

JOB: SENSELESS EVIL AND INSENSITIVE FRIENDS

READ: JOB 42

The book of Job wrestles with a question we've been asking for thousands of years: "Why do we suffer?" While we may rush to respond with quick answers like "suffering makes us stronger" or "only bad people suffer," these answers fall flat when confronted with a friend in the midst of heart-wrenching, life-sucking, can't-get-out-of-bed anguish. The kind where all you can do is look to God and cry out, "Why?!"

Job was a righteous man who recognized his need to repent and ask God's forgiveness, which he did regularly. But God permits Satan to steal Job's wealth, attack Job's health, and kill Job's children. Job's friends mourn with him silently for a week—until Job begins speaking, regretting the day he was born and longing to make a legal case against God for his unjust suffering.

But, instead of comforting him, Job's friends insist he must have done something wrong to deserve this terrible suffering (which was a common thought at the time). They go back and forth for several chapters, with Job defending his innocence and making his case against God while his friends accuse him of some forgotten or overlooked sin in his past.

Finally, God speaks.

But God doesn't say, "Hey, Job, here's why I've allowed you to suffer." Instead, He reveals His glory in a whirlwind and reminds Job that He is the loving, sovereign Creator of the universe. He shows Job and his friends that He is there and He is bigger than suffering. His reasons for allowing suffering aren't simple, and they aren't always for us to understand.

God's answer to suffering is the cross. He suffered on the cross for our sins—the very thing that twists and destroys, leading to all manner of suffering in our world. The all-knowing, all-powerful, loving God of the universe became human, suffered on the cross to beat sin, rose from the grave to beat death, and is returning to destroy suffering forever (John 1:14; Romans 8:20-24; 1 Peter 3:18; Revelation 21:1-5). Jesus is present, knows personally what suffering feels like, and died and rose again so that those who put their faith in Him might be freed from the grip of sin and all of its effects (Hebrews 4:14-16).

So where does that leave us? Well, if you are suffering, remember God loves you and He is big enough to handle your questions and your pain. Jesus died on the cross and rose again—dwelling with us in the dust and ashes of this broken world, sharing in the suffering and promising that sin and death will not have the last word. If your friend is suffering, be like Jesus—sit with that person in their pain. Hurt with them. Love them. And point them to Jesus, who loves them even more than you do, and who is returning to destroy all sin, suffering, and death. 🔑

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🔑 Because the God who holds us through suffering is so big yet also knows our suffering personally, we can bring all our hurts and pains to Him through lament. He can handle it. What laments do you have to bring to Him, either for your own suffering or the suffering of others? _____

🔑 Comforting a friend in pain can feel awkward, especially when you don't know what to say. But, sometimes, being with them silently is the best thing you can do. How did Job's "friends" make his pain worse? What could they have done to bring comfort to Job? _____

🔑 Jesus feels our pain with us. How does knowing this truth bring you comfort when you are hurting? _____

*I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes.
Job 42:5 (NLT)*

