Job is the first of five books commonly referred to as "The Books of Poetry." These include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. They are called such because they are written in poetic style in contrast to the narrative style of most other books. They are also often referred to as "Wisdom Literature" (especially Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes). Oswald Chambers (1874-1917) offered this concise summary of the five books:

Job - How to suffer

Psalms - How to pray

Proverbs - How to act

Ecclesiastes - How to enjoy

Song of Solomon - How to love

One day, we'll be on the other side of the veil, and we'll see things from God's viewpoint. But, until that day, we look at things from this side of the veil and have more questions than answers, because we don't understand what God is doing.

“Think how you have instructed many, how you have strengthened feeble hands. Your words have supported those who stumbled; you have strengthened faltering knees. But now trouble comes to you, and you are discouraged.” Job 4:3-5

“Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed? As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.” Job 4:7-8

“Call if you will, but who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you turn?” Job 5:1

“Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.” Job 5:7

Job really suffered. The cliché, “When it rains it pours,” was never more true than in his life.

In the first part of the book of Job, we hear Job’s story. We learn of the disaster that befalls him. Job is crushed, despondent; he is in the dark night of the soul. In Chapter 3, Job has no hope. He thinks his life is at an end and that the dead are better off than he is. Job feels as if he is beneath God’s notice, completely insignificant. Job’s wife tells him to curse God and die. If Job doesn’t already feel abandoned, you know he does the minute his wife tells him to pull the plug and be done with it.

Three friends come who have the bedside manner of a drill sergeant and the compassion of a chain-saw killer. A summary of their theology might read: “Boy, you must have done something really bad! We know that God is good, so if bad things are happening to you, then you have been bad. Period.”

“I’m not a bad man,” Job argues. “I paid my taxes. I’m active in civic duties. I’m a major contributor to United Way and a volunteer at the hospital bazaar.” Job is, in his eyes, a good man. And a good man, he reasons, deserves a good answer.

“He was a friend of the fatherless, a help to the widow, he fed the hungry, clothed the poor, and gave shelter to the orphan.” Job 31:16-22

After Bildad attacked him in Chapter 8, Job mostly ignored him and addressed his complaints directly to God. Job saw himself as incapable of defending himself before the Creator of the universe. Job’s responses are in the form of prayer. He was pouring his heart out to God.

Job recognized that there was no way for him to understand God’s all-knowing mind. You can also praise God for His omniscience. You can trust Him for always knowing what is best for you. Job conceded that there was no way that he could argue with the Creator of the universe. You can also praise God for His omnipotence and sovereignty over all. You can trust that there is no problem that is too big or small for Him to handle. Job recognized that he needed God’s mercy. You can also praise God for the mercy that He offers through Jesus to those who repent.

1. Praise God Because He Is All-Mighty.

Job helps to reveal seven truths about God’s holy character. He is a God of: (1) holiness, Job 9:1-2, (2) omniscience Job 9:3-4, (3) omnipotence, (4) mercy, (5) patience, (6) atonement, and (7) love.

- **Holiness: Praise God Because He is Righteous. (Job 9:1-2)**

“Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can mere mortals prove their innocence before God?” Job 9:1-2

Praise God that He loved you enough to send Jesus to die for you and become your heavenly mediator and advocate. Although Job was “blameless” before God (Job 1:8; 2:3), he was not without sin. His sins separated

him from God. Sin has also separated us from God: *“But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God . . .”* (Isaiah 59:2). *“There is none righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.”* (Romans 3:10-11). *“There is no one who does good.”* (Psalms 14:1; 53:1). *“Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you.”* (Psalms 143:2). *“Before You is our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this.”* (Ezra 9:15). *“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”* (1 John 1:8).

You should praise God for His holiness as the source of your righteousness.

- **Omniscience: Praise God Because He is All-Knowing. (Job 9:3-4)**

“Though they wished to dispute with him, they could not answer him one time out of a thousand. His wisdom is profound, his power is vast.” Job 9:3-4

We cannot fully understand God’s omniscient mind. Although Job accused God of being unfair, he conceded that he could not comprehend God’s mind. Job conceded that he could not vindicate himself as Eliphaz (Job 4:17) and Bildad (Job 8:3-6) had charged. Job understood that man could not debate with God or demand answers from Him.

