The Book of Job

| Session 4: Job 4–31 | |
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| SESSION GOALS | |
| Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do. | |
| Main Idea: Because God is ultimately right, powerful, and perfect, our response to suffering should reflect humility and trust. | |
| Head Change: To know that it is right to admit we do not understand all of God's reasons for allowing us to suffer. | |
| Heart Change: To feel secure in God's righteousness and love despite the pain we are enduring. | |
| Life Change: To respond to difficult circumstances by acknowledging our limited understanding and speaking humbly—or not at all—about God's role in our suffering. | |
| <u>OPEN</u> | |
| Would you call yourself a researcher or risk-taker? How do you approach choices that involve some mystery? | |
| Some of us jump at a chance for adventure even when the outcome is unknown or uncertain. Others would rather know as much as possible ahead of time to mitigate against potential disaster. The more you know, the better you can plan. | |
| Both Job and his friends were convinced they knew how God operates. But God is much more of a mystery than they were willing to acknowledge. In this session, Francis will walk through the long and increasingly frustrating conversations between Job and his three friends, showing us our need for humility when we approach God. | |

| READ | |
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| This session covers Job 4–31. Due to the length of this session's text, we have picked out specific points of conversation between Job and his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. | |
| Read Job 4:4–9 (Eliphaz), 5:6–8 (Eliphaz); 7:20 (Job to Eliphaz); 8:20–22 (Bildad); 9:4–10 (Job to Bildad); 10:8–12 (Job to Bildad); 11:13–18 (Zophar); 29:1–8 (Job to his friends); 31:3–4, 35–37 (Job to his friends) for a general overview of this section. | |
| 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. | |
| What do Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar think they know about Job? About God? | |
| How much did Job and his friends understand about God's role in Job's suffering? | |
| To what degree does God care about the words we use when we talk about him? | |
| Show Session 4: Job 4–31 (11 minutes). | |
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| DISCUSS | |
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| Now that Job's lament is finished, his friends began to speak to him about his situation. First, Eliphaz responded. | |
| Read Job 4:4–9 and 5:6–8. | |
| In attempting to encourage his friend, Eliphaz reminded Job of what a good guy he'd been. "Should not your piety be your confidence?" He encouraged Job to explain to God why he didn't deserve all that he endured. Have you ever approached God in an effort to prove him wrong? Do you think that is the right approach to God's choices? Why, or why not? | |
| Note: Our goodness does not dictate how God relates to us. To learn more about God's grace, go to Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of this study. | |
| Job then replied to Eliphaz. Read Job 7:20. | |
| In his response to Eliphaz, Job spoke bitterly to God, accusing him of toying with him, making him a target. He assumed that bad things are supposed to happen to bad people, not a faithful man like himself. In what ways can you relate to Job? Do you think he was right? Why, or why not? | |
| Next was Bildad's turn. Read Job 8:20–22. | |
| Bildad countered Job's assumption that his suffering came from God's hand. He focused on God's character, declaring that God would not reject a blameless person. Given that the readers know God indeed allowed Job's trials, what are we to think of Bildad's conclusion? | |
| Too often we, like Bildad, assume God's morality mimics ours. Good behavior warrants a reward, and bad behavior earns punishment. What do you base your ideas of God's morality on? How do you know your beliefs are accurate? | |
| Job's response in chapter nine declared that God is too great to be truly known. His works are beyond our understanding. Read 9:4–10. | |
| ghtnow MEDIA How vast is God's power, according to Job's vivid | |

| metaphors? If Job's description was the only information you had of God, to what degree would you be drawn to him or frightened by him? | |
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| Job went on, feeling torn between faith and despair. Read Job 10:8–12. | |
| Here, Job acknowledged God as his caring creator, but one who seemed to be destroying him. In what ways can you identify with Job's back-and-forth outburst? Where have you experienced God's apparent anger yet also remember his love? | |
| Later, Job's third friend, Zophar, joined the conversation. Read Job 11:13–18. | |
| Zophar's advice may seem true, but it is terrible advice. He sees the world as karmic—you earn both pain and joy. Job suffered greatly so, surely, he thought, he must have sinned greatly. This line of thinking may appear to be reasonable, but it places the blame of suffering on the sufferer, compounding their sorrow, negating God's sovereignty, and stealing their hope. In what ways can this line of thinking isolate a person, pushing them away from God and their church community? | |
| On the other hand, Zophar's advice might seem harsh, but our society is full of similar "wisdom": try harder and life will get better; move on—life will be good again if you just let it. What alternative answer to suffering can the church offer those who only hear our society's harsh response to their pain? | |
| Job replied to Zophar, trying to rebuke his view of the world and maintain his innocence (Job 21), but Eliphaz wouldn't have it. Read Job 22:4–11. | |
| Eliphaz adds to Zophar's claim that Job earned his suffering. Instead of comforting his friend, he begins to invent sins that Job might have committed: wickedness that would justify his level of suffering. In what ways can we, like Eliphaz, blame people for their pain? What might be a better way to help them? | |
| Note: To learn more about how we can minister to others because of our sorrows, go to Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of this study. | |
| After several rounds of discourse with his friends, Job | |

