



The book of Job is a story about God.

While God is the main character, the action centers around a man named Job and his friends as they attempt to unravel the mysteries of suffering, sin, and sovereignty. We sit with them as they ask big questions, as they doubt, and as they sometimes get things wrong in their effort to make sense of tragedy.

The book of Job is a work best understood in its entirety. Every verse must be viewed in its original context; some of the characters' statements about God and sin are not true. That is the point. We, as the reader, get to follow Job as he hears his friends tell him his suffering must be the result of his own sin. We know that is not true, but does Job? Will he give in to despair? Or will he trust God knowing he did nothing to deserve the tragedy he must endure?

And where is God? Will he save Job? Will he ever offer an explanation?

STRUCTURE & GENRE

- Job is a *story* with a beginning, middle, and end. However, within that story we find a mix of literary genres and devices.
- Job begins and ends with traditional *narrative*. The story opens with a rare glimpse into God's throne room and concludes with an interaction between God, Job, and his friends.
- The bulk of the story is told through dialogue in the form of poetry. Within the poems we find many literary devices such as parallelism, irony, metaphor, and soliloquy.
- Much of the conversation between Job and his friends takes the form of a legal dispute. Job wants to bring his case before God.
- Job contains thirty-one instances of *EI Shaddai* (God Almighty), the most of any book in the Old Testament.

AUTHORSHIP & SETTING

The author of Job remains anonymous, but scholars have posed many theories. Some suggestions include Elihu (the fourth counselor and contemporary of Job), Moses, Solomon, or even an unknown author in post-exile Israel. It is also unclear when Job was written, with dates ranging from 2000 B.C. to as recently as 455 B.C. Job is briefly referenced in Ezekiel 14:14–20, but it is unclear if the book was written in its final form at that time or if the story was simply part of the culture.

While many questions surround the authorship of Job, we know the events take place in the era of the patriarchs—the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—in the land of Uz (south and east of the Dead Sea).

CHARACTERS

- **Job:** A righteous man who feared God; a wealthy landowner with several sons and daughters
- **Satan (a title meaning “accuser”):** A spiritual being with access to the throne room of God; challenges the integrity of Job
- **Eliphaz:** a Temanite (city in Edom); Job’s friend
- **Bildad:** a Shuhite (descendant of Abraham through Ketura, See Genesis 25:1–6); Job’s friend
- **Zophar:** Naamathite (unknown region); Job’s friend.
- **Elihu:** the younger, fourth counselor

THEMES

Job centers around the questions of suffering and sin.

- Why do bad things happen to good people?
- Can God be trusted?
- How do we reconcile human suffering with divine justice?
- How does sovereignty work and how do I keep following God when unexplained tragedy strikes?

READING PLAN: Week of June 18–July 9

WEEK OF	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
JUNE 18	Job 1–2	Job 3–4	Job 5–6	Job 7–8	Job 9–10
JUNE 25	Job 11–12	Job 13–14	Job 15–16	Job 17–18	Job 19–20
JULY 2	Job 21–22	Job 23–24	Job 25–26	Job 27–28	Job 29–30
JULY 9	Job 31–32	Job 33–34	Job 35–37	Job 38–39	Job 40–42

Questions to ask as you read:

- What do I observe in the passage? What is happening and/or what are the characters saying?
- Where do I see God?
- What questions does this raise for me?

Questions to ask as you read:

- What did you learn about God?
- What do you think of Job and his friends? Are they good friends? Where do you identify with them?
- How does this alter your view of suffering?

READING PLAN: Week of July 16–August 6

WEEK OF	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
JULY 16	Job 1–2	Job 3–4	Job 5–6	Job 7–8	Job 9–10
JULY 23	Job 11–12	Job 13–14	Job 15–16	Job 17–18	Job 19–20
JULY 30	Job 21–22	Job 23–24	Job 25–26	Job 27–28	Job 29–30
AUGUST 6	Job 31–32	Job 33–34	Job 35–37	Job 38–39	Job 40–42

Questions to ask as you read:

- What do Job and his friends get right? What do they get wrong?
- How do you see God differently the second time through?
- Where do you see hope?

Questions to discuss with a group:

- How did you read it differently the second time? What stood out to you this time through?
- Which character do you most identify with and why?
- What is significant about God’s response to Job?
 - What questions does God not answer?
 - What point do you believe God is making?
- How might this affect your approach when comforting a friend experiencing great tragedy?

TO LEARN MORE

- Bible Project—<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-job/>
- Francis Chan on RightNow Media¹—<https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/770978>
- *Prayer in the Night; For Those Who Watch or Weep*, by Tish Harrison Warren; IVP, 2021

¹For a free account with RightNow Media, go to <https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/user/CCCOMaha>