The Book of Job

Session 2: Job 2:1–13

SESSION GOALS

Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.

Main Idea: The way we respond to suffering reveals our view of God, therefore a faithful response honors God and comforts the hurting.

Head Change: To know that we are part of a larger cosmic story centered on God, not ourselves.

Heart Change: To feel comfortable allowing the mystery of our suffering to coexist with faith.

Life Change: To come alongside suffering friends as companions, comforting through our presence before using our words.

OPEN

What is your favorite era of history to read or learn about?

History can be a fascinating study. Even when we examine cultures far different from our own, we discover a startling fact: we are all connected. Humanity shares remarkably similar experiences—our joys, pains, struggles, and hopes—no matter where or when they lived. And our stories are intricately connected. The past influences the present and our lives will influence the future.

In our session today, Francis Chan will show us the way our suffering points us to the story God is writing through all of humanity. The way you respond to God in your part of that story matters.

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READ

Read Job 2:1–13.

Note: *To see a weekly plan for reading through Job, go to Go Deeper Section 4 at the end of this study.*

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Francis Chan's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

Who is the central figure in the story of Job?

What is the point of our existence?

Show Session 2: *Job 2:1–13* (10 minutes).

DISCUSS

As chapter two opens, we find ourselves back in God's courtroom, watching a follow-up dialogue between God, the "sons of God," and Satan. Satan's first accusation was proven wrong, but the Accuser was not done with Job. He claimed that physical suffering would induce Job to curse God. God agreed to allow Job to be tested again. **What is your reaction to the conversation between God and Satan? If you could ask God any question about his decision to allow Job's suffering, what would you say?**

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LEADER'S NOTE

Many people understand Job 1–2 as a historical event in which Job was a real man. Job's suffering seems unfair and cruel and can cause some to question if God is truly faithful to those who worship him.

The book of Job is wisdom literature, a genre that allows Job's story to be read as a parable. The long cycles of speeches from Job's friends were constructed carefully in a poetic, organized fashion, unlike normal human conversation. The "heavenly courtroom" scenes, which no human could have observed and recorded, are less confusing when understood as literary devices that set the stage for exploring the experience of suffering.

Remembering the genre of Job can help readers focus on the main point of the book, rather than worrying about how Job's ten new children (42:13) were meant to make up for those he lost.
Whether he is a literary character or a real man, Job's story teaches the same truths about God and our suffering.

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Read Job 2:1–8.

Job's grief was compounded by physical suffering. He was afflicted with boils that caused him pain from head to toe. Pain can dominate our senses and our thinking, making it difficult to focus on anything around us. **How do you respond to others when you are in pain? Do you think clearly and behave normally? If you had the choice, how would you prefer to handle relationships on days when you physically hurt?**

Job's all-encompassing suffering can be difficult to identify with. In modern terms, Job's trials might be like losing your bank account and retirement in a stock market crash, then coming home to find your family had been killed in a fire that destroyed your house and belongings. To top it all off, the next day you find out you have cancer but no way to treat it, leaving you to suffer in agony. **In what ways does putting Job's losses in modern terms impact the way you see his story? What—if anything—would you be saying to God if you were in this scenario?**

In his agony, Job mourned. In verse 8, the word "sat" indicates that he took up residence, or stayed for a long time, in his grief. **How well do you allow yourself time to acknowledge your deep hurts? In what ways have you felt pressured to move on from, or get over, grief before you were ready? What value do you see in resting in the painful present?**

Read Job 2:8–10.

Despite all that has happened, Job rejected the idea that God owed him health and happiness, and he did not curse God. Francis described his attitude as accepting that "the world does not revolve around me." **What is your typical view of God when suffering comes your way? How have you approached God during past difficulties?**

Job's wife couldn't believe he was still honoring God. Job called her words—"Curse God and die!"—that of a fool. He says in verse 10, "Should we only accept good from God and not adversity?" Job and his wife's responses are models of wisdom and foolishness in suffering. But while we want to be wise, Job's acceptance of suffering is not easy to emulate. **In what circumstances have your expectations of God not**

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been met? What does it look like to accept God's actions, even when they are not what you want him to do?

Note: *To learn more about the word "integrity," go to* ***Go Deeper Section 1*** *at the end of this study.*

Note: *To learn more about the term "curse," go to* ***Go Deeper Section 2*** *at the end of this study.*

Job balanced two difficult truths in his pain: he acknowledges the world is not right while also recognizing God's goodness and sovereignty. It is difficult to hold those two truths in tension without allowing one to dominate the other. When we ignore that the world is broken, we may also ignore the suffering of others. When we ignore God's goodness, we are left in a broken world with no hope of rescue. **What is your typical reaction to pain? How do you reconcile a good God with painful times?**

When you've suffered, to what extent were you able to hold onto the truth of his goodness?

When our loved ones suffer, we are called to respond. Job's friends heard of his adversities, and traveled to "sympathize with him and comfort him." **What do you need from your friends when you are mourning or suffering? What did it look like when someone comforted you effectively?**

Read Job 2:11–13.

