



**FLOURISH
BIBLE STUDY**

J O B

LEADER'S GUIDE



LYDIA BROWNBACK



INTRODUCTION: GETTING INTO JOB

At this first meeting you'll want to cover the setting of the letter—who wrote it and to whom, when it was written, and the primary themes. Suffering is not an uncommon theme in Scripture, but certain aspects of suffering are unique to this Bible book. Here we get a glimpse at the spiritual warfare that underlies some suffering, along with how prolonged pain can severely test one's faith. As we walk with Job as he grieves his losses, we learn how to respond by faith and to discern good counsel from bad. It's good to note at the outset that this book of the Bible puts forth a lot of wrong interpretations about God and about how to suffer. But it's as we are exposed to this wrong teaching that we learn much truth, grow in wisdom, and deepen our faith. The narrator of Job tells the story using poetry, which is common in the Old Testament Wisdom books, which include Job. To get a bit more detail about the poetry and how it factors into the underlying message of the book, check out "Introduction to the Poetic and Wisdom Literature" in the *ESV Study Bible*, <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-study-bible/article-intro-poetry/>. During this gathering, it would be good to review the Bible reading plan on page xvi, pointing out the weeks when more reading is expected.

WEEK 1: A SHATTERED LIFE

JOB 1:1-2:13

Factoring in hugely this week is the tendency we have to look for an explainable reason for suffering, whether our own or someone else's. Include a discussion about what might underlie this tendency. Is it a desire to control the situation, to influence the outcome somehow? Or is it rooted more in how suffering makes us question God's character? For most of us, both those things factor in. Take some time to describe Job—his character and his life. Identify how the text shows him to be a family man (this will be pretty important when you get to Week 10). You'll want to cover the interplay between God and Satan in what happens to Job, and then also be sure to talk about how God governs our lives with "hedges." If you have time, touch on Job's wife before wrapping up with the Let's Talk questions.



WEEK 2: JOB'S BITTER LAMENT

JOB 3:1-26

You can get the conversation rolling by asking the group how suffering has affected them in various ways, most especially spiritually. What responses to suffering can lead to bitterness, and why is bitterness so destructive? Reviewing 1:4–5 might be a clue as to what underlies Job's declaration in 3:25, "The thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me." Back then, he seemed to lack for nothing except assurance about his children's spiritual well-being. As we leave this week's lesson, Job is languishing in darkness. Show how this whets an appetite for the light of the gospel by reading Luke 23:44–46 together. If you talked in depth about hedges last week, you might want to go straight to the second Let's Talk question this week. Before the group disperses, be sure to give a heads up about the length of the Bible passage to read before next week's gathering.

WEEK 3: WHEN FRIENDSHIPS HURT

JOB 4:1-14:22

This is the week where the unbiblical counsel begins to weave into the fabric of this Bible book. The misunderstanding of God exhibited by Job's friends shows us the importance of studying God's word in context. We come to know the Lord and his purposes by considering how a verse fits into a passage, and how that fits into the surrounding passages, then the book overall, and out from there to the whole Bible. We are prone to misinterpretation if we simply isolate a verse here and there and build our spiritual views around it. Be sure your group understands this principle. Before you cover the Let's Talk questions, the main part of your discussion should center on the particular way Job's three friends are off-kilter in their convictions about why Job is suffering. As a group, try to identify other passages in Scripture that expose why these friends are wrong.



WEEK 4: DIGGING IN AND DOUBLING DOWN

JOB 15:1-21:34

Draw out why Job's friends act so heartlessly. In other words, how does their perception and understanding of God limit their ability to sympathize and show compassion? We see again this week how the friends twist biblical truth into untruth. Last week you covered a basic principle of interpretation (considering a passage in context). You can build on that this week by discussing practical ways (sitting under the exposition of Scripture in a sound church; how to identify reliable books, podcasts, etc.) you can safeguard yourselves in good teaching. Be sure to touch on the last question in section 1, asking the group to share the "gospel glimpses" they uncovered in the reading and how Job's suffering prefigures the suffering of Christ. The Let's Talk questions are likely to generate some good discussion this week, especially the first one.

WEEK 5: GOLD IN THE DUST

JOB 22:1-27:23

This week provides another opportunity to review the importance of sitting under sound Bible teaching so we can recognize truth from error. Vital to this week's discussion will be the fact of God's sovereignty over every life and circumstance. Does your group wrestle with this, as Job did, or is it comforting? Spend some time talking through what you learn from Job 26 (see section 4), how wrestling with perplexities about God and persevering in seeking his face serve to deepen a sufferer's faith. If you linger over your discussion of God's sovereignty as you work through the lesson, you can skim the first Let's Talk question and just focus on the second question as you begin to wrap up.