| responded one last time. Read Job 29:1–8; 31:4–8, | |
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| 35–40. | |
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| Job looks back to the days "when the Almighty was still with me" (29:5). He is convinced God has abandoned | |
| him despite his innocence and begs to know why he | |
| has suffered. God has gone from someone Job trusts to | |
| one Job cannot make sense of. What does he get | |
| wrong in his belief about God? To what extent can pain skew our perspective of God? | |
| pani skew our perspective of God: | |
| Note: To learn more about the importance of using | |
| good times to think about suffering, go to Go Deeper | |
| Section 3 at the end of this study. | |
| Francis confessed that the chapters covered in this | |
| session are among his least favorite in the Bible. "It | |
| sounds so much like what we do today, everyone just | |
| talking about what they think." What is the risk of talking about God's thoughts and motives for acting? | |
| How do you know you are correct? What influence | |
| could speculation have on our relationship with God? | |
| Figure 2: 1: decay: Control of the c | |
| Francis identified a common problem that all three of Job's friends illustrated—how <i>not</i> to respond to a friend | |
| in pain. Their many words of explanation did not bring | |
| comfort to Job. They all ended their conversations more | |
| frustrated than they began. We can mean well when we | |
| seek to comfort a hurting friend, but we must be wise, only sharing what is true and helpful. What sort of well- | |
| meaning advice can hurt someone? What seemingly | |
| self-evident speculation is not helpful to talk about | |
| with someone in pain? | |
| Part of the problem with Job's friends is their utter | |
| certainty that they knew God's reasons for allowing Job | |
| to suffer. They left no wiggle room, no allowance that | |
| perhaps they could be wrong. They were wrong, nonetheless. In your speculations about God, how well | |
| do you balance your convictions with humility? To | |
| what extent are you teachable and willing to be | |
| wrong? | |
| Francis pointed out how Job's friends alienated | |
| themselves with their arrogant approach to knowing | |
| God. How can your faith-centered conversations take | |
| a more gracious tone or be handled more humbly? | |
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LAST WORD

Though we skimmed through the cycles of speeches, we saw Job's frustration grow deeper and his hope waiver as his friends shared their insights. He knew he was a righteous man, so his sufferings did not make sense to him, and his friends' advice to admit his wrong became offensive.

Francis urged us to be careful about our desire to talk about things we don't truly understand. A humble approach to discussing faith, particularly as it relates to suffering, will do more to show love and care than an insensitive, dogmatic mindset. Let's love our hurting friends with more listening and less lecturing.

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| can supplement you providing extra disc | tion has two potential functions. It or small group discussion by cussion material. We've highlighted a f the following segments could fit in of the study guide. | |
| • | e these sections as short you through the week until your | |
| 1. Salvation by Grad | e, Not Works | |
| his suffering becaus rewarded him if he v | onvinced that either he had earned e of his sin or that God would have were truly righteous. They were n that could actually be good I's favor. | |
| our best, that hard w way, or even that we kingdom. But God h | the same thing. We are taught to d work always brings good things our e need to earn our place in God's as made it clear to us that our he only way to earn God's favor is beyond our ability. | |
| Read Ephesians 2:8 | -9 . | |
| mercy, and an invita God made human, to an eternal future—st accepted the grace changed you? If you forgiveness and gra your hesitation and | the gift of his forgiveness and tion to put our faith in Jesus. He, ook our punishment, and offers us tarting now—with him. If you have of God, how has that choice a have not accepted God's ace, what's stopping you? Share questions with a trusted friend or clarity even as you seek the truth | |
| _ | ed by grace mean we don't need to ons at all? Not exactly. Read | |
| But faith comes first a grace-filled, forgiv and gratitude. They goodness, not the re | orks have nothing to do with faith. I then good works, which flow out on the deliever as signs of obedience are the response to God's eason he blesses us. And God I including us in his plan to shine his | |

