

1. In Chapter 11, we get introduced to the third of Job's friends. Like his other two friends, this guy gets to take his best shot at insulting Job in this lesson. This "friend" is named Zophar. He states a lot of basic biblical truths. As we have learned by reading thus far in this book, the complexities and subtleties of life can't always be explained by simply stating basic Sunday School truths. Job is going to give a three-chapter "rant and response". Like he did to his other two friends, he's going to shoot down Zophar's remarks in effect by stating, "Nice try, but what you said doesn't apply to my life". My job as usual is try to explain why we should care and why we should read further.
 - a) For my newcomers, here's a quick recap to date: The basic story of Job is God allowed this man named Job to suffer in terrible ways to test him. The purpose of the test was to see if he'd not sin despite dealing with horrid physical and emotional pain. If all that wasn't bad enough, Job then had three friends who lectured him while he's dealing with all that pain. So far, two of Job's friends took their best stab at Job and he responded. Job and his three friends have no idea about the test. They're just dealing with and trying to explain why it is Job's suffering so much. In Chapter 11, we get the third of these guys going at it. In the book of Job, there are nine rounds. The first two guys gets three "stabs" at Job and the third guy (Zophar) only gets two. Then a new man steps in to make some comments. The book ends with God Himself coming in to tell Job, "Who are you to argue with Me in the first place?" The suffering ends, Job gets much better and that's pretty much the book.
 - b) OK then, enough recap. What's so special about "Round 3" as you call it? At this point, we get a new twist to the story. To quote an old Hollywood cliché, "Then the plot thickened". A key moment is when he effectively states, "God owes me an explanation!" Yes, that's my lesson title. As I summarize these chapters, that'll become obvious. Let me explain:
 - i) In Chapter 11, this guy Zophar essentially says, "Job you are not being punished as bad as you deserve. You're claiming that if only God would listen to your story, all of this would come to an end." However, we three guys say that if you just confess whatever it is you did to tick God off, you'd get better and that would be that.
 - ii) Here is how Job effectively responds, "Hey Zophar (and the other two guys while I am at it), can't you see by nature that God's in charge? Isn't it obvious by what it is going on all around you not only that He exists, but this is how He works? By now we shouldn't have to go on and on by how God works! Yes, He allows me to be in this situation, but that doesn't mean I stop believing in Him, nor does it mean that I've got some horrid sin to confess. It just means He's letting me go through this."
 - iii) Bottom line, God wants us to trust Him even when and especially when we we're going through horrid times. God wants us to know He's still there, and He is still running the show, but it doesn't mean He owes us an explanation for why He does what He does. We must accept life as it comes and still honor Him as God!
2. OK then, that's four chapters in a nutshell. Obviously there are more details, or else we could all move on to something else by now. The plot "thickens" in that Job demands God to explain why he must suffer the way he is. If you know the basic story of Job, God does not show up for many more chapters when in effect God's "had enough of all of this" and says in effect, "Why do I owe any of you an explanation for My behavior? Where we you when I created everything?" We'll get to all of that later in the book. The question for right now is essentially, "Hey God, why must I go through what I'm dealing with right now? I've dedicated my life to serving You and this is how You pay me back by allowing me to go through this? Why are You allowing this to happen?"
 - a) The easy answer of course is that God's in charge we're not, and we must accept that fact as we try to make the best decisions possible given whatever situation is in front of us.
 - b) The hard answer, is that no matter how bad we want an answer of why God allows what He allows, we're not entitled to an answer to how He works in life, period.

- c) This sort of gets into the big question of "Why does God allow evil to exist"? For starters, it is because it proves He exists. If evil exists, there must be an entity greater than evil that's allowing it to exist in the first place. Second, it exists because God allows "free will". The reason God allows free will is so that some people will freely chose to love Him back just as much as He chooses to love us. Finally "evil" is a test. It's a way for God to ask us, "Do you still love Me now, in spite of whatever it is you're dealing with right now?" OK, what about death? Why does God allow good people to die young? How do you explain war? The reason is that in order for good people to overcome evil, often war is necessary for us to see that God and "good" wins out in the end.
 - d) Gee John, that's nice philosophy, how does any of it help my situation right now? Realize I can't solve all your problems. All I can do is give you some perspective about why He's working the way He works and why we can't sense His presence at times. What I hope to give you from these studies is some perspective on why we serve God in spite of any and all the things we must deal with in life. It's the reminder that in spite of all of that, God's still there, still in charge and still wants to use our lives for His glory. If you get that you not only get the purpose for Job's suffering but the purpose for living life.
3. OK I went off on a long tangent about suffering, and forget about Job. In a sense I didn't. We are about to read chapters of debate with the simple reminder that despite the fact God's "backed off" of Job's life and despite the fact God's allowed him to suffer horribly, Job's going to show us that just because we understand how God "normally works" doesn't explain how He will act in every situation in life. If you want a purpose for reading this, it's to understand why God "backs off" in our lives and what we can learn from that situation. With that said, we've got a lot of verses this week, so enjoy the rest of the lesson, and we'll talk next week.
