

1. Ever feel like your in the middle of a horrible situation with no end in sight? That's were we are at this point of the book. In Chapter 15 we begin "Round 4" of a debate: The story of Job is about a man who through no fault of his own, suffered terribly. If that weren't bad enough, he's got three friends telling him he must have done something horribly wrong and that's why he's in this predicament. Most of the book is nine rounds of dialogue between Job and his friends discussing how life works and why he's in this predicament. What is unknown to this group is God allowed Satan to harm Job as much as possible without killing him. The purpose of that was to see if Job would curse God with all that pain. That leads to these three chapters. I assume most of us could relate to being in a tough situation with no end in sight. So far, each of his three friends have taken their best shot at him. Since Job didn't do anything wrong he's maintaining his innocence.
 - a) I don't know about you, but if were Job, at this point I'd be tempted to say, "I confess, I am guilty of a horrid sin. You got me, now leave me alone in my misery!" Instead, he insists there is no unconfessed sin that's caused all the suffering he's experiencing. So why is Job toughing it out? My personal view is that Job wants to be a good witness for God. I'd say that includes not lying just to get someone off our back! Therefore this debate continues as we learn things about how God works. Because God operates a certain way, it doesn't mean we're guilty of some specific sin. Sometimes we suffer just because we are.
2. Most of us know what it's like to be so involved in a heated argument, we get to a point where all that matters is being right. There's an old American expression called "digging our heels in". Yes that is my lesson title. The idea is about getting to a point in an argument where all that matters is if we're right. In such arguments we usually end up repeating a lot of points, because we feel like the other side isn't listening to us. Chapter 15 opens after Job finished a three-chapter speech maintaining his innocence. Job makes the mistake of saying "God owes me an explanation of why I have to suffer the way ". As I pounded the point in the last lesson, God doesn't owe us an explanation for how He works. Our job is to make the best decisions we can with whatever we're dealing with and be a good witness for Jesus in spite of the problems of the moment.
 - a) However, the fact that Job maintains his innocence and demands an audience with God is enough to tick-off his three friends even more. That's why Chapter 15 will begin another round of dialogue between Job and his friends. If you've never read Job, all you really need to know is each friend take their best shots at Job, then he responds. This continues with two of the three guys giving three speeches against Job, and a third friend gets two. Then a new guy shows up to chew out Job, and finally God interrupts all this to tell Job in effect, "Who are you to ask Me how I work?" God also says the three main friends are wrong. Given all of that, this section begins the "second full round" of debates.
3. OK then, what happens in these three chapters, and why should I care? I'll begin with an attempt to summarize "Eliphaz's" next set of arguments in one paragraph. He says in effect, "Job you're a bunch of a hot air! You're unconfessed sin is wasting all our time here. Are you smarter than God or any of us for that matter? Job, nobody is pure in God's eyes. Obviously your sin must be bad, or else you wouldn't have suffered as much as you did!" In short, it's more of the "You must have ticked God off something horrible to be in this mess" style of argument.
 - a) Before I get into Job's response, time for a quick "why should I care response"? How about if we're falsely accused of something? There are things we learn from this debate that can help us in those situations. What if we're suffering from some disease or don't have all of our senses? What if we're falsely accused of doing something awful to be that way? Shall we think of our life as over, just because we are suffering for some reason? Do we just go through the rest of our lives being depressed due to whatever we're facing? Studying Job is a great reminder that first of all, not all suffering is due to things we did wrong. Next, it is the reminder we can still be good witnesses for Jesus despite being falsely accused!

