

OPEN

Mountains, beaches, stars, puppies, babies . . . creation can be glorious to behold. **Which parts of creation most prompt you to worship God?**

In recent years, technological advances have allowed us to see images from the far reaches of our universe or sidewalk views of almost every street in the world. At the same time, we can see and understand the microscopic details of a cell's inner mechanisms. We can see almost everything in creation—both visible and invisible—on the screens of our cell phones. God's creative genius has never been more available to observe and marvel over.

Seeing his power demonstrated in creation should lead us to trust him more deeply, even when we are in pain and are doubting his goodness. In today's session, God finally speaks to Job. While he does not give Job an answer to why he is suffering he does redirect Job's perspective of how to see his pain.

READ

This session covers Job 38–40. Due to the length of this passage, read Job 38:1–21, 31–36; 39: 1–6, 19–20, 26–27; 40:1–14 for a general overview of this section.

Note: To see a weekly plan for reading through Job, go to **Go Deeper Section 3** 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 is surprising about the way God speaks to Job?

What attributes should we include more often in our vision of God?

What is our proper response to God's speech to Job?

rightnowmedia.com
 Show Session 6: Job 38–40 (9 minutes).

DISCUSS

Job 38 is the pivot point for the entire book of Job. The human voices have finally quieted, and the Creator takes center stage. His first words leave no doubt that he is the central character of the creation.

Read Job 38:1–7.

God revealed himself with a thunderous entrance, speaking from “the whirlwind.” The Almighty had arrived. **When you think of God speaking to you, what comes to mind? How does your mental assumption of God’s voice correlate to the description here?**

Note: To learn about different methods God uses to speak to individuals in the Bible, go to **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.

God did not get upset with Job’s questions or doubts. What angered God was Job’s accusation that God was unjust and wrong for allowing him to suffer. **What do you think is the difference between wrestling with doubt and accusing God of being wrong?**

God challenged Job in verses 2 and 3, calling his words “ignorant” and telling him to get ready or brace himself “like a man.” Job had questioned God as if he was an equal, but God reminded him they were not. **How common is it in your life to think of God or talk to him in a casual manner? To what degree do you bring your complaints to him as if he were a friend sitting next to you? What tone do you strike when praying about your hurts, fears, griefs?**

God is not quiet or tame. He is not passive or apathetic toward his people. He is present, listening and overseeing everything from the smallest fly to the grandest nebulas. **In what ways can we seek to tame or tone down God’s power? Do you think we should downplay scenes where he is angry or correcting his people? Why, or why not?**

God did not directly answer Job’s questions or tell him why he suffered. Instead, he responds by asking Job a long series of questions. Read Job 38:8, 12–13, 16–21, 31–36; 39:1–6, 19–20, 26–27.

them sarcastic. Of course Job wasn't there when God created the cosmos or separated the sea from dry land! God's overwhelming evidence of his might, knowledge, and power highlights Job's (and our own) limited perspective and power. We are not like God. If we do not know how God made the universe, we cannot possibly fathom how he controls and oversees the universe. **What response do you think God is looking for from Job? From us?**

God is in control over every inch of the universe and our circumstances. His kingly authority may not dispel our doubt or questions, but it can lead us to trust him. **As you think of your current struggles, how does God's authority over you affect the way you respond to your pain or doubt?**

Note: To read the creation story devotionally, go to **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.

Read Job 40:1–4. God switched from a rhetorical defense of his power to a pointed defense of his character. He asked Job and us, "Will we correct him? Will we argue with God?" **What kinds of situations have prompted you to argue or question God's decisions? How did you express your skepticism of his goodness?**

Job's response to God's speech is much like his response in chapter 1. Recognizing who God is caused Job to humble himself. As Job ruminated on his doubts and his friend's accusations, something changed—he forgot who God was and questioned his goodness. It is not wrong to have doubts or questions, but we should be careful to not let our doubts turn into accusatory pride. **What would it look like to faithfully revere God while working through doubt?**

Note: To explore how Jesus revealed his divine power, go to **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this study.

