



SESSION

3

THE STORY OF
JOB & GOD



1. I have more pain than the people sitting here would even guess.

2. I grew up with bedtime stories that said, if you live right you will be blessed, and if you do wrong you will be punished.

3. Many of the financially “blessed” people I know are not really good people.

4. There are certain people whose prayers are answered more consistently than others.

5. God exposes secret sins by withdrawing his blessings.

YES • NO • MAYBE

A SUMMARY OF JOB 4 & 5

• The three friends who were introduced at the close of chap. 2 have not said a word for a week; now they begin to speak. Job chapter 4 is the first chapter in the book of Job where Job's friends begin to offer their advice and comfort. Eliphaz, the eldest of the three friends, begins by complimenting Job on his previous acts of righteousness. However, he then goes on to suggest that Job's suffering is a punishment from God for some hidden sin. He argues that Job's previous acts of righteousness do not guarantee that he will be immune from God's judgment.

• Eliphaz continues in chapter 5, stating that Job is a proud man, and that he has forgotten God. He warns Job that if he does not repent, his suffering will only get worse. He also says that Job's children must have sinned, and that this is why they were killed.

∞ Eliphaz's argument is based on the idea that God is just and that he rewards the good and punishes the wicked. How does Eliphaz's view of God match what you have heard from other people when you were younger?

- What conflict does this cause with the biblical view of God's character in light of other Scriptures?

DIG DEEP

JOB'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

- 4:6 - "Should not your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope?": Eliphaz's introductory paragraph concludes with a question. The expected answer to this rhetorical question is yes. It seemed to Eliphaz that Job's piety and "blameless ways" should now be expressed appropriately as confidence and hope. One would expect Job to have reflected on his religious faith and on his good record. That, however, was precisely the problem. His "piety" and "hope" was that God was good and did good things for those whose ways were "blameless" (a term God himself used in 1:8 to describe Job to the Satan).

∞ Why do you think that bad things happen to good people, and why doesn't God protect us from this?

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

Eliphaz seemed to know of no innocent person who suffered, and he apparently had never witnessed the upright destroyed. He had no place in his theology to put Job except among the guilty and the godless. Despite all he knew of Job's piety and good works, Eliphaz could not account for Job's suffering except to view it as punishment for sin. Neither he nor his friends had a category for the righteous sufferer. None of them had read about the man born blind in John 9:1-3 or of God's purpose in pruning fruitful vines in John 15:2.

∞ Does God bring suffering into people's lives because of their secret sins? If not, where does the suffering come from?

- 5:1 - "Call if you will, but who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you turn?"

5:1 Eliphaz challenged Job to call, presumably to an angel or one of the "holy ones." He's making the point that Job would find no help because in Eliphaz's eyes he was an unrepentant sinner and hence a fool. To this rhetorical question as well the answer is negative: no one will answer you, and there is no holy one to whom you can turn, implying that angels are not prepared to help fools.

∞ How is this viewpoint heresy, and what other Bible references can you think of that tell us the opposite viewpoint of God's willingness to answer foolish sinners when they call upon Him?

1. How much of my suffering is caused by my own choices?
2. How am I maintaining my faith that God hears all of my prayers, regardless of my sinfulness?
3. How does this help to clarify my understanding of God's character?