“But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.” Job 23:10

Job knew that God is infinitely wise and knows each person’s sins. *“For His eyes are upon the ways of a person, and He sees all his steps.”* Job 34:21

“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we must answer.” Hebrews 4:13

We can trust that God’s wisdom is superior to ours. Because God knows everything, you can put your trust in Him: *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.”* Proverbs 3:5

“Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it.” Psalms 37:5

“Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah.” Psalm 62:8

“Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.” Isaiah 12:2

- **Omnipotence: Praise God Because He is All-Powerful and Sovereign. (Job 9:5-13)**

“Who has resisted him and come out unscathed? He moves mountains without their knowing it and overturns them in his anger. He shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble. He speaks to the sun and it does not shine; he seals off the light of the stars. He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south. He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted.” Job 9:5-10

We cannot comprehend the omnipotence of the Creator of the universe. Although Job questioned God, he conceded that he could not question the Creator of the universe.

God created the entire universe. (Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 10:14; Nehemiah 9:6; Acts 4:24; Colossians 1:16)
Job understood that God was sovereign over everything in his life.

God's sovereignty over creation. The Bible proclaims that God created the universe in two steps. First, He spoke the universe into existence: *"the Universe was formed at God's command"* Hebrews 11:3 for *"He spoke and it came to be"* Psalm 33:9.

Five different Old Testament writers revealed that God *"stretched out" the stars from a small starting point to their present locations:*

"who alone stretches out the heavens" Job 9:8

"He stretches out the north over empty space and hangs the Earth on nothing." Job 26:7

"Oh Lord my God, though art very great; . . . stretching out Heaven (the stars and the Universe) like a tent curtain." Psalm 104:1-2

"He stretches out the Heavens (the stars and the Universe) like a curtain. And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in." Isaiah 40:22

"Thus says God the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out. . ." Isaiah 42:5

". . . I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by Myself and spreading out the Earth all alone." Isaiah 44:24

"It is I who made the Earth, and created man upon it I stretched out the heavens with My hands . . ." Isaiah 45:12

"That you have forgotten the Lord your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the Earth. . ." Isaiah 51:13

"It is He who made the Earth by His power . . . And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens" Jeremiah 10:12

"Oh Lord God, Behold, You have made the heavens and the Earth by your great power and by Your outstretched arm!" Jeremiah 32:17

"It is He who hath made the Earth by His power, who established the world by His wisdom, and by His understanding He stretched out the heavens." Jeremiah 51:15

". . . Thus declares the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the Earth . . ." Zechariah 12:1

Job, the first of these five authors, wrote about the stretching of the heavens before Moses wrote Genesis. In the 20th Century, astronomers confirmed the claims of the Bible. By studying the starlight, they discovered that the universe began as an infinitely small speck of matter and then stretched apart like the surface of space.

Astronomer Hugh Ross observes that the analogy to a tent curtain also makes sense in the context of space: *"And, like a tent, the physical reality of the universe is its surface. All space, time, matter and energy, is constrained to the surface of the universe."* – Hugh Ross

A tent curtain also conveys a three-dimensional structure meant to protect its inhabitants. Ross points out that *"Job's description of continuous cosmic expansion ranks as one of the most far-reaching and dramatic Biblical forecasts of later scientific discovery. Job accurately – and uniquely – predicted a monumental scientific breakthrough some four thousand years in advance!"* – Hugh Ross

How could Job, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah, living centuries before telescopes and knowledge of modern physics, have made these claims? Their writings establish that the Bible is God's Word. No other holy book can make similar claims.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows and proclaims His handiwork. Day after day pours forth speech, and night after night shows forth knowledge. There is no speech nor spoken word from the stars; their voice is not heard. Yet their voice goes out through all the earth, their sayings to the end of the world." Psalms 19:1-3

Whatever you need, God is greater. Whatever your weakness, God is stronger. Whatever you face, God is larger.

If you can see God as big enough to make a universe, surely He is also big enough to be trusted with your greatest needs. If you can see Him as big enough to put the stars in place, is He not also big enough to help you with your greatest challenges? If you can see Him as big enough to lead Israel out of Egypt's bondage, is He not also big enough to set you free from whatever it is that binds you and saps your victory?