WEEK 6: TREASURE HUNT

JOB 28:1-28

Wisdom is the theme this week, so perhaps start out with a reminder of what biblical wisdom actually is—skill in the art of godly living. Scripture itself defines wisdom as “the fear of the Lord” (Prov. 9:10). Review the imagery from the poem and what it teaches about how to lay hold of wisdom, and factor in time to review the “Mining the Riches of Wisdom” chart (p. 53) because it helps translate big-picture wisdom in poetry form into practical application. If you don’t have time to cover every question in each section, be sure to reserve time to talk about the very last question in section 3 (p. 57).

WEEK 7: THE GOOD OLD DAYS

JOB 29:1-31:40

You might want to introduce this week’s conversation by talking about what tempts us toward what the preacher of Ecclesiastes warns about: “Say not, ‘Why were the former days better than these?’ For it is not from wisdom that you ask this” (Eccl. 7:10). As you transition the conversation to Job, discuss the difference between an unwise longing backward and appropriate lament for what’s been lost. The difference is that in lament, we mourn what’s lost, whereas underlying the sort of nostalgia the Ecclesiastes preacher warned about is a refusal to accept God’s ordering of our lives. Primarily, you’ll want to focus on the way in which Job insists he has done nothing to deserve his suffering. Yes, he is blameless in the sense that his conscience is clear and we’re told he is a righteous man, but like every human being, he is a fallen sinner, deserving of God’s wrath. And as we noted earlier in the study, Job isn’t suffering because he sinned, but he did sin in his suffering by questioning God’s character. This would be a good time to talk about the gospel, and how Job’s plight points forward to every man’s need to be redeemed by the righteousness of Jesus. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:23–24).



WEEK 8: WOUNDS OF A FAITHFUL FRIEND

JOB 32:1-37:24

Elihu's speeches reveal a lot about God's character and serve as a corrective to the other three friends. Draw out the attributes of God that Elihu names and talk about how knowing these characteristics can be helpful during seasons of suffering. Be sure to point out that 33:23–24, where Elihu speaks of a mediator and a ransom, indirectly points forward to Christ. The point to make is that while human mediators cannot provide sufficient ransom for anyone, Christ can. When you get to the Let's Talk questions, you might find that you've already sufficiently addressed the content of question 1, and you can then move directly to question 2.

WEEK 9: THE ANSWER TO EVERYTHING

JOB 38:1-41:34

A likely conversation thread this week is addressed in the opening paragraph: *Is God the author of evil? We know from his character that he cannot be, but he reveals here that evil has a place in how God has hardwired the world to work—a place determined by God to ultimately work everything together for good for those who love him (Romans 8:28).* Evil is not outside the bounds of God's control. In fact, it serves his purposes, which is an important takeaway from the study of Job. As you talk about the way in which the Lord responds to Job's cries for answers—giving him not the *why* but the *who*—discuss why focusing on God is good and wise, as well as how humility is necessary to see him clearly in his word when our questions go unanswered and our suffering lingers.



WEEK 10: PEACE AT LAST—AND PROSPERITY TOO

JOB 42:1-17

Discuss as much as you can from each section in this week's lesson while leaving sufficient time to talk through the three Let's Talk questions at the end to ingrain the primary takeaways from Job. (1) The Lord works through suffering to accomplish his purposes both globally and individually. He uses pain to change us from the inside out, lead us to repentance, and equip us to deal with our circumstances in wise and God-honoring ways. Perhaps review the paragraph on page 92 that begins, "At the beginning of the story, we see the father heart of Job; here at the end, we see the father heart of God." You might want to outline a few answers to the third Let's Talk question ahead of time to be sure it gets discussed. This question reviews what's been learned through the study in three areas. (1) *The character of God*. You can simply bullet things like sovereign, patient, kind, powerful. (2) *The way of salvation*. A great resource for you to review ahead of the group meeting is the Job section of "History of Salvation in the Old Testament: Preparing the Way for Christ" (<https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-study-bible/article-history-salvation-ot/>). (3) *The path of discipleship*. The best way to frame this is how the story shows us that, through the various things we suffer, God is powerfully at work and faithful to his plans and purposes for us and others.