4. Chapter 11, Verse 1: Then Zophar the Naamathite replied: ² "Are all these words to go unanswered? Is this talker to be vindicated? ³ Will your idle talk reduce men to silence? Will no one rebuke you when you mock?
- a) One of the great truths to grasp about the book of Job, is it makes much more sense when we read it the second time. That's because by then we realize God appears on the scene in the end of the book to effectively say, "Job you're three friends are wrong. Their theories about how I work are correct, but their theology application misses the mark completely".
 - b) Once we realize that, it's a lot easier to digest the speeches of these three guys. Most of us know that, but it's still good to state it before we read these speeches.
 - c) Remember that Zophar listed patiently to the other two guys speak first. He heard Job as he responded to each of these two guys. Like the other two, Zophar was not an Israelite. He did believe in a single God and even makes some pretty impressive and theologically correct arguments about how God works. The issue isn't theology, it's how one applies it to our lives that's the question here.
 - d) I see Zophar speaking for all three men here when he says, "You think what you say will drive us to silence? You're mocking our response as irrelevant!" These guys have feelings and they're essentially saying, "Hey Job, what we say is true about God and you think you are exempt from God's vindication!" Job doesn't think that, he just thinks these three guys are missing the point as to why he's suffering. Remember that God steps into this story at the end to say in effect, these three guys are wrong, so I know I'm on God's side on this.
 - e) Anyway, that's the story to date. Let's look at Zophar's arguments:
5. Verse 4: You say to God, 'My beliefs are flawless and I am pure in your sight.' ⁵ Oh, how I wish that God would speak, that he would open his lips against you ⁶ and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom, for true wisdom has two sides. Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin.
- a) Zophar is mocking Job at this point. He's saying sarcastically, "You think you're perfect in God's eyes! You want God to speak so He could say how wonderful you are?" The truth is (from Zophar's perspective) that God hasn't punished you hard enough. If you knew just how sinful you really were, God would punish you much worse than what we see now!

- b) Let's personalize this for a minute. Let's say we're going through some sort of trial and we have people telling us, "The reason you're going through this is due to something that you have done wrong". Let's assume we've racked our brains and nothing comes to mind that we must confess. How do we deal with people who think, "You're in the mess that you're in due to guilt of unconfessed sin"? How do we convince them that's not it? All we can do is present Job's response which is essentially, "You're God philosophy is spot on, but that's not the case with me". So how do we convince somebody that we don't know why we are suffering, but we know it's not an unconfessed sin issue. We can lecture them all we want, but sometimes people's hearts get so hard, it doesn't matter what we say! That's when we need to realize we're accountable for sin to God and not to people. What if we're wrongly accused? All we can do is act like Job and do our best to convince people otherwise. Many people are wrongly accused of things. That's why a belief in a just God is a necessity if our life has a purpose, let alone a timeless truth. That truth can sustain us through the worst times of life. With that said, let's get back to Job's "horrid friend" Zophar.
6. Verse 7: "Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? ⁸ They are higher than the heavens--what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave--what can you know? ⁹ Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea.
- a) John's loose translation: "Hey Job, are you as smart as God? Can you understand why the world works the way it does?" Again, one can just sense the anger and sarcasm dripping from Zophar as he says this. The obvious point is none of us can ever fully understand all God has done in this world, let alone know what He knows.
- b) Speaking of obvious points, just because that's true, that doesn't mean Job's guilty of some great sin. Job's three friends can't "guilt trip" Job into confessing something that's not true!
- c) One of the horrible aspects about torture, is sometimes we'll confess to anything just to get it to come to an end! History records that most of the original Disciples were tortured and killed because they refused to deny Jesus was God. My point is if pain is bad enough we'd confess to just about anything, unless our eternity depends on us stating the truth. That in effect is what Job's doing here. Job's not saying God isn't perfect. Job understands that he isn't God and he doesn't know all God knows. Job's not maintaining his innocence just to prove it to these three guys. He simply accepts the fact he's forgiven of sin's he's confessed in the past and we don't have to feel guilty of confessed sins, no matter how bad they are or no matter how often we've done them. Yes, we still suffer in this lifetime for such sins, but our eternity is based on the trust that God Himself paid the price for those sins!
- d) Anyway, the point is Job gets everything Zophar's saying here. Job's not saying Zophar is wrong, just that he's wrongly applying God's truth to Job's situation. OK, let's continue:
7. Verse 10: "If he comes along and confines you in prison and convenes a court, who can oppose him? ¹¹ Surely he recognizes deceitful men; and when he sees evil, does he not take note?
- a) The idea here is that if we're put on trial for a crime, we don't have the power to overcome the verdict and the sentence. That's usually true in this life and that's definitely true when it comes to God. The idea is that usually the guilty eventually suffer in this life, but as we all know, that's not always the case. That's why a belief in a perfect God who is perfect in justice not only gives us comfort about this life, but is also true about the next life! By now I don't have to pound the point anymore that just because it's true, Job didn't do anything for the reason he's in pain, other than the fact it's a test by God.
