

SESSION TEN

JOB BAD DAYS FOR GOOD PEOPLE



*Job chapters 1-2
chapter 4
chapter 8
chapter 15*

*Job chapter 32
chapters 38-41
42:1-7*

INTRO

Would you rather...?

Ask your students the following questions, and have them vote on which experience they'd rather have happen to them.

Would you rather:

- Suffer and be wise or be happy and ignorant?
- Lose everything and get back twice as much or keep everything you have now?
- Live comfortably and be shallow or go through pain and be deep?
- Have friends that give bad advice or have no friends at all?
- Die with your family or live alone?
- Lose your wealth or lose your integrity?
- Have painful sores all over your body or be put out of your misery and die?
- Be married to someone who mocks you or not be married at all?
- Give in to the devil and be happy or stand firm against the devil and be in pain?
- Get answers from friends or get answers from God?

Segue into your talk by saying—

Most of you are probably thankful you don't have to choose any of the options I just gave you. But these were Job's options—

THE LESSON ON SUFFERING

HERE'S THE POINT.

Suffering may be the condition from which humans benefit the most.

When you suffer, you feel rejected. Even, sometimes, by God. Yet just the opposite may be true. Some of the pain you suffer in life is actually God's honoring you. It means he's drawing you near to himself. Face it—too often we turn to God only when things are so tough that we have nowhere left to turn.

Job was a servant of God who learned to turn to God during suffering. When the bottom dropped out, he couldn't find help in his circumstances, his family, or his friends. In the end he found his help in God. And that made all the difference.

SNOOZE

BUSTER!

Get kids to show their preferences by some sort of action. For instance, designate one side of the room as the place to stand if they vote for the first option, and the other side of the room for the other option. Or tell them to stand up if they want option one and stay seated if they want option two.

For more "Would you rather...?" questions, check out *Would You Rather...?* by Doug Fields, and—by Les Christie—*What If...?* and *Have You Ever...?* (all published by Youth Specialties). They'll get your kids talking (especially during long van rides).

only they weren't optional. One of those things in each pair just happened to him—unasked for.

Think about the pain you've experienced in the context of Job's experience. While discovering Job's story, look for ways you can, like Job, embrace the blessings found only in the wounds.

BIBLE LESSON

Ouch—this hurts

You'll need...

- *index cards*
- *pencils*



Before you begin your talk, pass out an index card to each of your students. Give them a minute to think of the most painful experience they've ever had. Ask them to write their name and a short description of their experience on the card.

Tell them they must turn in their index cards to you at the end of your talk. Warn them that you'll be reading each one out loud, though without identifying the writers. Your group will then vote on which experience they think is the worst. That person will receive the Suffering Servant Award.

Although the story of Job is 42 chapters long, your lesson focuses only on select passages that summarize the main idea of the story. Here's your outline:

JOB'S CIRCUMSTANCES

 Job chapters 1 and 2



Of all the tragedies that happened to Job, not one of them was his fault. They were circumstances that Satan arranged and that God allowed.



We are let in on the behind-the-scenes interaction between God and Satan. From our insider view we learn of the spiritual dimension of Job's troubles. Job, on the other hand, was clueless. For all he knew, he had been abandoned by God.



Even so, Job did not curse God for what happened (Job 1:22, 2:10). He accepted his circumstances even though he didn't understand what was going on.

JOB'S COMPANIONS




Job's companions tried to make him feel better by telling him what to do.




Job's wife (2:9)


1. She often gets a bad rap for her obvious bitterness.


2. Remember, though, that all her children had just been killed by a natural disaster. In the depths of her grief, she questioned a God who allowed innocent people to suffer.
3. Many people react to suffering like Job's wife did: with bitterness.


 Job chapter 4
chapter 8
chapter 15
chapter 32

-  Job's three friends (Job 2:12,13)
1. Although they started out very well, sitting with Job, crying with him, and not saying a word, things went downhill when they opened their mouths.
 2. Highlight a few of their comments, and remind kids that much of what they say isn't wrong—it's just that their comments don't apply to Job's situation.
 3. We all make some heinous mistakes in trying to be a friend, like listening too little and talking too much, thinking we know exactly how our friend feels, or trying to fix situations with pat answers.


JOB'S CONFRONTATION


 Ultimately, Job stops listening to his friends and starts listening to God.


 How often do we get to that point? Most of the time, we take our pain to others, hoping they have the words to make us feel better.


 Job shows us that our best bet is to take our pain to God.

 Job chapters 38-41


 God answers Job by questioning him. Through God's questions, Job finds the perspective he needs.