Read Job 40:7–14. Job had a serious hang-up: if God runs the world in a way where righteous people can suffer, then God's sense of justice is flawed. If Job were running the world, suffering would come only to the wicked. **To what extent do you agree with Job?**

Job's strategy sounds fair, even right. But if Job were to do what he wants—to only punish the wicked—where would the punishment end? God says *If you can punish*

every evil person, you must have the ability to save yourself. In other words, don't be so quick to exempt yourself from deserving punishment. **How would you define who is good and who is evil? Where, specifically, should we draw the line between those two groups?**

By having the audacity to question the fairness of God and justify himself, Job ironically revealed that he was unrighteous all along. His heart was prideful, and in his pride, he overreached, feeling free to judge God. **What has suffering taught you about your heart? In what ways have you been surprised to learn your stated views don't quite match your inner beliefs?**

Francis ended by exhorting us to spend time reading God's words to Job. They will help us get a better handle on the full character of God, which includes his power, his holiness, and his authority. We will stand before God face to face one day, and we will tremble. **How much time have you spent thinking about your coming audience with your Creator? What feelings arise as you contemplate that day?**

We may never know why we suffer. We will never understand how God controls the cosmos. But what we can know is God is supremely in control, concerned with our hearts, and the way we endure our suffering. He is asking us to trust him, even when we have questions. **What take for you to trust God—to have faith in him—today?**

LAST WORD

Job's pain and grief led him to question God. Our pain and grief often lead us to the same conclusion. But God's response shows us that we simply do not have the perspective or insight to understand how God made the world, much less guides its movements. We may never know why we are going through our suffering, but we can know God has not lost control of the world or cast us aside. He is near and, in Christ, working all things together for our good. Suffering is a mystery that can lead us to God's throne, awestruck and humbled.

Meditate on the truth of God's perfectly good character and ultimate power over all creation. He is a God worth

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. How God Speaks to Individuals in the Bible

In the book of Job, God spoke from a storm to confront Job. But throughout the Bible, he uses a variety of methods to communicate—some of them profound, others dramatic, and a few rather comical. Let's take a look at a few examples.

Unusual Methods

Read Exodus 3:1–6. God revealed himself to Moses in a bush on fire yet not burning up to commission him for holy service.

Read Numbers 22:22–33. Balaam was hired to bring curses upon Israel, but the Lord warned him only to bless Israel. He used divination, which was unacceptable to God. On his journey to the Israelite people, God opened the mouth of his donkey to warn Balaam. The Lord sometimes chooses the most curious and unsuspecting ways to speak truth to us.

What unusual circumstances has God used to get your attention?

Visions and Dreams

Read 2 Samuel 7:4–5, 11–17. The Lord appeared to the prophet Nathan in a vision, giving him words for David about his future kingdom.

Read 1 Kings 17:8–16. Elijah heard a word of the Lord. God used his prophets to speak his word to the people. The people could always know the prophets were legitimate when the content of God's word would come to pass as the prophets said it would.

Natural Phenomena

Read 1 Kings 19:9–13. God set before Elijah several

potential methods by which he could speak, but God chose the least likely phenomenon: a small voice. **In what surprising setting, where you least expected it, have you heard from God?**

Read Judges 6:11–12, 16–22. Gideon wasn't sure he was hearing from God, so he asked for a sign. God gave it to him in the form of a first wet, then dry, fleece. **Have you ever asked God for confirmation of what he called you to do? What happened?**

Jesus
Read Hebrews 1:1–3. The clearest way God speaks to us is through his Son. It is through Jesus that we see and hear the will of God now. **What is it about Jesus that attracted you to the heart of God?**

God has always sought to walk with his people even when we didn't always want to walk with him. He was not above using creative methods to get people's attention. While God speaks in a variety of ways, we should always align what we think we are hearing from God with his Word. As you listen for his voice in the pages of your Bible, remember that what he has to say to us is always good news.