Job's friends began with a right response to mourning. First, they showed up. Second, they joined Job in his grief. Third, they didn't speak. While they were with Job, weeping alongside him, they gave him time and space to lament in his own way. **Which of these three responses is most meaningful to you in your grief? Do you feel like their response is helpful? Why or why not?**

Watching our loved ones suffer is difficult and, in our helplessness, we might want to pull them out of grief. We may encourage them to not feel so deeply, to find a silver lining, or to look to the future—anything to numb or distract them from pain. Everyone grieves differently, and avoiding or justifying grief—even with Bible verses—is not often comforting. Rather, our well-

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intentioned excuses for suffering often dismiss pain, invalidate grief, or even gloss over what God might be doing in our suffering. There is a time when it is good and right to mourn, as difficult as it may be. Often our presence is the most critical comfort we can give. **When someone you love is in pain, what does your first impulse to help look like? In what ways can your response look more like Job's friends?**

If you are currently suffering or know someone who is, what could a faithful response to your pain or theirs look like?

LAST WORD

Job didn't know the "why" of his suffering, but he had a choice in how to respond. His faith guided his actions—he did not just praise God during the good times but trusted his sovereignty even when the world seemed to fall apart.

In Job chapter 2, we see models of faithfulness in Job and his friends. When we suffer, or when we encounter others in pain, may the examples of Job and his friends lead us to an honest, humble faith. The world is broken, but God is still good.

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GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting.

1. Dust off the Hebrew: *tummah/tmm*

In the Hebrew text of Job we repeatedly encounter the word *tummah* (root word: *tmm*), which communicates the idea of spotless character (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3, 9; 27:5; 31:6). In different places throughout the Hebrew Bible *tmm* and its derivatives are interpreted as "integrity, blameless, complete, finished, innocent, perfect." Job 2:3 and 9 both use "integrity" when speaking of Job's response to suffering.

Read Job 2:3 and 9.

In 2:3, Job is described twice as *tmm*. First, God calls him *blameless* and then declares that "he still maintains his *integrity*" after the trials of chapter one. His righteous character was reflected in his right actions—not allowing himself to be incited against God. By acting according to his righteous nature, he demonstrated integrity. The English word integrity means to do what you say you will do, to be consistent between word and deed. But integrity is a neutral concept—as long as a person is consistent in what they say, do, and think, he or she demonstrates integrity. **In what situations have you maintained your integrity when faced with difficulty?**

In 2:9, Job's wife, in seeming disbelief that he has not raised his fist to God after being physically afflicted, asks, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!" If integrity is letting your thoughts and feelings be reflected in your actions, then wouldn't Job be denying his feelings or doubts by remaining faithful to God? This seems backward to our understanding of integrity.

The primary difference between our idea of integrity and the biblical word *tmm* is the characteristic of

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righteousness. Biblical integrity (*tmm*) has blamelessness, right character, and godliness at its root. Since righteousness is defined by God, we can only be people of *tmm*, true integrity when we are aligned with his will.

When the Bible says Job maintained his integrity, it means that he remained righteous in the way he responded. By trusting God through his affliction, Job kept himself from sinning.

In what ways do you see room to grow in your integrity? What practices can help you choose righteousness in speech and behavior?

2. Dust off the Hebrew: *barak*

Understanding the concept of curses and blessings is essential to understanding God's sovereignty over Job's suffering. In Job 1:5, Job makes sacrifices on behalf of his children just in case they may have "cursed God in their hearts." Shortly thereafter, in Job 1:10–11 and 2:5, Satan twice declares that, if Job's blessings are removed, he will "surely curse" God.

The word for curse used in 1:11 and 2:5 is *barak*, the same Hebrew word for blessing used in 1:10, where Satan reflected on how God had "blessed the work of" Job's hands (we see *barak* as blessing in 31:20 and 42:12 also). *Barak* can be used in a way contrary to its primary connotation, so that it means the exact opposite —cursing. The context surrounding the use of *barak* clarifies which meaning the author intends.

For example, we could rephrase Job's wife when she urges him to "curse God and die!" in Job 2:9 with a sarcastic, "Tell him what a *blessing* your trials have been!" The author is contrasting the many good things—the blessings—Job received from God with the pain of having them removed. **Are her caustic words justified? If you've ever cursed God, or been tempted to, what did it take to learn how to rest in his sovereignty again?**

The use of *barak* in opposite ways draws attention to the source who both gave and removed blessing. God remains the central figure—he gives blessing, and he can take it away. We may receive much, or we may

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experience lack. But we did nothing to deserve what was given, and in Job's case, he did nothing to deserve the removal of God's blessings. **How do you react to the idea that God can both give blessing and take it away?**

When we experience loss and are tempted to shake our fists at God, the uses of *barak* in Job can help us remember that God is sovereign. Job received his good things from God, the giver of all blessings by his grace. But God does not owe us blessings, and he can, in his wisdom, choose to take them away. If you struggle to trust God, spend time recalling your *barak*—your blessings. Be honest with him and keep returning to his Word and your community of faith for encouragement.

3. Weekly Reading Plan

Job is a long book, and we won't be able to study every verse of it during our group sessions. This reading plan will help you familiarize yourself with the entirety of Job so that you can dig more deeply into God's Word. Some weeks will have more reading than others, so feel free to complete the daily readings at a pace that makes the most sense to you and your group. *Note: Starting this week, the plan will move at a different pace than the videos.*

Day 1: Job 3:1–26
Day 2: Job 4:1–21
Day 3: Job 5:1–27
Day 4: Job 6:1–30
Day 5: Job 7:1–21

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