- b) So does that mean every horrid thing we do is a test by God? Obviously, there is no way for us to know. All we can do is make the best decisions we can given what's in front of us at any given time. What we must accept about life, is often God allows horrid things to occur to good people, for some purpose greater than what we can accomplish. I've seen a few people I'm close to, suffer in horrid ways. What was amazing was even as they were facing death, they were great witnesses for Jesus through all that pain. It glorified Him in those situations and that's a goal for all of us to shoot for!

8. Verse 12: But a witless man can no more become wise than a wild donkey's colt can be born a man.
 - a) Meanwhile we're still stuck with Zophar stating biblical truths that don't apply here. At this point he's effectively saying, "When it comes to knowledge, we're nothing compared to what God knows". Again the point is that's true, but what does it have to do with Job in the situation he's in?
 - b) Let's pause to ask the big question: We get by now, what's going on. Why does this story have to go for chapter after chapter with this debate? Stop and think what life's like when we're suffering? It feels like it's going on forever. Just as we may cry out, "When is all this going to end?" We usually have to deal not only with our problems, but often we also got to deal with false accusations we're facing as we deal with that pain! The purpose of Job is to teach us how to get through such long and horrid times as we go through life.
9. Verse 13: "Yet if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him,¹⁴ if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent,¹⁵ then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear.
 - a) By this point I admit, I want to tell Zophar, "Will you please be quiet? Your arguments do not apply here, so please if you can't apply some comfort, please just shut up!" Notice that we never read of these three guys asking Job how can we help. Instead, all three of them just want to blast Job with, "Confess it, and let's get on with life!" An unfortunate truth in life, is people get so obsessed with trying to be right, they fail to see the situation for what it is in front of them! Zophar's so obsessed with saying, "Hey Job, just confess whatever it is you did, and then life will be better! The reason we get all of this, is because it's human nature to pound our point over and over again until we feel that we've been heard.
 - b) OK, what do we do when people talk to us like that? One of the greatest things to learn is what I call the "Jack in the Box" method. That hamburger chain first perfected the idea of a drive through window on a massive scale. One of the important things they teach is to always repeat back what the customer said. Not only does it get the order right, it makes the customer feel like someone is listening to them! That's my point here. Even if we do not agree with what someone is telling us, if we repeat back what they say, it makes them feel like they're being heard. It helps to calm a situation as the other party now feels that sense of "I'm being heard" here.
10. Verse 16: You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by.¹⁷ Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning.¹⁸ You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety.¹⁹ You will lie down, with no one to make you afraid, and many will court your favor.²⁰ But the eyes of the wicked will fail, and escape will elude them; their hope will become a dying gasp."
 - a) Mercifully, this is the end of Zophar's arguments. You almost get the impression that Job is so far ahead of Zophar in terms of wisdom, it's not a fair debate. Job knows all of these arguments and Job is well aware that he's not suffering due to some sin. Job's will state it as such in his reply in the next few verses. I sort of picture Job thinking, "I'll let Zophar get all of this out of his system, so when he stops to catch his breath, I can then tell him what a waste of time his whole speech has been!"
 - b) Remember that Zophar is a friend of Job. I see Zophar as the kind of guy who when life is going well, he compliments you and is fun to be around. When things are not going well, he's equally as tough, trying to get us to confess something that we know we're not guilty of. That's the essence of his arguments here in these verses.
 - c) The good news is Zophar's speech is done. The "plot will thicken" with Job's response:
11. Chapter 12: Then Job replied:² "Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!³ But I have a mind as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know all these things?
 - a) Job's saying, "I'm tired of listening to the basics! Don't you think I know all of this?!" It's the "I get all of that, but so what, as none of this applies to me" type of argument.

- b) You can sense that Job's fighting sarcasm with sarcasm. Job's now heard all three of his "so called" friends lecture him on repenting. Job's no idiot! He knows all that is true. It's a matter of his friends realizing it! It's as if Job's on trial, he knows the truth, but he can't convince the jury that what he says is true! One can sense his frustration here!
- 12. Verse 4: "I have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called upon God and he answered-- a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless!"
 - a) Here Job insults all three of his friends. When Job said he called upon God, I don't think it is anything recent. I think Job is simply describing his situation from God's perspective. I think Job sees himself as God might see him, a "laughingstock" based on all the pain he is going through, but still "righteous and blameless". It's the basic thought that Job believed he was innocent of the three men charging him with being guilty of some sort of sin!
 - b) From here, Job wants to give examples that not everybody who sins, is wallowing around in suffering, so the "cause and effect" argument the three men make don't apply here:
- 13. Verse 5: Men at ease have contempt for misfortune as the fate of those whose feet are slipping. ⁶ The tents of marauders are undisturbed, and those who provoke God are secure-- those who carry their god in their hands.
 - a) John's very loose translation: "People get away with stuff in this lifetime". Job's examples are those of thieves who get away with stuff (again, in this lifetime). The obvious point is they all believe in a God of justice, but that justice doesn't always happen in this lifetime. I'm sure we can all think of example of people who get away with stuff, and history's full of stories like that. Meanwhile, Job wants to give examples of how God works. He will do that by going to nature to give examples.
