

Job And His Three Friends

Job 2:11-32:1

MEMORY VERSE

JOB 19:25

"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth. "

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Black construction paper cut into 2"x 8" strips, white or yellow construction paper cut into 1" x 6" strips, markers, several small pebbles (aquarium pebbles), small 2" twigs, and clear contact paper.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Memory Game

Have the children sit in a circle. Allow them to tell their name and something special about themselves, such as their favorite animal.

As you go around the circle, each child must say what is special about each person who has already spoken as well as what is special about him or herself.

Keep going around the room until the last person can name all of the special things about everyone in the room. This game will help your class to get to know one another better and develop friendships.

LESSON TIME!

Job, a righteous man, was put to quite a test. He lost family, possessions, and even his health. Satan had determined evil upon Job, yet not without God's permission. God remained in control of the events and circumstances of Job's life. Job did not know the reason for his suffering, yet he continued to trust God.

In today's lesson, three friends offer their support ("comfort and counsel") to Job—Bildad, Zophar Eliphaz. How would *they* deal with this difficult question: "Why is Job suffering? Job declared his innocence to his friends. How would they respond?

Bildad and Eliphaz each speak three times; Zophar speaks twice. Each time Job answers back to their statements, arguments, and accusations. These three men argue from the same basic perspective: "Suffering is punishment for sin." "Job is suffering greatly; therefore, Job must be a great sinner." This was not a small accusation to bear, especially by one whose world had been turned upside down. Job's answers defend his relationship with God and show an understanding of God. Though he could not account for his circumstances, he continued to trust in God. **We can trust God even when our "friends" judge us wrongfully.**

JOB 18:1-12, 21

Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:

"How long till you put an end to words? Gain understanding, and afterward we will speak.

Why are we counted as beasts, And regarded as stupid in your sight?

You who tear yourself in anger, Shall the earth be forsaken for you? Or shall the rock be removed from its place?

"The light of the wicked indeed goes out, And the flame of his fire does not shine.

The light is dark in his tent, And his lamp beside him is put out.

The steps of his strength are shortened, And his own counsel casts him down.

For he is cast into a net by his own feet, And he walks into a snare.

The net takes him by the heel, And a snare lays hold of him.

A noose is hidden for him on the ground, And a trap for him in the road.

Terrors frighten him on every side, And drive him to his feet.

His strength is starved, And destruction is ready at his side.

Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, And this is the place of him who does not know God."

What attitude is revealed by Bildad's words toward Job? He certainly does not affirm Job's declaration of innocence. The name "Bildad" means "son of contention." He charges Job with godlessness (Job 8:13). One of his main contentions is that God never twists justice (Job 8:3).

Be careful! Sometimes, we need more information before we decide someone is guilty of sin! In this speech he was giving a lot of dark descriptions of the wicked man's fate. Why was he saying all of this to Job? The problem with Bildad was not that he was wrong in his descriptions, but that he was warning the wrong man! Let's see what Job says.

JOB 19:1-8, 14-21, 25-27

Then Job answered and said:

"How long will you torment my soul, And break me in pieces with words?

These ten times you have reproached me; You are not ashamed that you have wronged me.

And if indeed I have erred, My error remains with me.

If indeed you exalt yourselves against me, And plead my disgrace against me,

Know then that God has wronged me, And has surrounded me with His net.

"If I cry out concerning wrong, I am not heard. If I cry aloud, there is no justice.

He has fenced up my way, so that I cannot pass; And He has set darkness in my paths.

Verses 14-21

My relatives have failed, And my close friends have forgotten me.

Those who dwell in my house, and my maidservants, Count me as a stranger; I am an alien in their sight.

I call my servant, but he gives no answer; I beg him with my mouth.

My breath is offensive to my wife, And I am repulsive to the children of my own body.

Even young children despise me; I arise, and they speak against me.

All my close friends abhor me, And those whom I love have turned against me.

My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh, And I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.

"Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, For the hand of God has struck me!

Verses 25-27

For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth;

And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God,

Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Job appeals to his friends to have compassion. No one wanted to be around him. It seemed there was nothing in his life to be happy about. Could things have gotten much worse? He knows God has allowed these bad circumstances and feels “wronged”; yet he does not curse God.

Though he does not understand the reason for his circumstances, what he *does* understand is very significant. He understands there is a Redeemer that in the end will stand on the earth. He understands that he himself will live again after his death. He goes from the valley of despair to the peak of hope because of his faith in a God that he cannot see, nor fully understand. His heart yearns for God and trusts God even though he cannot account for his circumstances.

