

## PRAYER

### Introduction | Job Wants to Meet With God

- What he most wants, but also what he most fears
- **Then...God shows up. What will he say? What will he be like?**

### Off-Putting Tone?

**Job 38** <sup>1</sup> Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind. He said: <sup>2</sup> Who is this who obscures my counsel with ignorant words? <sup>3</sup> Get ready to answer me like a man; when I question you, you will inform me. <sup>4</sup> Where were you when I established the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. <sup>5</sup> Who fixed its dimensions? Certainly you know!

- Many modern readers struggle with the response from God: 1) Doesn't answer the question of why Job has suffered, 2) his tone seems to be strident, even rude or sarcastic.

**Longman / Walton** It is particularly common for readers to feel disappointed with the speeches of God. They sound to some readers like deflection—a power play in which the real issues are set aside while God simply overwhelms and intimidates Job. In fact it is not uncommon to hear that the answer in the book of Job is, “I am God, and you are not.” This generally has an implied complement: “So just shut up,” or “Mind your own business,” or “I can do what I want,” or “You are worthless.”

- I don't think we need to read Job this way. In fact, I don't think we are supposed to read the book of Job this way.

**Big question:** *how should we understand God's response to Job?* Three keys: 1) God's personal response, 2) God's parental care, 3) God's profound wisdom

### I. God's personal involvement

1. **Eleonore Stump** One way to think about the story of Job here is to notice that Job has the longest face-to-face conversation with God of any character, anywhere in the Biblical stories ever, ever...If you leave that out, it's harder to understand what's going on in [Job].
2. Job 38:1, the personal, covenantal name of YHWH is used, first time since ch. 2
3. Face-to-face | **Job 42:5**
  - a. CSB <sup>5</sup> I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you.
  - b. NET <sup>5</sup> I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye has seen you.
4. Job 38:3, the invitation to a personal “wrestling match”
  - a. CSB Get ready to answer me like a man; when I question you, you will inform me.
  - b. ESV Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.
  - c. KJV Gird up thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

- d. **Derek Rishmawy** Sometimes the only way to correct a person who believes nobody cares about him is to be indignant at the insulting suggestion, causing him to see and know how misguided that belief really is...[T]his is the dignifying tenderness of God's forceful rebuke—he deals with Job as someone who merits his care and attention, as someone who, though small and confused, is deeply loved by the Lord of heaven and earth.

## **II. God's Parental Care**

### 1. Textual clues

- a. **Job 38** <sup>4</sup>Where were you when I established the earth...<sup>7</sup> while the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? <sup>8</sup>Who enclosed the sea behind doors when it burst from the womb, <sup>9</sup>when I made the clouds its garment and total darkness its blanket.
- b. **Job 38** <sup>28</sup>Does the rain have a father? Who fathered the drops of dew? <sup>29</sup>Whose womb did the ice come from? Who gave birth to the frost of heaven?
- c. **Job 38** bear and her cubs(Ursa)...lioness hunting for her cubs...raven feeding her baby birds...**Job 39** goats and deer in labor...mother ostrich with her eggs...
- d. **Job 41** <sup>5</sup>Can you play with [Leviathan] like a bird or put him on a leash for your girls?

2. **Eleonore Stump** It is a mistake, then, to characterize God's speeches to Job as demonstrating nothing but God's power over creation. The speeches certainly do show God's power; but, equally importantly, they show God...as a parent with his creatures, from the sea and rain to the raven and the donkey and even the monstrous behemoth and leviathan. He brings them out of the womb, swaddles, feeds, and guides them, and even plays with them. Most importantly, he talks to them; and somehow, in some sense or other, they talk to him in return. These speeches thus show God as more than powerful. They show him as engaged...with his whole creation, and they portray him as having a parental care toward all his creatures, even the inanimate ones.

- a. This is not a drill sergeant dressing down a new recruit, this is a father-son chat.

3. *The intensity of parental conversation with a coming-of-age son*

## **III. God's Profound Wisdom | Two Speeches**

Does God answer Job's questions? Yes and no.

- No to the question of "what did I do to suffer like this?"
- Yes to the question of "how does God govern the universe?"
  - "Who darkens counsel" is a phrase of governance
  - Wisdom | Job 28, the chiasmic center of the book

### **Part 1: Nature**

*Bible Project guys: "cosmic tour of the universe"*

1. Nature | land/water, rain, hail, snow, desert, frost, oxen, goats, ravens, ostriches

2. Space | **Job 38** <sup>31</sup> Can you fasten the chains of the Pleiades or loosen the belt of Orion? <sup>32</sup> Can you bring out the constellations in their season and lead the Bear and her cubs? <sup>33</sup> Do you know the laws of heaven? Can you impose its authority on earth?
  - a. Jupiter | 79 known moons, Ganymede is larger than Mercury, pulls in asteroids, one of the reasons Earth doesn't get pummelled.
  - b. 100 billion stars per galaxy, maybe as many as 2 trillion galaxies in the observable universe (U. of Nottingham estimate)

### Job's First Response

**Job 40** <sup>4</sup> I am so insignificant. How can I answer you? I place my hand over my mouth. <sup>5</sup> I have spoken once, and I will not reply; twice, but now I can add nothing.

