

SUMMARY AND REVIEW

1. Take 5-10 minutes to discuss last week's sermon.
2. What are your experiences or associations with the Book of Job?

INTRO TO THE TEXT:

These passages from the Prologue to the Book of Job alternate between heavenly and earthly settings. God and Satan discuss Job's upcoming tests of faith, and then we see them unfold in Job's life.

READ Job 1:8-22; 2:3-10

ANALYZE THE TEXT

1. What four recurring adjectives/phrases does God use to describe Job? Refer to Ezekiel 14:13-14 for more insight. What else do we learn in Job 1:4-6?
2. What is Satan's main complaint? Read Rev. 12:9-10 & 1 Peter 5:8-9. What do these passages reveal about Satan's role and his ultimate fate?
3. What are the first four losses and the earthly causes of each? What trends or patterns do you notice?
4. What limits did God place on Satan for each test? Do you find this comforting or disturbing? Why?

A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER:

There is scholarly debate over the when, where, and who of the Book of Job and whether it is allegorical or historical. This is fitting as the book is full of mystery, raising more questions than answers. Rather than delve into explanations surrounding the book's origin and authorship, it is more useful to focus on two concepts applicable to our lives: what does the Book of Job say about *suffering* about *faith*?

The Prologue sets up a sort of heavenly bet to test Job's faith through the medium of loss and suffering. Satan argues that Job *only* worships God because of the "hedge" (v. 10) of blessing and prosperity he receives in return. Satan cannot fathom how man can love God without any attached rewards and is insistent on proving his case. This glimpse into the spiritual world, however disturbing and difficult to comprehend, arms us with insight into Job's plight.

Keep in mind that Job is not aware of this backstory - he does not know his faith is on trial.

In a dramatic series of dovetailing tragic events, Job, a God-fearing and prosperous man, suddenly loses his worldly wealth consisting of animals and servants (his livelihood) and children (his legacy). With faith still intact, his response is to worship God as he mourns.

Having passed the first test, Satan urges God to strike his health. Refusing to renounce his faith as suggested by his grieving wife, he sits on an ash heap outside the city scraping his head-to-toe boils with a shard of pottery. Job is isolated by loss, grief, and disease. He is reduced to a mere shadow of his former self.

As we consider this cosmic wager between Satan and God, we are invited to wrestle with serious questions: Why does a good God allow suffering? Why do good people suffer and bad people prosper? Who is to blame? Is suffering connected to sin? Is God unfair, silent, or hidden when we suffer?

APPLY Break up into groups of men & women.

1. Describe a time when you experienced suffering.
2. Was your faith strengthened or strained as a result?
3. In what ways do you relate to God when you experience suffering? How does He relate to you? Has He ever withdrawn?

MEMORIZE

Job 1:21 and or Job 2:10b Job 1:21)

Homework (the good kind): It's often said that we are either in a time of suffering, have recently experienced one, or are about to enter one. Where are you? Practice thanking the Lord for his refining work in your life, whether past or present. Reflect on the memory verses from Job, and perhaps write a journal response. Ask God to help you worship Him regardless of your circumstances. Our gracious Father truly understands your pain - ask Him to draw you close and speak to you through it.

Suggestions for further reading: *Disappointment with God* - Philip Yancey; *A Grace Disguised* - Jerry Sittser