 - b) Let me quickly pause for a "why should I care" statement? Because a day may come when we need to explain God's existence to someone. We may encounter a person who is really hurting and can't explain why justice isn't occurring. Sometimes we need to explain what and who God is, before we can even bring up the concept of God Himself paying the full price for our sins. It's the first part of explaining how God works, which is the focus here.
- 14. Verse 7: "But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ⁸ or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you.
 - a) Obviously, Job's not being literal. You can't walk up to a bird or fish and ask them about how God works. The point is such animals exist in an atmosphere that was created so they can exist. If there was no bodies of water, or no skies full of air, not only would we fail to exist, but the animal world wouldn't exist either. That's the obvious point here.
 - b) I'd argue it takes much more faith to believe all that life evolved from a "dead rock" which is what atheists believed the world was at one time, than to believe the creation story. I'd argue science gives more evidence that "all this is no accident" than saying where all here due to some random accident. That's the implied point of these verses. Meanwhile Job is continuing to use nature to make his case for God.
- 15. Verse 9: Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this? ¹⁰ In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.
 - a) The unspoken point is there must be a god who created all of this, as one can't explain all the creatures that existed as if it was an accident. The reason for this lecture, is Job wants to explain that God exists and has a purpose for our lives. He's starting this lecture with a bit of nature. In order to explain what Job wants to do about his condition, first he wants to lay out the case for God's existence and then explain his need to talk to God.
- 16. Verse 11: Does not the ear test words as the tongue tastes food?
 - a) The more we think about atheism, the sillier the arguments are: Do you think all animals and humans "randomly" developed hearing so we know what's going on around us?
 - b) If we were just designed to eat food, why give people and animals the ability to taste what we eat as opposed to just eating things. My simple point is our design is an argument that life didn't just come about "by a random accident."

17. Verse 12: Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?
 - a) Ask yourself, are most people smarter at 30 than at 20? What about say 40 versus 30? The simple point is living for a good while brings us understanding of how our world works. Job's making this point to teach that we can learn about God just by learning about life and seeing how it works.
18. Verse 13: "To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his. ¹⁴ What he tears down cannot be rebuilt; the man he imprisons cannot be released. ¹⁵ If he holds back the waters, there is drought; if he lets them loose, they devastate the land.
 - a) At this point, Job jumps to God's existence as if to say, "If God does something what can we do to change it? What we call "natural disasters" are "God-filtered" somehow for His purpose. We don't know why He allows things to occur, we just accept it does.
19. Verse 16: To him belong strength and victory; both deceived and deceiver are his. ¹⁷ He leads counselors away stripped and makes fools of judges. ¹⁸ He takes off the shackles put on by kings and ties a loincloth around their waist. ¹⁹ He leads priests away stripped and overthrows men long established. ²⁰ He silences the lips of trusted advisers and takes away the discernment of elders. ²¹ He pours contempt on nobles and disarms the mighty.
 - a) Job gets on a role here, and I included a bunch of verses so we can see that. Job's essential argument is, "God exists and He allows good and bad things to happen. Bad people exist who should be punished for what they did. At the same time there are those who've used their lives to work hard for God who suffer terribly in this lifetime." The point is we can't judge how what happens to us in life by how we're living. Judgment's all about what will happen to us after we die, not what happens to us in this lifetime. The reason God's gives this speech is to say in effect, "You can't look at my condition and assume it's due to sin as that can't explain why a lot of bad people get away with stuff or good people suffer."
 - b) Let me also add that Job isn't claiming he was perfect or sinless. Again, it's the idea that if we confess our sin and trust that God Himself paid the price for the sin, there is no reason for us to keep feeling guilty over it. Part of the idea of forgiveness is we must accept it as fact and stop feeling guilty for what we've done. Yes we must deal with the consequences of that sin, but we equally must accept that God doesn't hold "guilt over our head" once it has been confessed and turned from. I should equally state that this principal doesn't give us a "license to sin" as we can just confess it later. Often, we'll still suffer the consequences of our sins let alone the guilt. Just because God allowed Job to suffer to test his faith, does not mean he's got a "free reign to get away with stuff". The essential reason we're to avoid sin is it makes us a bad witness for God as we're separated for Him to be that witness!
 - c) Meanwhile, Job was on a role and I cut him off to make my own speech. Back to Job:
20. Verse 22: He reveals the deep things of darkness and brings deep shadows into the light.
 - a) In this verse Job's transitioning from bad people to nations and leaders (next two verses). I suspect the idea of this verse is simply that God allows evil people to exist in this world as to expose them for what they are. The idea is people won't know just how evil such things are unless we're exposed to them. Throughout history, horrid individuals have risen to be leaders and many people die due to their quest for power. The reason God allowed them to get that way is to expose them for who they are. Yes, many suffer due to such evil. The good is that they get exposed and remembered that way for all of history.
21. Verse 23: He makes nations great, and destroys them; he enlarges nations, and disperses them. ²⁴ He deprives the leaders of the earth of their reason; he sends them wandering through a trackless waste. ²⁵ They grope in darkness with no light; he makes them stagger like drunkards.