"Can you bind the chains of Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth the signs of the zodiac in their season? Or can you guide the Bear with her young?" Job 38:31-32

God has the power to rescue you. God's miracles and control over creation are proof that you can trust in His power to deliver you: *"Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?" Deuteronomy 4:34*

"Why was there no man when I came? When I called, why was there none to answer? Is My hand so short that it cannot ransom? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, I dry up the sea with My rebuke, I make the rivers a wilderness; their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst." Isaiah 50:2

Are you crying out to God to free you when you are in bondage or being attacked?

God is sovereign over evil. Job praised God's power to trample the sea's waves (Job 9:8). The sea symbolized the wicked people: *"But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud saying 'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked.'" Isaiah 57:20-21*

When the sea disappears in heaven, it symbolizes the disappearance of evil people. *"And there was no more sea." Revelation 21:1*

Even though Satan was attacking Job behind the scenes in heaven, Job trusted that God was sovereign over evil.

Worship the faithful Creator of the universe who is sovereign over everything.

The psalmist worshiped God as the creator of all life: *"May you be blessed of the LORD, maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 115:15*

"Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth." Psalm 124:8

"May the LORD bless you from Zion, He who made heaven and earth." Psalm 134:3

Do you have the faith to know that there is no problem that is too big or small in your life for God to deal with?

- **Mercy: Praise God For the Mercy That He Offers to Those Who Repent. (Job 9:14-20)**

"How then can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him? Though I were innocent, I could not answer him; I could only plead with my Judge for mercy." Job 9:14-15

We need mercy in the face of God's divine justice. Even though Job had led a model life of faith and service, Job knew that he needed mercy under God's perfect law: *"How then can I answer Him, and choose my words before Him? For though I were right, I could not answer; I would have to implore the mercy of my Judge. If I called and He answered me, I could not believe that He was listening to my voice. For He bruises me with a storm and multiplies my wounds without cause. He will not allow me to get my breath, but He saturates me with bitterness. If it is a matter of power, behold, He is the strong one! And if it is a matter of justice, who can*

summon Him? Though I am righteous, my mouth will condemn me; though I am guiltless, He will declare me guilty.” Job 9:14-20

Job knew that he lacked the words to even mount a legal defense before God, but he still called himself “guiltless.” He further felt that there was nothing that he could do as a guiltless man to earn God’s favor.

We cannot atone for our sins. Job believed that there was nothing that he could do to be found innocent under God’s law.

“I am afraid of all my pains, I know that You will not acquit me. I am guilty, why then should I struggle in vain? If I washed myself with snow, and cleansed my hands with lye, Then You would plunge me into the pit, and my own clothes would loathe me.” Job 9:28-31

In fact, everyone is guilty of sin under God’s law. Without Jesus’ death at the cross, it would be impossible to be innocent. Jesus received the punishment that each person deserves. Praise Jesus for taking your penalty at the cross. Jesus died without sin in order to reconcile us with God the Father. *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 1:17-18.

He also healed us through His suffering. *“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”* 1 Peter 2:24

“But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.” Isaiah 53:5

Are you praising Jesus for His sacrifice for you?

2. Praise God We Have An Advocate.

“If only there were someone to mediate between us, someone to bring us together. someone to remove God’s rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more.” Job 9:33

Satan has access to God’s Court, and he uses that access to level charges against God’s people. Here, Job pleaded for someone to defend him in God’s court (Job 9:32-33). He later repeated this request: *“Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my advocate is on high. . . That one might plead for a man with God as a son of man with his neighbor!”* Job 16:19, 21

“Yet as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last, He will take His stand on the earth.” Job 19:25

This foreshadowed the need for Jesus Christ. He is our counselor (Isaiah 9:6) and your only mediator to God the Father. (1 Timothy 2:5) Jesus also advocates for you in the same heavenly court: *“And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”* 1 John 2:1

“Christ Jesus . . . also intercedes for us.” Romans 8:34

“Therefore He is also able to save forever those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” Hebrews 7:25

“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” 1 John 5:14

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” Matthew 7:7-8

Praise God that He loves you. God loved you enough to send His only Son to die for your sins (John 3:16).

“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. . . We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” 1 John 4:8,16

Thus, you should never feel abandoned by God. You should also feel comfortable asking to have your prayers heard.