- He acknowledges God's big-ness, but he doesn't address God's justice, or evil, suffering

### Part 2: Dealing with Evil

1. Humanity | **Job 40** <sup>10</sup> Adorn yourself with majesty and splendor, and clothe yourself with honor and glory. <sup>11</sup> Pour out your raging anger; look on every proud person and humiliate him. <sup>12</sup> Look on every proud person and humble him; trample the wicked where they stand. <sup>13</sup> Hide them together in the dust; imprison them in the grave. <sup>14</sup> Then I will confess to you that your own right hand can deliver you.
2. Two unusual animals
  - a. Behemoth | **Job 40:15-24**
    - i. Strong and immovable: strong back, tail like a cedar tree, bones like bronze tubes, a river couldn't sweep him away.
    - ii. Hungry: eats grass like an ox, hills yield food for him
    - iii. Always there: he's in the hills and the river, he's under lotus plants
  - b. Leviathan | **Job 41:1-34**
    - i. Fearsome: nobody can tame him, even the angles are afraid
    - ii. Painful: sharp teeth, sharp scales, fire from his mouth
    - iii. Proudful: heart is hard, he is king over all the sons of pride
3. Identifying the beasts | **Beast from the land, and the beast from the sea**
  - a. Strictly zoological: hippopotamus/elephant, crocodile/whale
    - i. Problem: descriptions don't neatly fit.
  - b. Pure fantasy & myth: made up creatures, totally fake
  - c. Reality: mythopoetic. Kinda real, but larger than life | Kraken, Bigfoot
4. What they communicate is something very theological
  - a. Behemoth: unyielding/strong, everywhere, always hungry | Robert Fyall says that behemoth is associated with Mot, the Canaanite God of death. **Death.**
  - b. Leviathan: untamable, wild, lurking, sharp and painful | **Evil & chaos.**
5. God says that only he can deal with both
  - a. **Job 40:19** [Behemoth] is the foremost of God's works; only his Maker can draw the sword against him.

- b. **Job 41:10-11** <sup>10</sup> No one is ferocious enough to rouse Leviathan; who then can stand against me? <sup>11</sup> Who confronted me, that I should repay him? Everything under heaven belongs to me.

### Job's Final Response

**Job 42** <sup>2</sup> I know that you can do anything and no plan of yours can be thwarted. <sup>3</sup> You asked, "Who is this who conceals my counsel with ignorance?" Surely I spoke about things I did not understand, things too wondrous for me to know. <sup>4</sup> You said, "Listen now, and I will speak. When I question you, you will inform me." <sup>5</sup> I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you. <sup>6</sup> Therefore, I reject my words and am sorry for them; I am dust and ashes.

- Now this is a response. He confesses three things
  - God is in charge
  - I have been in the wrong
    - Job did not suffer because he sinned, but he sinned in his suffering
    - Questioned God, I could do a better Job of running things
  - We have face-to-face relationship now

### Job is All of Us

Every one of us, in our fallen natures, thinks that we know how to run the universe.

- Humanity was created to rule in partnership with God, on his terms, in his wisdom
  - Adam and Eve took matters into their own hands, every human since has done the same
- I've been arguing for a reading of God's correction of Job through the lens of kindness.
- A loving father shows up to talk to his headstrong teenage son and help him see
  - This is what God does for every single one of us
  - Romans 1 says that God is rightly (righteously) angry about our sin and folly
  - Romans 2:4 says that God's kindness is what leads us to repentance

### GOSPEL: Jesus Is Better

1. Jesus came to reveal our loving father | Matthew 11:27
2. Jesus is God personally involved | John 1:14
  - a. Cross, resurrection
3. Jesus defeats the monsters of evil and death | 1 Corinthians 15:57
4. Jesus is God's wisdom | Hebrews 1:3

### Our Only Hope | Trusting In God Even When We Don't Understand

- 1) First, we trust God for salvation, even if we don't fully understand (theories of atonement)
- 2) Then, we embark upon a lifestyle of trust: "you're God, I am not, I'm so glad to have relationship"
  - For some things in life, we get good and straightforward answer
  - But, if you were to break it down, at some point you'd have to trust
  - We expect a rational answer for everything, we assume that would be helpful
    - Evil is fundamentally irrational and absurd | Leviathan
    - We're doing long division, and getting frustrated that there's a "remainder"
  - We think that answers will make it better, but Job is telling us "probably not"

- Our only hope is a posture of humble trust in God’s wisdom

**Walton / Longman** ...“So just shut up,” or “Mind your own business,” or “I can do what I want,” or “You are worthless.” A preferable understanding would be, “I am God, [the] supremely wise and powerful, so I want you to trust me even when you don’t understand.”

### **Benediction**

Romans 11:33-36 *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*

### **Sermon Description**

Many modern readers struggle with God’s response to Job near the end of the book. Many people hear it as a power play in which God deflects Job’s questions and puts him in his place. However, this misunderstanding is due to our failure to see God’s parental and personal heart of love for Job in these chapters. When rightly understood, God’s invitation to Job is the same invitation to all of us: trust in him because he is perfectly wise.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How difficult is it for you personally to come to grips with the idea that we don’t always get the answers that we want in life? Why is personal, face-to-face relationship God better than answers?
2. Read Job chs. 40 and 41. What do you think of these strange and incredible beasts? Why is it more important to identify what these beasts represent rather than identify what specific animals they might be?
3. How does Jesus enable us to adopt a posture of humility and trust? How can we more deeply live a lifestyle of humility and trust (repentance and faith) as we follow Jesus?
4. If we embodied more humility and trust in Jesus, how would that help us as we seek to share the gospel with those around us who have yet to trust Jesus?

### **Prayer Points**

1. Pray for the ability to humbly trust God, even when we don’t have all the answers that we want about the difficulties of life.
2. Pray that as we grow in humility and trust, it would be a witness to an unbelieving world.

### **For Further Study**

- [Gandalf, Job, and the Indignant Love of God](#) blog post by Derek Rishmawy
- [Wandering in Darkness](#) book by Eleonore Stump. Note: this is a massive, scholarly work that may not be of interest to all readers.