 - a) The essential point is nations rise and fall as well as leaders. Anyone who's lived a decent amount of time and studied a little history knows all of this. The reason Job's giving all of this "rise and fall of bad nations and bad leaders" speech is for us to realize there is a God who allows all of this ultimately to glorify Him by exposing such people for who they are. It's a way of saying, "God's in charge and allows evil to lose in the end!"

- b) OK, we made it through two of the four chapters. Let's pause to catch our breath, as we ponder "Why this speech?" Why did Job give a "chapter long" sermon on proof of God's existence? We can assume that Job's three friends believe in the existence of a single God or else they have been friends with Job long enough to know he believes that. Again, why give a chapter long speech arguing for God's existence? To answer, think about what it is that Job's three friends have been saying for a bunch of chapters now: God exists, and He's punishing Job for some unconfessed sin. Job's response is effectively, "Of course God exists and there's evidence of it in the sky, the animal kingdom and just by watching how a person or nation behaves. Just because He exists doesn't mean He always punishes bad people for their behavior in this lifetime.
 - c) For many of us this is "old truth's". A reason it is here is we may be in a situation where a person is pondering if God exists. We can use history, animal life, and even the evidence of how the earth functions as proof of His existence. The point is we can't argue how God works in our lives until we first prove His existence. That's why whoever made the breaks in this chapter separated those verses as a separate chapter.
 - d) When I started this lesson I said my lesson title is "Does God owe me an explanation?" It will be the key point of Chapter 13. In Job's long argument for God's existence he'll make the mistake of demanding an explanation for why he's suffering. It's like he's saying to his three friends, you failed to explain why I'm suffering so now I require God to explain the "true reason" since nothing stated so far has explained what I'm going through.
22. Chapter 13, Verse 1: "My eyes have seen all this, my ears have heard and understood it. ² What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you.
- a) At this point, Job says in effect, "All the arguments you make are legitimate points on the issue of how God generally works. I know all of those arguments, but they don't apply to me, so that's not it. This leads well to Verse 3.
23. Verse 3: But I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God.
- a) The big underlying question of this lesson is "Does God owe us an explanation?" Let's say we were injured due to no fault of our own. What if we're born with a deformity or don't have all our senses? Does God owe us an explanation? While God does give Job one later in the book, that doesn't mean He owes us one, at least not in this lifetime. When God will give His response to Job later in the book, the basic point is God asks Job, "Who are you to question what it is I do?" In that sense, that's His answer to us as well.
 - i) What I've always found interesting is people who lack one of their senses or have a significant disability suffer from a lower rate of suicide than society as a whole. My point is there is generally acceptance of one's disability in those communities.
 - ii) The great answer of course, is that God has His purpose why He allows people to go through disabilities and even horrid things and at times horrid deaths, for His reason, which we're not entitled to that answer in this lifetime.
 - iii) That leads to the more important question: Now what? The answer is to deal with whatever we're dealing with the best we can, and remember that God still loves us tremendously. He still wants us to be a good witness for Him in spite of whatever pain we have to deal with in this life. As the old saying goes, "We can't control the things that happen to us, but we can always control our attitude."
 - b) OK enough of all of that, back to Job as he returns to chewing out his three friends.
24. Verse 4: You, however, smear me with lies; you are worthless physicians, all of you! ⁵ If only you would be altogether silent! For you, that would be wisdom.
- a) The main lie is that they falsely accused Job of sin. He essentially says, "I'd rather you just sat there and didn't say anything as opposed to stating basic Sunday School truths that we have known all our lives and held off on accusations!" It's implying, "Don't you think that I've already racked my brain trying to think of any sin I'm guilty of before you three even got here?" In summary, Job's saying the speeches of his friends were a waste of time!

25. Verse 6: Hear now my argument; listen to the plea of my lips. ⁷Will you speak wickedly on God's behalf? Will you speak deceitfully for him? ⁸ Will you show him partiality? Will you argue the case for God?
- a) This is the implication that 1) God hasn't lost Job's phone number and 2) God hasn't given any insights to his friends that God couldn't make obvious to Job Himself? In effect we're back to the question of "Why can't I question God?" Part of the answer is He doesn't make specific messages for us that he gives to others.
 - i) There are a few famous exceptions to this. Some of the Israelite kings got messages from the prophets. That's because God made it a point to separate the offices of a civil leader from a religious leader. In those specific cases, God used prophets for specific messages to specific kings.
 - ii) However, you and I are not Israelite kings. My simple point is God hasn't lost our "phone numbers". If God wants to give us a message, I find He'll makes it obvious what He wants us to do. It's the classic fact that God's three answers are, "Yes, no, and not now." I've never had God speak to me audibly. Sometimes I've had strong senses that God wants me to do this or that. When they come, it's usually what I'd be doing anyway and obviously, it's never a violation of His word. I don't demand God speak to me, as I figure if God's got something to say, He'd say it and nothing I can do can speed up that message. In the meantime, I do what's logical and that is that. OK then, meanwhile Job's saying, "God doesn't use you to speak to me!"