2. How do other biblical passages talk about creation?

Job 40–42 highlights the creative genius and power of God. He lists numerous areas of creation, from tiny animals to domesticated pets to the heavens above and beyond our skies. He made it all. Other passages in Scripture help us meditate on the story of creation as well. Take time this week to read Proverbs 8:22–36 aloud and reflect on the questions below. The speaker in this proverb is a personification of wisdom who communicates truth about God in poetic form.

“The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works,
before his deeds of old;
I was formed long ages ago,
at the very beginning, when the world came to be.
When there were no watery depths, I was given birth,
when there were no springs overflowing with
water;
before the mountains were settled in place,
before the hills, I was given birth,
before he made the world or its fields

or any of the dust of the earth.
 I was there when he set the heavens in place,
 when he marked out the horizon on the face of the
 deep,
 when he established the clouds above
 and fixed securely the fountains of the deep,
 when he gave the sea its boundary
 so the waters would not overstep his command,
 and when he marked out the foundations of the
 earth.

Then I was constantly at his side.
 I was filled with delight day after day,
 rejoicing always in his presence,
 rejoicing in his whole world
 and delighting in mankind.

“Now then, my children, listen to me;
 blessed are those who keep my ways.
 Listen to my instruction and be wise;
 do not disregard it.

Blessed are those who listen to me,
 watching daily at my doors,
 waiting at my doorway.

For those who find me find life
 and receive favor from the LORD.

But those who fail to find me harm themselves;
 all who hate me love death.”

What in this passage prompts you to worship? What leaves you feeling appropriately humble?

If God’s wisdom, so evident in creation, is available to you through listening to God, what stops you from listening closely? What steps can you take to listen to him more throughout your day?

3. Jesus Is God

God revealed himself to Job as the all-powerful creator of the world. He is transcendent, yet he voluntarily and temporarily relinquished his divine position. He walked the earth as a human man, accepting the physical, mental, and emotional limitations common to all people. He thirsted, hungered, got tired, got angry, and felt compassion—“fully human in every way” (Hebrews 2:17).

But Jesus occasionally allowed glimpses of his divine power to peek through. He showed his power over evil,

sickness, creation, sin, and death.

Evil spirits: Luke 4:31–37 describes Jesus casting out an unclean demonic spirit possessing a man in the synagogue. The witnesses were astonished at Jesus’s spiritual authority.

Illness: Luke 4:38–40 shows Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law and those who came to see him. He repeatedly healed the sick throughout his ministry.

Nature: In Luke 5:1–10, Jesus displays his power over the fish in the lake, enabling Peter to catch an enormous bounty after failing to catch any on his own.

Sins: In Luke 5:17–26, a man who could not walk is brought to Jesus, who declares that the man’s sins are forgiven—much to the chagrin of the religious leaders watching. To prove he had the power to forgive sins, Jesus told the man to get up and walk also. And he did.

Death: John 11:1–44 tells the story of Lazarus, Jesus’s friend who became ill and died before Jesus arrived. Four days later, Jesus called out for Lazarus to come out of the grave.

Read Matthew 17:1–8. In the Transfiguration, it’s as if Jesus stopped holding back his divine glory and allowed it to shine through his body. The spiritual became visible. Peter, James, and John were awe-struck at the sight of Jesus in blinding glory speaking with Moses and Elijah.

What does your mental image of Jesus include? How do you reconcile his divine nature with his human nature?

In what ways can the examples given above clarify that Jesus our savior is the same God speaking to Job from the whirlwind?

Which qualities of Jesus have meant the most to you recently? Spend time thanking and praising him for meeting you in your need.

4. Weekly Reading Plan

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.

Day 1: Job 32:1–22

Day 2: Job 33:1–33

Day 3: Job 34:1–35:16

Day 4: Job 36:1–33

Day 5: Job 37:1–24
