

JOB Bible Reading Schedule

4 Weeks

WEEK 1

Job is a fascinating Book. I invite you to begin exploring the depths of Job's story. I would suggest to you that it is like deep sea fishing. So, put on your wet suit and oxygen tank and take the plunge with me.

I suggest that you read the text from the New Living Translation. I have compared it to the other translations I use (ESV & NIV) and have found the NLT translation illuminates the message of Job in a more understandable way for me.

Obviously, Job is known as the Book in the Bible about suffering. But if you want to understand the why of suffering, you will be disappointed with the Book's explanation. In fact, that is one of the marvels of Job's experience; he demanded an explanation and God didn't give him one. But, nonetheless, Job draws closer to God through his suffering with the theme verse saying, "I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes." (Job 42:5)

The story of Job takes place around the time of Abraham. His story was passed on through the strong oral tradition of that time and possibly recorded during Israel's wilderness wanderings but could have been recorded later since Job is not mentioned until the prophet Ezekiel as well as Jeremiah. The story of Job is recognized as historical believing Job to be a real person in the plan of God. As we journey through this Book, the Spirit of Lord will bring us to a similar place as with Job so that we get a clearer picture of the Sovereignty of God. Which theme do you need for your spiritual growth: suffering, Satan's attacks, God's goodness, pride or trusting? Thank you for joining me for a walk through the dark valley of Job.

DAY 1 – Job 1 & 2

The introduction of Job is worth a second read, for sure. There are a number of places to camp out in these two chapters. Something that caught my eye and appears to be a major theme is Satan suggesting that Job would curse God if the good things that blessed his life were taken away. "...he will surely curse you to your face!" (1:11 & 2:5) Instead, Job responded, "Praise the name of the Lord!" (1:21) "Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad!" (2:10) God knew and Satan didn't it. Job did later curse the day of his birth (3:1,8), but he did not curse God (31:30), even when his distraught wife urged him to do so (2:9). From the very beginning you can sense the depth of this Book. We often can assume that believing in God protects us from trouble and so when difficulty comes, we are prone to ask "why?" But Job's beginning response is very profound to me: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of Lord." (1:21, ESV) That profession of faith sticks out to me as especially powerful as well as so valuable for my own journey of faith. Job passed the initial test and continued to love God for who he is, not for what he gives. What aspect of the introduction to our story impresses you the most? Why?

DAY 2 – Job 3 & 4

We left chapter 2 as three friends come to support Job. They don't say anything for seven days. This kind of beginning seems positive even though the circumstances are so incredibly difficult. In the hardest of times, having friends who are just willing to be there with you can be so helpful. But these friends could not resist giving their assessment of the situation as Eliphaz shares in chapter 4. However, Job is the first to speak out. His honesty and complaint are understandable in light of the circumstances, in my opinion. He lamented these conditions and went as far as to say, "I wish I had never been born." (3:11) Job is deeply grieved, "I have no peace, no quietness, I have no rest; only trouble comes." (3:26) This leads us to Eliphaz response. I can easily understand his response to Job. I have often heard people lament about the difficulties of life and my inclination is to try to fix the problem. But when Eliphaz suggests that he has heard from God, he is posing himself as prophet who is the one now that should be punished. Some of what Job's friend shares resonates with me like verse 17 declaring human beings to be sinful creatures and God is the only sinless one. But he insinuates that Job is suffering because of his sin. This will be a repeated theme by Job's friends. Words to a suffering soul are overrated. Eliphaz was too eager to explain things to Job. He could have validated Job's pain and grief but he didn't. In our love for people who are suffering, let's be slow to speak and quick to listen. Amen?! What caught your eye as the dialogue begins?

DAY 3 – Job 5 & 6

Some of the words of advice from Eliphaz in chapter 5 seem true and even helpful but the timing is all off. For example, verse 8, "If I were you, I would go to God and present my case to him." Job will actually do that beginning in chapter 29 but Eliphaz is not listening to Job. Job is not asking for advice. He needs support and encouragement. Job is suffering and his friend wants to simplify the situation by advising him to tell God to intervene. If that doesn't work then repent; there must be sin your life. "But consider the joy of those corrected by God! Do not despise the discipline of the Almighty when you sin." (5:18) When I listen to the pain and agony of others, am I quick to quote a verse or give some premature advice? Job is essentially saying that is exactly what his friends are doing. "Don't I have a right to complain?" (6:5) "At least I can take comfort in this: Despite the pain, I have not denied the words of the Holy One." (6:10) Amen to that! "One should be kind to a fainting friend, but you accuse me without any fear of the Almighty." (6:14) I have realized my error in supporting people with advice or problem solving when they needed a listening ear or a supportive friend. My failure has taught me the hard way because sometimes it results in a severed relationship. Truth telling is important, of course. But when you share it makes a big difference. "Everyone enjoys a fitting reply; it is wonderful to say the right thing at the right time." (Proverbs 15:23) How does this approach to caregiving apply to your life?

DAY 4 – Job 7 & 8

Job has previously acknowledged the Lord but in this chapter, he begins to talk with the Lord. I think this is a good step. His prayer isn't pretty but talking with God makes more sense than debating with friends. Essentially, Job is venting in prayer; at least from verses 6 to 16. And his prayer is not exactly correct suggesting that the Lord will not be able to see him when he dies. The place of Sheol is thought of as being in the depths of the earth where not even God could see Job. But the Scriptures teach us that not even Sheol can hide us from God, "If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave (Sheol), you are there." (Psalm 139:8) His venting turns into questioning God by verse 17. I am not critical of Job; in fact, quite the contrary. His connection with God is the most hopeful aspect of his suffering. Verse 20 stands out to me, "If I have sinned, what have I done to you (his friends told him that he must have sinned against God), O watcher of all humanity? Why make me your target? Am I a burden to you?" Three times in these verses Job prays "why?" But we understand that Job's emotions are very raw. Job's friends judge him for his deep lament but God doesn't. The Bible is filled with honest prayers of lament. Our questions, frustrations and even anger are not too big for God. But Bildad doesn't even get close to supporting Job. His perspective is one of cause and effect. His stance could be expressed like this, "God

could not be unjust, and God would not punish a just man; therefore, Job must be unjust.” Bildad is even less compassionate and less of a friend than Eliphaz. Bildad responded from his head and not his heart. How does Job’s prayer strike you? How does Bildad’s counsel strike you? Why?

DAY 5 – Job 9 & 10

These are important chapters as Job contemplates the greatness of God in chapter 9 and also pleads with God in chapter 10. There are many touch points for us to consider but I am drawn to the last four verses of chapter 9 (vv. 32-35). In the NLT, the word used is “mediator.” Job longs for a mediator which is translated “arbiter” in the ESV. Both words refer to someone standing in the gap. Job perceives the chasm between himself and God to be very wide. “Who I am that I should try to answer God?” (9:14) His words are partially an indictment against his friends who have not served him well. The image is one of Job being in God’s court and he is on trial. As we listen to Job, his speech seems like a complicated legal case. One minute he realizes his guilt and the next minute he is innocent. One minute he declares God wise and present and the next minute God is unseen and distant. How should we respond to the confusing nature of Job’s faith and connection to the God who created all things and was intimately directing the formation of Job’s life. “You gave me life and showed me your unfailing love...” (10:14) For me, Job must be a worthy example of pursuing God in the most difficult of circumstances. His desire for a mediator makes sense to me. I need a mediator too. I have two thoughts about the wonder of these two chapters. 1) We are not meant to know or understand everything. There’s a measure of peace when we realize that some aspects of life are a mystery. 2) Jesus has made the Almighty God knowable. He is the mediator Job needed and he is the mediator that makes all the difference in our lives. “So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1) In the highs of life as well as the depths, knowing Jesus supersedes the confusion that pain and suffering cause. How does Jesus help you in the midst of suffering? What else stands out to you in these two chapters?

WEEK 2

Our readings for this week could be entitled, “Counselors: Can you trust them?” The Book of Proverbs suggests that counselors are helpful and improve our odds of success. But this was not the case for Job. In fact, later on the Lord will rebuke the friends of Job. As I said last week, it seems to me that Job’s friends were thinking too much and not feeling enough for their friend. Too often Job’s counselors gave correct teaching but they misfired on how it specifically applied to Job. They made many assumptions. Their poor example continues to teach us how NOT to do it.

DAY 1 – Job 11 & 12

We are introduced to the third friend named Zophar. It is hard to believe that Zophar will be even less empathic than the other two. We might have anticipated the final friend with hope that he might be different. But he speaks out against Job with anger and arrogant words. Job’s friends were strong on principle and weak on application. They did not have any evidence that what they were saying was true for Job. Their counsel could be summarized, “You must have sinned and done evil in God’s sight because you are experiencing God’s divine judgment.” “For he (God) knows those who are false, and he takes note of all their sins.” (11:11) Zophar is suggesting that Job is hiding his sin. But we understand that Zophar’s assumption was wrong. So, Job says this in response, “He (God) leads counselors away, stripped of good judgment; wise judges become fools.” (12:17) As if to say, how can you be so sure of yourself. Does Zophar know the thoughts of Job? Does he understand all the mysteries of God? In our sermon series on Timothy, Paul’s concern is for Timothy is boldness. But in our reading from Job, his friends needed some genuine humility. My thoughts often center around boldness and humility these days. Was I bold; was I humble? Too often, I am one or the other. But the Spirit of God is both. Zophar

was not speaking words of the Spirit because he had no humility. Let's examine our interaction with friends and people in our lives. Do you reflect boldness and humility?

DAY 2 – Job 13 & 14

The first 19 verses of chapter 13 are especially strong and cause me to say, "Amen!" Essentially Job says, "I am not listening to you." He will approach God instead. Job is wise enough to know that his friends are not helpful and aren't speaking wisely. "If only you could be silent! That's the wisest thing you could do." (13:5) I appreciate his boldness in confronting his friends. But as much as I affirm Job's directness to his friends, I am concerned about his words to the Almighty. I know the Lord accepts our lament and it would make sense that Job would be depressed about all that he has experienced. I want Job to be bold with his friends and humble toward God. But as one commentary wrote, "It was a necessary step for Job to be angry and then bargain with God about death. Could death be turned around and bring life again? (14:14) When we go through suffering and have to endure the pain, we have an advantage over Job. We know that the dead will rise. Christ rose, and we have hope based on Christ's promise in John 14:19. Job was expressing his frustration about suffering in verses 18-22. But could Job be getting closer to accepting the loss and suffering he is experiencing? The grief cycle has been examined. The point of acceptance is the final one. I notice Job on the journey of grief. How would you assess his progress? How do you understand the process of grief for your life?

DAY 3 – Job 15 & 16

"Have you no fear of God, no reverence for him" (15:4) I was hoping for different words from Eliphaz this time around. This is his second response and begins a new round of dialogue between Job and his friends. If Eliphaz has something positive to say I can't find it. He accuses Job of unbelief, corruption, and sinfulness because Job is suffering. This historic book is meant to shape our understanding of suffering. We will not be helped by Job's friends in understanding suffering unless we learn from them how not to do it. Suffering has one purpose, in their thinking, and that is to reveal sin. Jesus made it clear in John 9 (verses 1-5) that sin is not the only reason for suffering. Suffering is more connected to a fallen world where good behavior is not always rewarded and bad behavior is not always punished. Innocent people sometimes suffer. This is clearly portrayed in our story of Job. But what Job needed is what he would want to give if the roles were reversed. "But if it were me, I would encourage you. I would try to take away your grief." (16:5) That is what Job needed, yet, none of his friends displayed that kind of empathy. His friends seemed to enjoy hearing themselves talk (16:3). They were full of criticism and even accusation (16:4). They often gave pat answers to a complex situation. Job would know better how to support someone in their pain now. In fact, that principle is outlined in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 which is well worth reading. To suffer well is to realize God is teaching you something deeper which he will use in your life and in the lives of others if you let him. How have you been able to comfort others through how you have been comforted?

DAY 4 – Job 17 & 18

"My eyes are swollen with weeping, and I am but a shadow of my former self." (17:7) As I read the written words of Job, I constantly think of how deeply he is grieving which makes sense. I have mentioned his anger and even the idea of bargaining with God. It reminds me of something I have read about grief and have seen take place in the lives of people who go through a difficult loss. I am sure you have notice this also. I mentioned this two days ago and want to outline it further. In 1969, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross described the Five Stages of Grief with this outline: 1) DENIAL – "I don't believe it. Deep shock. This doesn't feel real. It can't be happening to me." 2) ANGER – "I don't deserve this. Someone's to blame. God, it's not fair." 3) BARGAINING – "Please God/doctor, if you heal me, I'll do anything for you." 4) DEPRESSION – "What's the point? My situation is hopeless." 5) ACCEPTANCE – "I need to get on and make the most of life within these limitations." I bet you have noticed these types of responses

from Job. You probably have also experience them yourself when you had gone through a significant loss. This can help us normalize Job's anger with God and even his desire to be done with this and die. Again, Bildad shows no empathy with statements like, "You may tear out your hair in anger..." (18:4) He goes on to confront the wicked with statements of judgment and demise. He does so, in a sideways manner, to insinuate that Job must be like the wicked since he is getting what the wicked deserve. This will not give Job strength but only make his grief worse as we will read in the next chapter. How do you respond to the stages of grief?

DAY 5 – Job 19 & 20

Zophar rants about the destruction of the wicked which can only be connected to his judgment of Job. You are being punished like the wicked so you must be wicked. These words are so arrogant as Zophar points a crooked finger at Job. After reading chapter 19, my empathy for Job was stronger and my hope for him is deeper. No one else has supported Job, not even his family. I had wondered about his wife and in verse 17 it says she was repelled by him and his breath made her sick. In other words, she didn't want to be around him either. As the sayings, add insult to injury. But verse 25 jumps off the page. We have not heard words like these, so far. Job affirms the identity of God as a redeemer. There's strong indication that Job is speaking prophetically. His friends acted prophetically but they were full of pride. Job, in his humility, speaks about the plan of God to stand on the earth as his redeemer one day. Because we live as New Testament believers, we know that the redeemer to come is none other than Jesus Christ. I want to believe that God gave Job a glimpse of what is to come. In the darkness of his circumstances, he sees a glimmer of light that points to seeing the Lord with his own eyes. "I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!" (19:27) Isn't this uplifting after so many chapters that display a lack of hope. I believe the Lord was giving Job some hope when he needed it the most. How do you respond to these words? How might they stir up hope in you?

WEEK 3

This next week of readings in Job will highlight him the most. Only two chapters pertain to the words of Job's friends. I would suggest that their limited wisdom ran out. I am not saying that everything Job says is the absolute truth but I am drawn to his pursuit of God in the midst of intense suffering. That is worth noting over and over again. Job expresses innocence in these chapters. But is anyone innocent? The Lord did refer to Job as "blameless—a man of complete integrity." (1:8, 2:3) Did Job sin in his suffering? Probably. But his faith in God remained throughout. Because Job is justified by his faith, like Abraham, he is seen as a righteous because of the anticipated plan of God to save the world through the shed blood of Jesus. Job is an Old Testament saint!

DAY 1 – Job 21 & 22

I am giving less time and energy to the final words of Job's three friends and spending more time contemplating the words of Job. In this chapter Job refutes Zophar's idea that evil people never experience wealth and happiness. But Job points out the reality that God does what he pleases even if it doesn't make sense to us. Speaking of the wicked, he says, "They spend their days in prosperity, then go down to the grave in peace." (21:13) Success to Job's friends was based on outward performance; success to God, however, is based on a person's heart. Psalm 73 expresses a similar sentiment as Job does in chapter 21. As the Psalmist complains about the success of the ungodly, he comes to a conclusion of surrender. God will do what is right and just, why should I worry about the fate of the wealthy or the prosperity of the wicked. As for me, the Psalmist writes, "My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever." (Psalm 73:26) Will Job come to the same conclusion. We'll see. Will you come to the same conclusion?

DAY 2 – Job 23 & 24

“But he knows where I am going. And when he tests me, I will come out as pure as gold.” (23:10) In chapter 22, Eliphaz had tried to condemn Job by identifying some secret sin which he may have committed. But Job is confident in God’s justice as well as God’s sovereignty. He says, “Whatever he wants to do, he does.” (23:13) These words have me reeling. I am not confident that Job is saying them in an honorable way. Do I think Job is being arrogant? Is it possible to say, “I have stayed on God’s paths; I have followed his ways and not turned aside” (23:11) without some sense of pride involved? I may have some counsel for Job. I only hope my counsel is accurate. To me, we always have some hidden sin; sins we don’t even know about because God is absolutely holy and we always fall short. The “testing” part of Job’s suffering is crucial to Job’s understanding of how to navigate through these troubled waters. It doesn’t seem like he is embracing the refiner’s fire but rather suggesting that he is already innocent and will be proven to be so. I think that summarizes my discomfort with Job’s posture. Job will come along in the proceeding chapters but fairly slowly. I sense that Job’s story is about the deep work of God’s Spirit necessary for us to live in submission to God no matter what comes our way. But, like Job’s story, there is mystery and uncertainty for me that calls out faith in me for our trustworthy God. But I can be callous to the immensity of Job’s pain. I would like to fall back on the assurance of God’s mercy even though Job seems to point an accusing finger toward the Lord. How might God be testing you through something painful or disappointing?

DAY 3 – Job 25-27

We will focus on the words of Job for the rest of the week. He maintains his innocence. However, today I want to contemplate the final words of Bildad. He has 6 short verses in this first chapter to highlight. As I read it, I like some of it and I dislike it as well. Maybe I just want to really grapple with the shortest chapter in the Book. This might surprise you but I agree with his view of God because he is speaking about the greatest of God and His holiness. But his view of mankind is contrary to the Bible which describes human beings as created in God’s image and the focal point of his creation rather than maggots or worms. So, he and his friends conclude that Job must be in the wrong because God is always in the right. Bildad’s posture toward Job is still upsetting but his point is true, “How can a mortal be innocent before God? Can anyone born of a woman be pure?” (25:4) This is what we know: When held up to the light of Christ’s absolute righteousness, Job stands with all of us as a sinner. Job was not justified by his deeds but by his faith just like Abraham. However, it does not appear to me that he understands this kind of grace. Nonetheless, ultimately, he trusts God through all this and that is very similar to Abraham. If Job’s friends were more teachable and gracious, they might be able to speak the truth in love. But their words of counsel finally conclude, being of no comfort to Job. To me, his friends represent the person who stonewalls any “give and take” necessary for friendship and helpful advice. I learned this principle from Stephen Covey: “seek first to understand and then be understood.” After reading the words of indictment from his so-called friends in chapters 4, 5, 8, 11, 15, 18, 20, 22, and 25... what say you? For me, as I have previously said, they teach me more about how not to than how to. What about you?

DAY 4 – Job 28 & 29

In chapter 29, Job is reminiscing about how life used to be for him. He will contrast that with his present anguish in chapter 30 which we will read tomorrow. But Chapter 28 has my attention today. It is a fascinating chapter with a message about wisdom not unlike the Book of Proverbs. This similarity has a few scholars believing that Solomon might have recorded the Book of Job to give meaning to the sorrow of life. It does take deep wisdom to understand the complexity of life. Job’s questions about true wisdom and his pursuit of understanding are beyond his reach. James tells us that true wisdom comes from heaven. James 3:17 & 18 is a good reminder for us concerning the gift of wisdom that seemingly it was buried too deep for Job to embrace. Verse 13 says that no one knows where to find it, “for it is not found among the living.” As much as Job tells us it is beyond our reach, he uses words that Solomon

shared, "The fear of the Lord is true wisdom." (28:28) Solomon said it was the beginning of wisdom. I find encouragement in verses 23-28 because they make sense to me. "God alone understands the way of wisdom." (28:23) I want this poem on wisdom to be the discovery of Job because it moves him closer to a surrendered life. You know we will see that surrendered life by the close of this book. But let me remind you of the Apostle Paul's words in Romans 11:33, "Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!" A high view of God and His wisdom will lead us forward. Do you agree? Why or why not?

DAY 5 – Job 30 & 31

These two chapters represent Job's last words. To me, he shows a critical posture towards people and he overstates his innocence. Now, I have no idea how I would deal with some much loss and pain. I would only hope that I would not turn my back on God. Job does not turn his back on God even though he does shake his fist. After three weeks of reading Job, I am hopeful that he is about to surrender. The evidence of depression is real; his disdain for himself and others is consuming; his hope is gone. "And now my life seeps away. Depression haunts my days." (30:16) As I have referred to the "grief cycle" previously, depression, the 4th step of 5, is likened to coming to the end of your rope. I am hopeful that surrender and acceptance are right around the corner. But chapter 31 throws me off. It is like he has one more gasp of air to expel his determination to present his innocence. He won't go down without one more rant before the Lord. "Let the Almighty answer me. Let my accuser write out the charges against me. I would face accusation proudly. I would wear it like a crown." (31:35b & 36) Then he says, "I would come before him like a prince." A prince who is wrongly accused had the right to come before his king to make an appeal. He is pulling out all the stops now. He is only a few breaths away from resting his case. Would he finally silence himself before the Lord? Job might be talking (venting) so much that he couldn't possibly hear the voice of God. But he ends his words in 31:40. Seemingly, God patiently allows Job his argumentative defense and gives him space to share his questions, along with his raw emotions and even his folly. I would suggest that Job did NOT suffer because of sin. However, it seems to me, that he sinned in his suffering. Elihu will express similar thoughts in the next 6 chapters. Do you think Job is closing in on accepting God's plan or not? How difficult is it for you to trust God in the midst of suffering and loss? How so?