| light through our gifts, personalities, and actions. By our good works, we confirm the presence of his Spirit in us and live out our purpose as ambassadors for Christ. In what ways have you acted upon your faith? What gifts do you have to share? What about God's grace inspires you to show his love to others? | |
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| Spend time reflecting on the grace you've been given and thank God that your salvation isn't based on what you do. Then pray for opportunities to do good works—motivated by the grace of God—and act. | |
| 2. Our pain can help us minister to others. | |
| Job's friends arrived after hearing of his suffering and sat with him for a solid week, mourning with him in silence. When Job finally decided to speak, they responded. Though much of what they said about God was true, the ultimate message each of them gave Job was wrong. Their "comfort" proved unhelpful and misleading. | |
| Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–6. | |
| Paul opens his letter to the Corinthian church with words of comfort. In verse 6, Paul refers to the benefit of his suffering: "it is for your comfort and salvation." In what ways does suffering give us the ability to understand or empathize with others? | |
| In what ways have you been able to draw on past hurt or hardship to encourage someone else? | |
| Paul knew that the persecution he endured would benefit newer believers. By enduring his suffering while remaining committed to Christ, Paul served as an example to those coming behind him. He kept his perspective centered on God rather than himself because he knew God was using his unwanted experiences to draw others to Jesus. How could you keep perspective during your struggles, remembering that God has purposes and plans beyond your personal experience? | |
| It took a long time for Job to realize that his suffering was not about him. We can struggle with that reality as well. As you walk through your valleys, remember Paul's encouragement to the young church. He praised his | |

| | Father in heaven, the one who comforted him in all his | |
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| | trouble because he knew that his suffering would be transformed into a blessing for others. Spend a few | |
| | moments praising your Father in heaven for his | |
| | intentional care and affection for you. | |
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| | 3. Why think about pain and suffering when life is | |
| | going well? | |
| | In Job 29:1, Job opens with memories of the good old | |
| | days: "If only I could be as in months gone by, in the | |
| | days when God watched over me." It's natural, amid | |
| | suffering, to long for better, easier, happier times. | |
| | But what if those happier times could prepare us for the | |
| | hard times? Painful events can come at any moment, | |
| | from any direction—how might contemplating an | |
| | inevitable hardship now help us when it comes? | |
| | Proverbs offers us an unlikely illustration. Read Proverbs | |
| | 6:6–11. | |
| | Here we are directed to observe the activity of the lowly | |
| | ant. What does the ant teach us about wisdom? | |
| | The ant understands what's coming. He's a realist. | |
| | He doesn't wait for others to motivate him. He takes initiative. | |
| | He prepares himself for the future that he knows is coming. | |
| | He's not lazy. When the harvest comes, he's out | |
| | gathering food. | |
| | Like the ant, what could it look like for you to prepare | |
| | yourself to suffer well when you are currently at ease? | |
| | A few ideas to get you started: | |
| | Minimize the potential for regrets. Keep short | |
| | accounts and be free with your words of | |
| | affirmation and love. | |
| | Maximize your time in God's Word and prayer. | - |
| | Learn from your past. What lessons did you learn from a difficult time of the past. The past of | |
| | from difficult times? How are you applying those lessons in your life now? | |
| | Fortify your faith. Deepen your knowledge of God | |
| | and your dependence upon him. | |
| | Cultivate healthy relationships now. When dark | |
| ri | ahtndimes come, they will lift you up and often carry | |
| | vou until vou are strong enough to walk again. | |

| What would you add to the list? | |
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| What steps can you take to fortify your faith now? | |
| What doubts and questions can you seek answers to now? | |
| Which relationships can you strengthen now? | |
| We will all suffer in some way. It is wise, not morbid, to acknowledge that reality. Better to consider what we believe about God during times of ease and comfort so we will be ready when tragedy or hardship comes. Celebrate the good times, but also use them to solidify your foundation in Jesus, your friendships, and in your church. | |
| 4. 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. | |
| <u>Day 1:</u> Job 15:1–35 <u>Day 2:</u> Job 16:1–17:16 <u>Day 3:</u> Job 18:1–19:29 <u>Day 4:</u> Job 20:1–29 <u>Day 5:</u> Job 21:1–34 | |

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