

TRUSTING GOD WHEN LIFE MAKES NO SENSE

The Book of Job

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Part 3: “WHEN GOD SEEMS SILENT”

Main Idea



Elihu (the youngest of Job's four friends) challenges Job and his three friends. He explains that suffering is not always punishment for sin—it may also be used by God to correct, teach, protect, and deepen a person's faith.

CENTRAL QUESTION: What should we do when we are going through a very difficult time, God seems silent, and advice from others isn't helping?

Job has finished his defense, and his three friends have stopped answering him. A younger man named *Elihu* now speaks. He is angry that Job has justified himself rather than God, and angry that the three friends have condemned Job without proving their case. Elihu offers a different possibility: suffering may sometimes be corrective or protective rather than punishment for a specific sin.

Elihu says several things that help us hear from God, but he does not possess a full explanation either. He reminds Job that God is greater than we are. He speaks in ways we may overlook and works for purposes beyond our understanding. Chapter 37 points directly toward God's answer in Chapter 38.

READ JOB CHAPTERS 32 TO 37

Chapter 32: Elihu Enters the Conversation

Why does Elihu finally decide to speak?

- A. He believes age always guarantees wisdom.
- B. He is angry that Job has justified himself and that the friends have condemned Job without answering him.

- C. He has received a complete explanation of Job's suffering.
- D. He wants Job to stop believing in God.

Answer: B. He is angry that Job has justified himself and that the friends have condemned Job without answering him.

Chapter 33: Elihu Says God Speaks in Different Ways

What new possibility does Elihu introduce concerning suffering?

- A. Every instance of suffering proves a hidden sin.
- B. Suffering always means that God has abandoned a person.
- C. God may use suffering to warn, correct, or preserve a person from a destructive path.
- D. Human beings can always discover God's exact purpose.

Answer: C. God may use suffering to warn, correct, or preserve a person from a destructive path.

Chapter 34: Elihu Defends God's Justice

What central truth does Elihu emphasize about God's rule?

- A. God can act unjustly when He is angry.
- B. God governs impartially and never does wrong.
- C. God must explain every decision to human beings.
- D. God rewards and punishes everyone immediately.

Answer: B. God governs impartially and never does wrong.

Chapter 35: Elihu Corrects Job's Perspective

How does Elihu respond to Job's complaint that righteousness seems to bring no benefit?

- A. He says human conduct does not matter at all.
- B. He says God depends on human goodness.
- C. He points out that God is greater than human beings and is not controlled by what they do.
- D. He promises that Job's suffering will end the next day.

Answer: C. He points out that God is greater than human beings and is not controlled by what they do.

Chapter 36: Elihu Sees Instruction in Affliction

According to Elihu, what may God accomplish through affliction?

- A. He may open a person's ears to instruction and turn that person from wrongdoing.
- B. He may prove that the sufferer is worse than everyone else.
- C. He may remove the need for faith.

D. He may reveal every detail of His plan.

Answer: A. He may open a person's ears to instruction and turn that person from wrongdoing.

Chapter 37: The Storm Points to God's Greatness

What response does Elihu call for as he describes God's power in creation?

A. Demand an immediate explanation from God.

B. Explain every mystery of weather and suffering.

C. Stop and consider God's wonders with reverence and humility.

D. Assume that natural disasters reveal a person's guilt.

Answer: C. Stop and consider God's wonders with reverence and humility.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why were Job's three friends silent at the beginning of chapter 32?

Answer: They had run out of arguments because Job remained convinced of his innocence. Their silence did not mean that they had solved the problem. It showed that their simple formula - suffering always proves personal sin - could not account for Job's case.

2. What does Elihu add to the discussion that Job's three friends had largely missed?

Answer: Elihu suggests that suffering may sometimes instruct, warn, correct, or protect a person. He does not merely look backward for a sin that caused the pain; he also looks forward to what God may accomplish through it.

3. Which parts of Elihu's speech are helpful, and how did he view his own insights into Job's suffering?

Answer: Elihu rightly emphasizes God's justice, greatness, wisdom, and freedom. He also reminds Job that people do not see the whole picture. Yet Elihu still speaks more confidently than his limited knowledge warrants, and he cannot identify God's specific purpose in Job's suffering.

4. What does it mean to stop and consider God's wonders in Job 37:14?

Answer: It means pausing our arguments and giving serious attention to God's power, wisdom, and rule displayed in creation. Wonder does not answer every question, but it places our questions within the reality that God's knowledge and authority far exceed ours.

5. Suppose a Christian said, "God must be punishing you because your suffering isn't coming to an end." Based on Job 32 to 37, how would you respond?

Answer: I would avoid claiming to know God's hidden purpose. I would acknowledge that suffering can sometimes correct us, but it may also serve purposes we cannot see. I would encourage honest self-examination without automatic self-condemnation, continued prayer, wise support, and trust in God's character.

APPLICATION

1. When comforting others who are suffering, listen before speaking.

Elihu waited while older men spoke, but he still had only part of the picture. When someone suffers, listen carefully and avoid claiming certainty about what God has not revealed.

2. Ask yourself how you can grow spiritually while going through this difficult time.

Pain can expose attitudes, deepen dependence, redirect choices, or cultivate compassion. Prayerfully ask, What can I learn here? Do not turn that question into the accusation, What sin must have caused this?

3. When going through a difficult time place your full trust in God's wisdom especially when His reasons seem hidden.

Job could not explain the storm forming around him, but the storm pointed to a God whose wisdom and power surpassed his own. When answers do not come, consider God's works, remember His character, and keep trusting Him.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Elihu does not give Job the final answer. He does, however, loosen the grip of the friends' narrow assumption that suffering must be punishment for a specific sin. God may use hardship to warn, teach, protect, and deepen His people, and His purposes may remain beyond our sight.

When God seems silent, listen humbly, consider His greatness, and trust that He is still at work.