



Introduction

The following questions, prayers and comments are intended to assist you through a Bible study time this summer, especially if we are still practicing social distancing because of COVID-19. Pastor John Foss will continue to provide his sermon notes for each of his Sunday morning sermons. Watch on Facebook Live or commhope.freeonlinechurch.com/live at 9 am on Sundays. This study and Pastor John's sermons will cover 15 men & women of the Bible. Weekly studies like these will be available each week. If you have any questions, please e-mail koko@commhope.org.

Week 3: Job – Pain & Purity

Prayer of preparation: (Record your own prayer if you prefer)

Lord guard me from my beliefs in what is fair or unfair. Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me. Open my eyes and ears as I seek your presence. Amen.

Bible reference: Please, read the book of Job

Context: This book was written somewhere between 2000 and 1000 years before Christ. Because there are no personal pronouns used in the telling of this story it is believed that this book is not written by Job, himself. One popular theory is that it was written by a Sage living before the time of King David. What is a sage? By comparison with what is a prophet, we can better understand what is a Sage. Prophets spoke for God, focused on divine justice. Sages spoke from a human perspective addressing human reasoning and social issues, for the purpose of helping people apply knowledge to their daily lives. This story reminds me of the stories Jesus told of the Good Samaritan, the pearl of great price and others that were used to illustrate a point rather than describe a reality.

I used to think of the book of Job as a study in pain and politics. As I prepared for this study I have seen it more as an exploration of what it is to be faithful, in sickness or health, in good times and bad; much like many of us promised in our wedding vows.

Questions, comments and cross references:

- Read: Job 1:1-5 and think of a person that you know or know about, that embodies characteristics like the ones used to describe Job.
- Think of a time when someone tried to divide you from another person. Notice the trap Satan attempts to spring on God, using Job in verse 9. What do you believe Satan was doing when he was roaming the earth in verse 7?
- Read: Job 2:11 to the end of the chapter. Do you know any friends that are like Zophar, Bildad and Eliphaz?

- Try these verses for a summary of what Job’s three friends tried to tell Job about what has befallen him:
 - Eliphaz: Job 4:7-9, 5:17-27, 22:21-22
 - Bildad: 8:5-6, 18:2-4,
 - Zophar: 11:13-20, 20:1-9

Summarize these verses down to a couple of lines and compare them to what you might say to a sufferer. These three men have set aside a great deal of time and energy to sympathize with Job. The problem does not lie in their commitment to Job rather it lies in what they think they know about God and justice. Hopefully, I will think about Job’s friends the next time I am tempted to say, “You’ll get what you deserve”. While what Job’s friends said to him might have represented the theology of his time it was of no comfort or use to him.

Remembering the description of Job at the beginning of the book, read Job 13:13-19. We are told often in our culture how important it is to have confidence. Based on what we know about Job explain what is meant by verse 15.

The first three men attacked Job's righteousness and claimed that Job was being punished for a sin he must have committed, or that his children died for their sins.

Their limited understanding was that God would have only inflicted Job with such pain if Job had some hidden evil in him. Their accusations got more and more pointed, leading Job to exclaim "Ten times now you have reproached me!" Job 19:3

Elihu, Job 32:1-5, the younger, conversely, promoted the righteousness of God in taking any course of action, regardless of the good or evil of man. He took Job to task for thinking that it was futile to be good then, if the good could face trials as well as the wicked. He pointed out that the Lord will repay men for what they have done (in this life or the next), so it is very profitable to fear the Lord even if one does not see immediate benefit. This is wisdom that flies in the face of Satan’s contention that the only reason Job loves God is that God is good to him. If God allows evil to happen, Job will not love Him, Job1:9.

The moment when Jesus dies on the cross, he shouts from the cross a phrase that can be applicable to the way Job is feeling in this time. The phrase is found in both Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. The ESV of the Bible says it this way: “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”

It is odd that the source of all love would turn away from his own son. When Jesus cries out this phrase, it is a reference to Psalm 22. This Psalm is held to be a messianic psalm and one where the author (King David) appears to be sharing in some vision of what will happen to the Lord’s Messiah. In Psalm 22:6-8, it says that David’s enemies are mocking him, specifically because he trusts in the Lord and that the Lord would rescue him. Matthew 27:35-44 and Mark 15:29-32 both say that the people mocking Jesus claimed that if God loved him so much, then God

should save him in that moment. Psalm 22, though a Messianic Psalm, is also classified as a lament (another category of Psalm). Laments are notable in that not only do they describe an unbearable situation in which the author finds himself, they also declare a universal dependence upon the Lord and gratitude is offered for the grace of God. When Jesus cried out the first verse of this Psalm, he was also calling out his dependence upon God and his gratitude for the benevolence of God (Psalm 22:3-5, 9-11, 19-31). He recognized the desperation of humanity that suddenly hung upon his shoulders and even in that agonizing moment, his voice called out to show that only God can deliver us. Jesus committed his Spirit to God, see Matthew 27:50, and God resurrected him from the dead, even as God restored life to Job. Death is not as great as our relationship with God; our relationship is everything.

Job's turmoil is expressed by him relentlessly in his responses to his friends and his anger at God. But like David, Job goes to God with his cries; he challenges God, he reprimands God but he does not turn away. God was right about Job. For me, this is the message of the story of Job.

Comments: With all the difficulties and dangers facing us in our time, I am often tempted to feel helpless and intimidated. In Job 42:8 God says that Job will pray for his friends and that God will accept Job's intercessory prayer and not deal with the friends in a manner fitting with their folly. This verse reassured me that the relationship with Job and God was fully restored. It made me understand the celebrations in heaven when one of us turns toward God, see Luke 15:10. Do not be afraid, do not turn away from God.

Prayer: Lord help me to see the difference between my goodness and your purity. Help me to be humble in the face of those that suffer. Thank you for showing us your power and your grace. Amen