 Job 42:1-6

 Job's response in the last chapter shows that he understood his pain in a new way.

 God had been faithful in giving Job the answers he needed.

 Job 42:7

 The irony of Job's offering a sacrifice to God for his friends' misunderstanding shows that people who appear to have all the right answers can't always be trusted.

 Ultimately, we shouldn't assume people who suffer are being punished by God. It might be they're being honored by him—being counted worthy to bear the pain.

Now collect all the cards that describe the difficult circumstances your students have been through.

Without reading any names, read the situations out loud to your group. Have the students vote on which situation they think is the hardest or most painful. Call up to the front the student who wrote about that experience and give her the Suffering Servant Award.

As you are giving the student her prize, make the connection back to Job by saying something like this—

Usually, we are pitied for our pain. But Job shows us that in God's opinion we should be honored for bearing up under painful circumstances. Therefore, we give this award today to the person who has been through the most pain as a reminder to us that suffering is not always bad.

Instead of running from our pain, may we let it do its work in our lives.

SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION

Tried but true

You'll need...

- *copies of Job: Tried But True—Small Group Q's 10.1*
- *pencils*
- *extra Bibles*

The handout contains discussion-starting questions that will drive your kids to the Bible for answers (and even more questions).

APPLICATION

Quit talking for once and listen

You'll need...

- *copies of The Message of Job—Making Connections 10.2*
- *pencils*

The Making Connections worksheet is Job 42:2-6 in *The Message*—a contemporary-language translation of parts of the Bible. Pass it out and ask a student to read it aloud. Tell students to list on their sheets all the things Job learned from his experience of suffering. Then give them a few quiet moments to circle the lessons that are most significant to them right now.

Eugene Peterson's *The Message* now includes the New Testament and the book of Job (NavPress, 1996). Pick one up, being the suffering servant you are. After all, you work with teenagers—and in your pain, you are honored. (The day you start cutting yourself with pottery, however, means it's probably time to find a new church.)

Job: tried but true

Read aloud or skim the following Scriptures.
Use what you learn to discuss the related questions.

1 As a group, make a list on the back of this sheet of all the things that cause people to suffer.

2 Do you think God allows suffering because he's punishing us? Why or why not?

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Job 1:1-19

3 Why did God allow Job to suffer?

4 Do you think God was unfair? How do you think Job felt?

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Job 2:1-10

5 What do you think Job thought when he was sitting among the ashes? Have you ever felt this way? What did you do?

6 Why do you think Job's wife's was so bitter?

7 Do you know any bitter people? What causes them to feel that way?

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Job 2:11-13

8 When you were there for a friend who was going through a hard time, what did you do or say (if anything)? How did your friend respond to you?

9 Did you feel good about the way you supported them? (Have the group share their experiences.)

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Read Job's first words in Job 3

10 Have you ever been this depressed? If so, what did you do (if anything) to feel better? What finally made you feel better?

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Job 4:6-8

11 What did Eliphaz say to comfort Job? Do you think his advice was helpful?

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Job 8:4-6

12 What did Bildad say? Was it helpful?

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Job 11:14-17

13 How about Zophar?

.....
Job 16:1-2

14 Have your friends ever comforted you with words that didn't really help? How did it make you feel?

15 Can you relate to Job's response to his friends?

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Job chapter 31

16 Have you ever been mad enough at God to lay out your case before him the way Job did? If not, why not? If so, what did you do?

.....
Job chapters 38-42:7

17 Although God answered Job by asserting his authority as Creator, do you get the feeling that he was angry with Job for questioning him?

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Job 42:10-16

18 What happened to Job in the end?

.....
Job 42: 1-6

19 How did his perspective change in the process?

20 What does all this teach you about your relationship with God?

The Message of

Job

Read the Scripture below from the book of Job. In the space below the Bible passage, list the things Job learned from his experience, based on this Scripture.

JOB ANSWERED GOD:

"I'm convinced: You can do anything and everything.
Nothing and no one can upset your plans.
You asked, 'Who is this muddying the water,
Ignorantly confusing the issue, second-guessing my purposes?'
I admit it. I was the one. I babbled on about things far beyond me,
Made small talk about wonders way over my head.
You told me, 'Listen, and let me do the talking.
Let me ask the questions. You give the answers.'
I admit I once lived by rumors of you;
Now I have it all firsthand—from my own eyes and ears!
I'm sorry—forgive me. I'll never do that again, I promise!
I'll never again live on crusts of hearsay, crumbs of rumor."

—from Eugene Peterson's *The Message: Job*

THINGS JOB LEARNED FROM HIS EXPERIENCE: