

CLINGING TO HOPE

STUDY FIVE

When Calamity Crashes In

Selections from Job 1–2

Job never saw calamity coming, but he was ready for it. He had spent his entire life preparing.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IF you could choose your life's course, which one would you choose—the rocky course or the smooth?

The answer is obvious. We'd select the smooth path—the flower-lined lane filled with an assortment of sights, smells, and pleasurable diversions. No jagged rocks or steep hills to climb. Only soft grass to soothe the feet and soft winds to cool the brow.

The problem-free life sounds inviting, doesn't it? No worries about money. No hassles with the kids. No headaches at work. No stress, no friction, no pain.

Unfortunately, only in over-the-rainbow dreams does such a life exist. Down on earth, no matter how hard we work to attain a life of ease, an avalanche of losses may wipe us out at any moment. How do we spiritually prepare for disasters that we don't see coming? To what hope do we cling when calamity crashes in? The ancient patriarch Job has a few answers, and we turn to his account of suffering in this *Searching the Scriptures* study.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Most people know about Job and his troubles. Our goal is to know his heart, which saw him through it all to the end. As you open the book of Job, ask the Lord to reveal the inner life of Job that made him “a man of great endurance” (James 5:11), so your spirit can be ready for the trials that come your way.

Father, prepare me to be the kind of person who is prepared to endure suffering. Spark in me a flame of faith that no wave of adversity can extinguish. Help me find in Job’s example a vision of who I can be in Christ. In His name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

For a helpful overview of the book of Job, review the [introduction](#) at [insight.org](#), including the [chart](#) of the book of Job. Notice how the first two chapters of the book set the stage for a series of long dialogues between Job and his friends who tried but failed to give Job wise counsel.

At the end of the account, God stepped in to reveal the wisdom Job needed most—God alone rules all things, and He invites us to trust Him as our sovereign King. With this preview in mind, let’s start at the beginning where we meet a truly remarkable man from the land of Uz.



Observation: Waves of Calamity

A technique in *Searching the Scriptures* is to use your imagination to enter a biblical scene. Put yourself in the action as you read the account to answer the questions below.

The Character of Job—Job 1:1–5

Suppose you were Job’s neighbor and good friend. What qualities in him would you have admired? Read [Job 1:1–3](#) and write down what you observe.



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How does *Job 1:4–5* describe Job’s devotion to his family and his Lord? What do his actions reveal about his heart?

Job was merely a man, not a superman. He was blameless, not sinless. But he feared God, walked in humility, and was a man of moral and ethical purity. His peers considered him “the greatest among us.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The First Wave of Calamity and Job’s Response—Job 1:6–22

In *Job 1:6–12*, the author pulls back the curtain of heaven to reveal a most unusual scene. What do you observe about this dialogue between God and Satan, which unsuspecting Job knew nothing about?

What series of back-to-back disasters did Satan unleash in *1:13–19*?



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If you had been standing with Job hearing the news of one tragedy after another, how would you have responded? How did Job respond, according to *Job 1:20–22*?

Satan lives to see us fall. He exists to hear us curse and blame God because things don't go the way we thought they should have gone. Job neither cursed nor blamed God. So, Satan returned for round two. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Second Wave of Calamity and Job's Response—Job 2:1–10

In *Job 2:1–6*, the author pulls back the curtain of heaven once again, revealing a second conversation between God and Satan. What is similar and different about this dialogue in comparison to the first?

What horrible affliction did Satan give Job, according to *2:7–8*?



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Job wasn't the only one who suffered terrible loss. The ten fresh graves of her children called out to Job's wife as well. Now, at the sight of her pitiful husband writhing in agony, her heart shattered. Describe her anguish and how she expressed her feelings to Job in [Job 2:9](#).

How did Job respond, according to [2:10](#)?

Always guard your words when a mate or close friend is going through hard times. What you say means more than you realize, and even if you forget your words, he or she won't. So guard your words. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: God's Sovereignty and Our Tragedies

How do we interpret Job's wise responses to tragedy? First, he didn't try to mask his emotions. He "tore his robe in grief," "shaved his head," and "fell to the ground" (Job 1:20). If Job could speak to you in your pain, what counsel about grief do you think he would share?



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Second, while Job let his emotions flow, he anchored his thoughts in truth. Long before tragedy struck, Job walked in faith and devoted himself to God. Consequently, when Job fell to the ground in grief, he also fell in worship to the King he had been faithfully serving. What truth or truths about God did Job express in his statement in *Job 1:21*, which he then repeated in *2:10*?

Job's personal and profound view of God allowed for suffering, even for the righteous. Later, Job's friends would assert that Job's troubles were the bitter fruit of some sin in Job's life. According to their fairness formula, God always rewards the righteous and curses sinners. How might you use Job's example to explain that God is fair and good even when life doesn't follow the formulas?

Be certain to balance what people tell you with what the Scriptures teach. God's Word is always our guide. It's the foundation of what we believe. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: God Does as He Pleases

The correlation phase consults similar biblical passages to complement what's taught in our main passage. Years after the life of Job, King Nebuchadnezzar also experienced severe adversity. Unlike Job, however, Nebuchadnezzar was a boastful, arrogant man who did not honor God. As a result, God humbled him through a season of mental illness. When his sanity returned, the king of Babylon came to his senses and proclaimed God to be the true King:

*“His rule is everlasting,
and his kingdom is eternal.
All the people of the earth
are nothing compared to him.
He does as he pleases
among the angels of heaven
and among the people of the earth.
No one can stop him or say to him,
‘What do you mean by doing these things?’” (Daniel 4:34–35)*

As you compare Nebuchadnezzar's proclamation to Job's in [Job 1:21](#), what similar truths do you find? What phrases most clearly express the sovereignty of God to which you might want to anchor yourself during your times of suffering?

When calamity crashes over us, our natural response is to search for a cause. We blame Satan for meddling behind the scenes. We complain that the world is unfair, and the system is rigged against us. We may point the blame at ourselves, thinking that our trouble is punishment for sin. We may even shoot a glaring look at God, accusing Him of being cruel or absent.

If you're suffering, Job invites you to do as he did—simply grieve. Bring your tears to God, along with your questions, fears, and frustrations, and keep your faith in God even though you don't have all the answers.



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Application: Concluding Principles

Satan may have set out to destroy Job, but that was not God's intent. God permitted Job's trials to display Job's faith, the quality that God knew Job had. Through his years of devotion to God, Job had been preparing his heart, so that when suffering came, Job's character shined through. The trials proved the genuineness of Job's faith. The same is true for us through our suffering, and someday, a bountiful reward will come.

Peter confidently pointed to the light at the end of our dark tunnel:

There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. (1 Peter 1:6–7)

Job's life teaches us three points of wisdom:

- *Trials are inevitable.* Expecting a problem-free life leads to disappointment.
- *Our world is fallen.* Until Christ returns, we inhabit a war zone. Good people suffer.
- *God is sovereign.* The wisest posture through life is humble submission to God.

How does believing these truths help you prepare today for whatever suffering may come to your life tomorrow?



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Are you suffering now? How can you follow Job's example of expressing grief, perhaps by sharing your heart with a family member, trusted friend, pastor, or Christian counselor?

What truths about God and what hope can you cling to today?

When you look through your pain, do you see God in the person of Jesus Christ walking with you? Do you see Him weeping with you? Do you see Him suffering for you on the cross? Do you see Him rising from the grave, motioning for you to follow one day? In faith, step back from the precipice of doubt and fall into the arms of your Savior who welcomes you in your pain. There you will find Job, the man who showed sufferers the way.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the promise of life after death, the assurance of joy through sorrow, and the hope that lights this dark world. Draw my eyes to You through the ashes of adversity that cloud my vision, and keep me faithfully trusting You as my sovereign King. In Jesus' name, amen.