 - b) Since Job's on a roll, he decided to hit his three friends back where it might hurt:
26. Verse 9: Would it turn out well if he examined you? Could you deceive him as you might deceive men? ¹⁰ He would surely rebuke you if you secretly showed partiality. ¹¹ Would not his splendor terrify you? Would not the dread of him fall on you? ¹² Your maxims are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay.
- a) Let me paraphrase Job since I've been doing that all day. "Hey you guys want me to tell God how sorry I am for some unconfessed sin? How about God examine your lives? If God decided to examine your lives, would He find a reason to punish you as badly as I am suffering at this moment?" Keep this speech by Job in mind the next time someone demands that "you must confess your sins and be better". In effect, it's a continuation of the idea that "God hasn't lost my phone number" argument.
 - b) Verse 12 makes references to ashes and clay. It's Job's colorful way of saying the points his friends are making are as "dead as ashes" and as "breakable as clay"!
 - c) From here we're going to get to one of Job's shining moments:
27. Verse 13: "Keep silent and let me speak; then let come to me what may. ¹⁴ Why do I put myself in jeopardy and take my life in my hands? ¹⁵ Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face.
- a) First he tells his three friends to shut up, to imply Job's about to say something important.
 - b) When Job says that he puts "himself in jeopardy", I don't know if he's referring to his pain or how his friends are treating him. In context, it appears to refer to what God is allowing Job to go through.
 - c) Then comes the key line, "Despite all these horrid things, He's allowing me to go through, I will still trust God! That line is proof that Satan just lost the bet that Job would sin. See Chapter 1 for that bet! Remember that the reason of Job's suffering was to see if he'd curse God. That is why God let Satan do all that damage to Job's health, and his life.
 - d) Then as we're prone to do, after we say the right thing, then we blow it and say the wrong thing! (How human is that!) That's when Job says the last line of Verse 15, "I will surely defend my ways to his face."
 - i) We're back to the issue of whether or not God owes us an explanation! We're back to us mistakenly thinking we can defend our lives to God. The short answer is no we can't. The longer answer is the last bunch of chapters of this book!

28. Verse 16: Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance, for no godless man would dare come before him!
- a) There is an old cliché in prisons called, "The prison attorney". It doesn't refer to lawyers. It refers to prisoners who have spent many hours in prison studying the law to figure out how to make a proper defense of their case. I bring that up here, as in effect Job's about to act like a "Prison attorney". Instead of saying as he did a few chapters back, that he needs someone who is a mediator between God and Himself, Job wants to defend his actions to God. It's as if he's practicing his defense before his three friends. Yes, all three of them are going to respond to this argument and God Himself has a few words to react to this point later in the book. As I said, "The plot thickens" here.
29. Verse 17: Listen carefully to my words; let your ears take in what I say. ¹⁸ Now that I have prepared my case, I know I will be vindicated. ¹⁹ Can anyone bring charges against me? If so, I will be silent and die.
- a) As I just said, Job's practicing his defense before his three friends. In Verse 19, Job says in effect, "If I'm guilty of any unconfessed sin, I'll shut up and take my punishment". This is Job reminding us he can't think of any unconfessed sin. OK then, back to Job's "defense".
30. Verse 20: "Only grant me these two things, O God, and then I will not hide from you: ²¹ Withdraw your hand far from me, and stop frightening me with your terrors. ²² Then summon me and I will answer, or let me speak, and you reply.
- a) This is Job pleading with God to take away his pain and explain to him why he's suffering the way he is. Then Job wants to defend his life to God and let him reply.
- b) We're back to the question of "Does God owe us an explanation for how we're suffering?" After reading the whole book and knowing my bible well, my answer is no. Of course, we can figure a lot of things out by observing life, but we're not entitled to God explaining all He does for our benefit. God explains what He wants us to know by observing life and as we study His word and sometimes through prayer. The point is what He doesn't want us to know is "His business" and we're not entitled to know unless He wants to tell us.
- c) That is the mistake Job's making here, but I'll "let him dig his own hole!"
31. Verse 23: How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense and my sin. ²⁴ Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy? ²⁵ Will you torment a windblown leaf? Will you chase after dry chaff?
- a) Let's pause to remember that Job's in tremendous physical pain as well as emotional pain. It is logical to want to know why we're suffering that way! If you're stuck in that situation it's logical to ponder why it is so? A blind person could ask God, "Why did you allow this to happen?" Somebody dying of cancer or horribly injured could ask the same question. I see Job here pondering the same issue. In a sense, it is more tormenting to not know why we may be suffering than to just deal with the pain! Remember that Job's had to listen to his three friends lecture him about unconfessed sin. Job was correct that God allowed all of this to occur. He can't figure out why and demands that God explain Himself? That is the issue being discussed here!
32. Verse 26: For you write down bitter things against me and make me inherit the sins of my youth. ²⁷ You fasten my feet in shackles; you keep close watch on all my paths by putting marks on the soles of my feet. ²⁸ "So man wastes away like something rotten, like a garment eaten by moths.
- a) The fact that Job's in a lot of pain catches up with him here. Job's talking in the 3rd person but I'm positive his own pain is in focus here. He's also describing a lot of suffering many people go through in life. Finally, he comments on the fact that all of us get old and suffer because of age. To quote my best friend, "This whole getting old thing is really becoming an inconvenience to my lifestyle!"
- b) What all of this is coming down to, is Job is demanding God to explain why people have to suffer in this lifetime, as if God owes us an explanation! I hold the view that He reveals what He wants to reveal and we're not entitled to know any more than that!

33. Chapter 14, Verse 1: "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. ² He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure.
- a) Just because someone added chapter breaks millenniums after this was written, does not mean that Job pauses in mid-thought between chapters. He states a basic "Sunday School truth" that the human life goes on and is hard at times! Sooner or later, all of us die, so we must make the best of the time we've been given as I love to state every so often! Anyway that is Job's point here that life is short and hard at times!
34. Verse 3: Do you fix your eye on such a one? Will you bring him before you for judgment?
- a) I admit it's strange to consider that a God who knows all things can "focus" on the lives of each individual and judge us after we die! How do we know God's capable of doing all of that and why would He bother? I figure if God's capable of creating the world that we are living in, then He's also capable of judging us individually. I'm positive that the bible is inspired from outside of time. That's because 30% of its predictions about the future, most of which have come true. If you study the evidence of when each book was written, and compare all the predictions to what occurred in history after it was written, it's great evidence for the bible coming from outside time as we know it. If God lays out for us His requirements for us in that book, it's proof that He exists. Then He says in effect, "Whether we like it or not, each of us will be judged based on how we lived compared to how He expects us to live." Since none of us are perfect, we need a perfect God to fully pay the price for our sins Himself! I just gave the Gospel message in a paragraph!
 - b) Meanwhile Job's still on a role, and I interrupted.
35. Verse 4: Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one! ⁵ Man's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed.
- a) Let's pause to realize why Job's giving this speech. One reason is so his three friends will understand that Job didn't do anything wrong and individual judgment comes in the next life and not this one. Sometimes people just suffer, for some reason we can't explain.
 - b) If God knows all things, then He also knows how long each of us will live. None of us can live past whatever time frame God's given for us. That's the point of Verse 5. Now that he has stated the obvious, what's the point? Let's read on and find out.
36. Verse 6: So look away from him and let him alone, till he has put in his time like a hired man.
- a) Remember that Job's making his defense of his life before God. Job's point here is simply that people get some unknown fixed time to live and Job wants his three friends to stop judging him until his life is over. In effect this verse is the reminder that, "Life's not over until it's over" and then comes the judgment. Job's saying to his friends, God didn't make you three judges over my life, so let me be, rather than try to get me to confess something I didn't do! Job will now give an example of how our lives here are limited:
37. Verse 7: "At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail. ⁸ Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil, ⁹ yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant.
- a) In a sense, "a tree doesn't die", in that even if it's cut down, a new sprout can rise up after it is cut down. Even a tree whose roots are old and the stump dies, can live again if there is water it can absorb. These verses are another proof that the bible is not a science book, but it does explain accurately how life works in examples like these.
 - b) Job's point here is we can observe plant life and learn a "dead plant can grow again if the conditions are right". However, people don't have that option. When we're dead, that's it as Job explains in the next verse. Speaking of which:
38. Verse 10: But man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more. ¹¹ As water disappears from the sea or a riverbed becomes parched and dry, ¹² so man lies down and does not rise; till the heavens are no more, men will not awake or be roused from their sleep.
- a) This is a colorful way of saying, "When we die, that's it for our time here on earth!"

- b) Yes of course, Job believes in human resurrection, and we'll get to that later in the book. This is just a stating of the basics here that all human life gets a fixed amount of time that we don't know what it is, and we must make the best of it as that's all we get! Job gives a colorful way of describing the permanency of death in these verses. Again, he's stating all of this as part of his argument that God doesn't judge people in this lifetime. Yes there are many people in jail for committing crimes but a lot of people get away with stuff now. In effect Job's stating the length of our lives has nothing to do with the fact that we're going to be judged, so accept that fact!
39. Verse 13: "If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed! If only you would set me a time and then remember me!
- a) This is Job asking again, "Why do I have to suffer so much?" Wouldn't it be better if I was simply dead while "Your anger passed". That's the question Job is pondering here.
 - b) Job's basically asking isn't death better than what I'm going through? It's the question of whether "assisted suicide" should be permitted (assuming we're not "brain dead"). Notice Job never makes any effort to take his life. He never asks these friends to kill him. Job still realizes God's in charge of his life, no matter how bad it gets, and despite his pain, he will not make any effort to lessen his time and be a living witness for God with his life!
40. Verse 14: If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come.
- a) One of the things that fascinates me, is there is very little reference to us actually going up to heaven in the bible. The only references I can think of, of people actually being taken to heaven (other than Jesus Himself) is when Elijah was taken there. (2nd Kings 2:11.) There are many stories about God acting from heaven, but surprisingly little evidence that we're to go there one day when we die. Why is that? Because the bible mainly designed to teach us how we're to live here on earth. It's as if God's saying, 'You let Me worry about what'll happen to us after we die, until then believe in Me, trust that I paid the complete price for all our sins and be a good witness for Me!'
 - b) I state all of that here, because Job first states again in effect, when we're dead, we're dead! Then he implies that somehow he gets resurrected. Did you know that no references exist to the term "resurrection" in the Old Testament. Yes religious Jewish people believed they would go to heaven, but that term is surprisingly missing from the Old Testament. Here in Job, he states fairly blatantly that he'll be "renewed". That sounds a lot like resurrection to me. My point is simply that even though Job is the oldest book in the bible, even here is a hint in the belief of resurrection. If we're to be judged by God in the next life, then we have to believe in that concept even though the word isn't used there.
41. Verse 15: You will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands have made.
- a) Again Job is focusing on being resurrected. The idea of "you will call", is not referring to a point in this lifetime. It's referring to living after we die so we can be judged! Remember why God created us in the first place: He desires "things" to express His love upon and He wants us to freely choose to love Him in return. Here Job's saying in effect, "I long for the day when I get to see you "face to face". It's Job stating that despite the fact he's suffering horribly, he still looks forward to the day when He sees God face to face at judgment.
 - b) The reason Job's stating this here is because his three friends essentially state, "You must have really ticked God off to be in that condition". Job responds in effect by saying, that He has no fear of being resurrected and facing God's judgment. For what it's worth, that is why I can't imagine anyone wanting to tell God that "My good deeds outweigh my bad ones". I'd rather God Himself pay for my sins, then face that type of judgment!
42. Verse 16: Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin. ¹⁷ My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin.
- a) As the oldest bible book, we got to admit Job got the idea that all his sins were forgiven!

- b) Does that mean Job fully grasped the gospel message? No idea. I'm just positive Job was sure he's got nothing to confess and he can stand before God's judgment.
 - c) In effect, we're back to the question of "Why do I have to suffer like this?" I'm positive Job "racked his brain" and can't think of anything. He wants to ask God, what's the deal here? He can't figure out why he's suffering and he wants his time with God to find out. As Job will find out in the last few chapters of the book, God doesn't owe us an explanation. He's allowing us to go through whatever we're going through for a reason we're not entitled to know or else He'd make it obvious to us. God just wants us to make the best decisions we can given what's in front of us and be a good witness for Him in spite of whatever it is we have to deal with in life. OK then, five more verses to go.
43. Verse 18: "But as a mountain erodes and crumbles and as a rock is moved from its place,¹⁹ as water wears away stones and torrents wash away the soil, so you destroy man's hope.²⁰ You overpower him once for all, and he is gone; you change his countenance and send him away.
- a) Job finishes his "three chapter" rant by stating more facts about God. Job's saying just as water wear away rock over time as well as soil, God "wears us out" in the sense that most of us grow old and our bodies wear out like that soil. The morbid point of all of this is the fact that whether we like it or not, we're all going to die sooner or later.
 - b) In effect, Job wants to tell his three friends that "Yes, God's allowing me to go through this horrid pain. It's not that I sinned and did anything wrong, it's just the "luck of the draw". I've got to make the best of this situation and still be a good witness for God in spite of all of this pain. Now if Job can think that way, what excuse do the rest of us have?
44. Verse 21: If his sons are honored, he does not know it; if they are brought low, he does not see it.
²² He feels but the pain of his own body and mourns only for himself."
- a) Job ends this speech with the obvious statement that if we're old and in pain we can't see first hand if say, our great-grandson gets some tremendous honor. I've lost count of the number of times in my life when I've seen an acceptance speech where the winner says, "I wish my father were alive to see this". There is a built in desire in all of us to please those who've raised us. That's the obvious. Job's main point here is that as we get old and we're focusing on our pain, it's hard to enjoy our descendants accomplishments due to the pain or worse, if we're not around to see it.
 - b) The reason Job ends with this speech is he's trying to emphasize the fact his time on earth is limited and he's trying to make the best of a really bad situation. It's a major rebuke to the argument that he's suffering due to some sin.
45. To state what may be obvious, Job's response is only going to tick off his three friends even more so. He shot down their arguments. He claimed there is nothing to confess. His three friends can either say, "we were wrong" (men are usually way too stubborn to admit they were wrong as they are debating with other men, or his friends could "dig their heels in" and "double down" on their views of what should happen to Job. Now you can see why my alternative title was the phrase, "Now the plot thickens". Don't worry, four chapters is enough for one lesson. There is a lot more to learn in "Rounds 4 through 9", but I'll save them for future lessons.
46. Time to pray and give our gratitude for making through these chapters.
47. Heavenly Father, First, we thank You that You have separated us so we can use our lives to make a difference for You. Help us to be comforters to others and not be like Job's friends who are too busy trying to find fault than to actually help others and be a good witness to them. Help us as we deal with our own, "Why me God" moments and help us to remember that You're still there, You are still in charge and You still desire we use our lives for Your glory. Together may we use our lives to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.