WEEK 4

Reading through Job has obviously been more challenging. As I see it, we need to grapple with the kind of challenges Job faced and realize how he hung on by faith and we can too. At the same time, you are probably ready to wrap things up with Job. This is our last week with 11 chapters in the Book left. I think chapter 42 is so important that I will add a 6th day to the reading schedule this week. Elihu and the Lord fill the pages of these final chapters. I think this concluding week has the potential of speaking the loudest to us. I am confident it will be a very meaningful week in God's Word.

DAY 1 – Job 32 & 33

As we begin reading Elihu's words to Job, I must admit I was more hopeful that he would be the counselor that spoke to Job with depth and accuracy. And even though I resonant with more of his thoughts than the other friends, he brings an arrogance that weakens my appreciation. Job's other friends continued to tell Job he was suffering because of sin. But Elihu's message connects with Job's present situation more so and suggests he is sinning in his suffering. This insight has some merit. However, in verses chapter 33:23-30, Elihu still wrongly assumed that a correct response to suffering always bring healing and restoration. "When he prays to God, he will be accepted. And God will receive him with joy and restore him to good standing." (33:26) But Job had prayed to God as he bore his soul before God and his friends. Whenever someone places themselves above others I am repelled. Elihu set

himself up as someone with an upright heart and yet spoke down to Job telling Job he was prideful. Did Elihu recognize pride in Job more easily because of his own arrogance? Isn't it true that the sins we accuse others of are often the very sins we struggle with? This is sometimes called "projection." We project our areas of weakness or sin onto others. Elihu's intensity to talk as one who has the answers causes me to guard my heart. I have found that I need to be careful about what I take in and what I believe. Paul told Timothy, "Watch your life and doctrine closely." (1 Timothy 4:16) How do you respond to these thoughts?

DAY 2 – Job 34 & 35

I was thinking about how little I know about the words of Job in chapters 3 to 41. But two verses I have quoted several times over the years are found in chapter 34. "If God were to take back his spirit and withdraw his breath, all life would cease, and humanity would turn again to dust." (Verses 14 & 15) The truth of God sustaining life on earth is an important principle we might overlook. Hebrews 1:3 affirms this truth: "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word." The sustaining presence God is connected to the breath in our nostrils. This is an important factor in God's creation. The very fact that we are alive and breathing points to a power beyond ourselves. If God withdrew, all mankind would perish. That reality inspires me and gives me direction for sharing my faith as I point to the sustaining presence of God who is the One who gives me life and saves my soul. As much as I am drawn to Elihu's words in these two verses, I question the wisdom of what he says at the close of this chapter: "Job, you deserve the maximum penalty for the wicked way you have talked. For you have added rebellion to your sin; you show no respect, and you speak many angry words against God." (Verses 36 & 37) The Bible says, "The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love." (Psalm 103:8) I don't notice these attributes in Elihu's presentation to Job about God. No one would be able to stand before Elihu's God and find mercy. How might Job respond if someone would remind him of a compassionate, merciful God who loves him in spite of how he feels?