JOB 20:1-11, 21

Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said:

"Therefore my anxious thoughts make me answer,
Because of the turmoil within me.

I have heard the rebuke that reproaches me, And the
spirit of my understanding causes me to answer.

"Do you not know this of old, Since man was placed
on earth,

That the triumphing of the wicked is short, And the
joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment?

Though his haughtiness mounts up to the heavens,
And his head reaches to the clouds,

Yet he will perish forever like his own refuse; Those
who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?'

He will fly away like a dream, and not be found; Yes,
he will be chased away like a vision of the night.

The eye that saw him will see him no more, Nor will
his place behold him anymore.

His children will seek the favor of the poor, And his hands will restore his wealth.

His bones are full of his youthful vigor, But it will lie down with him in the dust.

Nothing is left for him to eat; Therefore his well-being will not last.

The name Zophar means “hairy or rough.” He speaks very bluntly, sometimes displaying a “holier-than-thou” attitude. In his first speech, he charges Job with boasting (Job 11:26); he calls Job a “witless man” and rebukes his “idle talk.” One of his main contentions is that God knows iniquity when He sees it (Job 11:11).

In this second speech, he again seemed certain that Job only imagined his innocence. He, as did the others, talks about the fate of evildoers, inferring Job needed to repent and turn from his evil doing. How does Job answer?

JOB 21:1-3, 7-15, 17-21

Then Job answered and said:

"Listen carefully to my speech, And let this be your consolation.

Bear with me that I may speak, And after I have spoken, keep mocking.

Why do the wicked live and become old, Yes, become mighty in power?

Their descendants are established with them in their sight, And their offspring before their eyes.

Their houses are safe from fear, Neither is the rod of God upon them.

Their bull breeds without failure; Their cow calves without miscarriage.

They send forth their little ones like a flock, And their children dance.

They sing to the tambourine and harp, And rejoice to the sound of the flute.

They spend their days in wealth, And in a moment go down to the grave.

Yet they say to God, 'Depart from us, For we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways.

Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?'

"How often is the lamp of the wicked put out? How often does their destruction come upon them, The sorrows God distributes in His anger?

They are like straw before the wind, And like chaff that a storm carries away.

They say, 'God lays up one's iniquity for his children'; Let Him recompense him, that he may know it.

Let his eyes see his destruction, And let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty.

For what does he care about his household after him,
When the number of his months is cut in half?

Job used logic to show that their major argument—all suffering is the punishment of sin--does not hold up well. In verses 17-21, Job asks, “How often are the wicked judged?” He had observed many people being wicked, yet few had been judged for their wickedness.

Job knew there must be a deeper meaning and purpose for suffering. Though Job did not know what that deeper meaning and purpose was, he continued to trust God. Next, Eliphaz evaluated the situation.

JOB 22:4-5, 21-27

"Is it because of your fear of Him that He corrects you,
And enters into judgment with you?

Is not your wickedness great, And your iniquity
without end?

"Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace;
Thereby good will come to you.

Receive, please, instruction from His mouth, And lay
up His words in your heart.

If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up;
You will remove iniquity far from your tents.

Then you will lay your gold in the dust, And the gold
of Ophir among the stones of the brooks.

Yes, the Almighty will be your gold And your
precious silver;

For then you will have your delight in the Almighty,
And lift up your face to God.

You will make your prayer to Him, He will hear you,
And you will pay your vows. "

This is the third speech of Eliphaz. The name Eliphaz has two possible meanings: "God is dispenser," or "God is fine gold." Eliphaz acts as lead spokesman as well as the "scientist" of the group. His speeches show clearer reasoning and more considerate criticism than those of the other two friends do. He is seen to be noble, sincere and wise. His main arguments are that God is perfectly pure and righteous (Job 4:17) and that man brings trouble on himself (Job 5:7).

Though, he does not know what evil Job has committed, he accuses him of evil. For the second time, he urges Job to turn back to God, to repent, to submit to God and be at peace with God. Can you imagine how difficult this is for Job to hear? He was living a blameless, upright life when all this trouble came upon him. Though he does not understand his circumstances, he knows he does not need to repent.

Our friends may judge us wrongfully or say things that are not true about us. How important it is that we know God's character and His Word. We, as Job, must learn to trust Him no matter the circumstances.

Helping Friends

Have the children find a partner and pair up. Then have the pairs line up near a wall. Next have all of the children find a spot in front of the wall. Have them face the wall and stand arms-length from it. Their feet should be close together. Next the children should carefully lean forward against the wall so that only their forehead is touching the wall. They must keep their body stiff and

straight with their arms crossed. Next, say, “On the count of three, try to stand upright. Remember to keep your body stiff, arms crossed and no bending of the knees.” Count to three.

Children will struggle to stand upright without bending at the waist or using their arms. Allow a few seconds for children to attempt this, and then have the pairs choose who would like to try. The partner will help their friend to stand upright. Give them another couple of seconds to try this. Ask the children if it was easier with a friend’s help. Next trade spots and have one child lean forward, but this time the partner will only tell their friend, “You will have to do better,” “Can’t you do it right?” or “If you would only do it this way!” They can be creative. As an alternative activity you can have them try scratching the center of their back and tying their shoe with only one hand.

Have the children sit down and ask them which was the most help; telling about how someone should do better, or actually helping them. In today’s lesson, we have seen Job’s friends attempting to “comfort” him. Unfortunately, it really did not provide much comfort. In fact, they only caused Job misery! Let’s look at how Job handled his situation. **We can trust God even when our “friends” judge us wrongfully.**

JOB 23:1-12; 24:22-25

Then Job answered and said:

"Even today my complaint is bitter; My hand is listless because of my groaning.

Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat!

I would present my case before Him, And fill my mouth with arguments.

I would know the words which He would answer me,
And understand what He would say to me.

Would He contend with me in His great power? No!
But He would take note of me.

There the upright could reason with Him, And I
would be delivered forever from my Judge.

"Look, I go forward, but He is not there, And
backward, but I cannot perceive Him;

When He works on the left hand, I cannot behold
Him; When He turns to the right hand, I cannot see
Him.

But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested
me, I shall come forth as gold.

My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His
way and not turned aside.

I have not departed from the commandment of His
lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more
than my necessary food.

"But God draws the mighty away with His power; He
rises up, but no man is sure of life.

He gives them security, and they rely on it; Yet His
eyes are on their ways.

They are exalted for a little while, Then they are
gone. They are brought low; They are taken out of
the way like all others; They dry out like the heads
of grain.

"Now if it is not so, who will prove me a liar, And make my speech worth nothing?"

In the midst of his desperate circumstances, Job searches for God. He desires to inquire of Him, to present his case before the righteous judge of the universe. Job laments an unsuccessful search. He recognizes that though he cannot see God, God sees him and is still overseeing this trial. Faith and hope once more emerged as Job declared, "But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold."

Perhaps you will experience a trial you do not understand. It may seem God does not hear your prayers or respond to your cries. How important it is when we suffer that we learn to receive comfort from God. Our friends may fail us...they may add grief to our wounds, but God will never leave us or forsake us. Indeed, "...He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold." We can be confident God does hear us and no circumstance or event can separate us from His love (1 John 5:14; Romans 8 35-39).

Through Job's encounter with his three friends, we also learn some lessons on friendship. Job's three friends may have been sincere in their desire to help Job; but by wrongfully judging, they only caused him more pain. They did not understand 1) Job's heart—he was upright before God and 2) the reason God was allowing Job to suffer. What kind of friend will we be to a person who is suffering? Remember, our understanding is limited. We do not see the whole picture or story as God does. We must be careful before attempting to "put our two cents in."

Whether we are the ones in the midst of a difficult trial or we are the friend of one who is suffering, may we know we can trust God even when we can not account for the circumstances we experience. He remains our Redeemer, who we will one day see face to face; He knows the way we take, and He is working a good plan in our lives.

Sticks and Stones Bookmark

To be a good friend we need to be careful about what we say. Job's friends accused him of things that were not really true. In doing so, they only added to his suffering. This bookmark will help us to remember that we need to watch what we say to others. You will need black construction paper cut into 2" x 8" strips, white or yellow construction paper cut into 1"x 6" strips, markers, several small pebbles (aquarium pebbles), small 2" twigs, and clear contact paper.

Use a marker to write Psalm 141:3 on the smaller of the two strips. (Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips. -Psalm 141:3).

Using glue stick, paste the smaller strip centered in the larger strip. Next glue the twigs and the pebbles to the bookmark. Then cover the bookmark with clear contact paper over the front and the back. Trim with scissors if necessary.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to trust in the Lord even in difficult times and to continue to trust in Him no matter what our "friends" say. May we keep our attention focused on Him! If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.