DAY 3 – Job 36 & 37

These last two chapters seem more accurate to me as Elihu elevates the greatness of God in 36:22ff until he wraps up his speech. Of course, I think God is great and beyond what I could ever fathom. But he is also kind and loving which are absent in his speech, as I said yesterday. But I have discovered an intriguing message from Elihu that points to testing (36:17-21). Elihu is admonishing Job to learn the lesson God was trying to teach him through his suffering. We can understand the corrective love of God which is clearly highlighted in all the Bible (Hebrews 12:5-11, for example). The New Living Translation says it in this way, "Be on your guard! Turn back from evil, for God sent this suffering to keep you from a life of evil." (36:21) Job would someday realize his affliction was of more value to him than his wealth and all his efforts to justify himself. The way the NLT says it gives me the impression that his wealth and ease of life could have backfired on him. He could have let down his guard and given into some sinful or immoral influence. Only God would know what Job's future could have been. Might the Lord be ultimately protecting him from a life gone wrong? Would he rise from these ashes stronger and more deeply connected to the Lord God?! The 1984 translation of the NIV reads like this in verse 21, "Beware of turning to evil, for that is why you are tested by affliction." I encourage you to read Hebrews 12 as I referenced earlier. Abraham was tested; Joseph was tested; Peter was tested; Paul was tested; Job was tested... you will be tested! How will you respond to God's testing in your life?

DAY 4 – Job 38 & 39

These two chapters obviously go together. It isn't until chapter 40 that Job responds. We will look at Job's words tomorrow. The first statement from the Lord sets everything in motion. "Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? (Also, Job's words were arrogant as well.) Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them." (38:2, 3) God

challenges Job by emphasizing Job's inability to assess how the world works so how can he argue with the God who made it all? God uses a series of questions to illustrate how little Job knew about creation and God's ways. If Job knew nothing of these mysteries, how could he know anything about God's character? All Job could do was surrender and trust God. We too often need to be reminded of God's greatest. Like Job, we wonder why we suffer. We wonder why bad things happen to us and to those we love. Just like Job, we are finite and cannot understand everything about how God works because he is infinite. God was not seeking answers from Job but rather he was getting him to realize and submit to God's power and rule. Only then could he hear what God was really saying to him. Isaiah 40:12-31 has a very similar message from the prophet about "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom." (Isaiah 40:28) How might you respond to this timeless message from the Lord our God, both in Job and in Isaiah?

DAY 5 – Job 40 & 41

If you are like me, you wonder about the Behemoth (40:15) and the Leviathan (41:1). No one can be absolutely sure but the clear message tells us that God created these animals. The use of these words have caused scholars to date the writing of Job as ancient, one of the earliest records in history. This means it could coincide with the creation account in Genesis pointing to the idea that Moses wrote Job. Because they are listed among the animals that God created, and even though they are dangerous to humans, the Lord controls their coming and going. Also, because of the description given, the Behemoth is often thought of as a hippopotamus and the Leviathan is identified as a crocodile. But more than that, I am drawn to Job's response in 40:3-5 along with the Lord's challenging words from 40:7-14 with the final statement from God, "Then even I would praise you, for your own strength would save you." (40:14) The beginning of this chapter gives evidence to Job's humility with the words, "I have said too much already. I have nothing more to say." (40:5) God used the majesty and power of his creation to remind Job that God is the only one who can save. If Job could not even overpower created things, how could Job save himself from the God who created them? Everything under heaven belongs to God, including Job. God never did give Job an explanation for his suffering; God only let Job know that he, the Creator of the universe, was ultimately in control. How does Job's experience speak to you especially during hard times? What might you say to the Lord regarding suffering or loss?

DAY 6 – Job 42

This last chapter deserves our complete focus today making this a week to add an extra day to our reading schedule. Make sense?! The first six verses have my closest attention. I am sure you can identify something he said that stirs your heart. The idea of what he had gone through was "too wonderful" for him to comprehend is an amazing conclusion to me that is full of gratitude and faith. I also treasure the outcome of seeing God more clearly, "I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes." (Verse 5) There's no doubt that the Lord had profoundly changed his life through suffering. Romans 8:28 comes to mind also as God works all things out for the good in Job's life. In the second half of this chapter, I noticed God's rebuke of Job's friends. If God would have been justifiably harsh with his friends and punished them, he would have done so according to their own rules because they would be getting what they deserve. They must have been grateful that God responded to them with grace instead. Job prayed for them and God forgave them. My mind is swimming with thoughts about this Book. For me, Job remained a positive example of turning to God and hanging on to faith. I know he didn't stand like a rock in reverent submission as though unaffected by his trials. But rather, he responds in a natural human way. Job rages, protests, moans, and even vacillates between confidence and despair, but he never gives up. He does not curse God, and he does not make a false confession of guilt in the hope that God will let up on him. Although Job could not understand his situation, he knows that his answer will be found in the Lord (19:25-27). Amen!