4. Now that I got that speech out of my system, onto Job's response, which is Chapters 16 and 17.
 - a) First I give Job credit for saying what most of us must be thinking by this point in the tale: "You guys are a miserable bunch of comforters. None of you have lifted a finger to try to alleviate the pain or ask, what I can do to help me be more comfortable?" Instead each of these friends are "digging their heels in" to put Job down even more.
 - b) Job blames God for allowing him to go through his pain and even says in effect, "Hey God why did you bring me "friends" who just make it worse by insulting me in my misery?"
 - c) Job laments his pain using word pictures to express just how bad his physical pain is. If I was in that much pain, I suspect I too, would constantly be asking, "Hey God, why don't you just take my life and end it, or why are you allowing all this to happen?"
 - d) During all of this talk, Job never asks his friends to kill him. He never stops believing that God exists. Job jumps back and forth between praying to God to question all of this, then he goes back to dealing with his friends or just wallowing in pain. It's a tough gig for Job and his friends are not making it any easier with their accusations.
 - e) By Chapter 17, Job even cries out "These guys have closed their minds to my position". He even cries out in effect, "I'm not giving up yet, so let's keep the debate going".
 - f) In summary, Job "digs his heels in" in defense of his innocence.
5. There, that's three chapters in a few thoughts. OK one more time, why should we care about all of this? The answer is most of us have been in situations where we have to face our friends or family and discuss tough predicaments. I suspect we all know what it's like to have to defend ourselves "to the death" and dig our heels in, in our position. Is it ego? Is it competitive drive to hate being wrong? Is it being so sure we're right, we say the same things over and over again, hoping that'll get the other side to give up from us wearing them down? Again, if I were Job, I'd be tempted to give up at this point and say, "OK you got me, I sinned horribly" just to get these guys to shut up.
 - a) So why go on and on about this? Because often, that's how life works. When we're in lots of pain it doesn't just go away in five minutes. When we're debating over some issue, let's face it, it goes on and on and in hindsight, we realize what a waste most of that time was.
 - b) The point is there's a lot to learn about dealing with issues that drag on and on. It's not to give us more debate points to throw at the other side. It's to realize there are situations in life we can't explain, but must do our best to be a witness for God in spite of whatever it is we must deal with at the present moment. That's why we must plow through all this dialogue to help us deal with our own problems. Speaking of which, time to get started.
 - c) Therefore, let's begin the verse by verse commentary.
6. Chapter 15, Verse 1: Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied: ² "Would a wise man answer with empty notions or fill his belly with the hot east wind?
 - a) We got introduced to Eliphaz in the early chapters of this book. To recap, we don't know a lot about him. We do know he wasn't Jewish. We know he had some sort of friendship with Job prior to this book. We also know he believes in a single god. He was the first of Job's three friends to take his best shot at Job. Now in Chapter 15, we've now had all three have one round at Job, so we're beginning a second round of dialogue. I'd admit this is getting boring and repetitive by this point, so we should we keep reading?
 - i) If you've ever been in a heated discussion about how life works, and why we must go through what we do in life, this is one of those moments. I'm positive that both sides feel like their right and the other person won't listen to a word they're saying in this debate. As I said, both sides have "dug their heels in". So why does this go on and on the way it does. Why can't both sides just say, "we disagree and we'll be on our way now". One answer is nobody's solved the riddle of why Job's suffering the way he is. Another is that both sides want to claim their right and nobody will quit and walk out of this discussion. It's the attitude of no one's going to quit until we solve this mystery!
 - ii) It's a reminder to us that sometimes problems go on and on and won't end easily.

- iii) My point here is sometimes in life we have to "trudge through a lot of mud" to get to a point of relief of our suffering. Part of it is killing time until a solution comes. Another part of it is trying to learn about life from such predicaments and giving it our best shot to explain how life works.
 - iv) Bottom line, is just as Job and his three friends had to trudge through all of this, so in life we'll have our own moments when we just have to work through it until we get to a point where either a solution comes or we figure out why all of "this" was necessary to begin with.
 - v) Bottom line #2: We're stuck in the middle of this dialogue and we must press on.
- b) The first time Eliphaz spoke about a dozen chapters back he was kind to Job, and felt bad for him. This time, it reads like he's ticked off to no end. Eliphaz heard Job respond to his arguments and those of the other two friends. Since Job refuses to believe he did anything wrong, Eliphaz is now downright angry and going to lay into job. Verse 2 essentially says that Job is full of hot air, meaning his views about God, life and his situation are so wrong, it's like wasted breath. With that said, Eliphaz is just getting warmed up.
- 7. Verse 3: Would he argue with useless words, with speeches that have no value? ⁴ But you even undermine piety and hinder devotion to God.
 - a) Eliphaz is stating that God wouldn't argue with us. It's a reminder that "He's God and we are not". Eliphaz is claiming Job's not even worshipping God as Eliphaz thinks Job turned from God in his misery. Eliphaz is listening to Job want to question God and asks, "Just who do you think you are to debate God in the first place?" Eliphaz's accusing Job of a lack of faith in who God is because Job wants an explanation for his pain.
 - b) As usual, Eliphaz has a point. Obviously it's got nothing to do with why Job is suffering. He is on a role, so let's continue.
- 8. Verse 5: Your sin prompts your mouth; you adopt the tongue of the crafty. ⁶ Your own mouth condemns you, not mine; your own lips testify against you.
 - a) Remember that Eliphaz is still convinced that Job sinned horribly and that's why Job is in the pain he's in. Eliphaz is saying, "Hey Job, you're just make excuses to avoid whatever it is you must have done."
 - b) Imagine trying to be a good witness for Jesus, when people around you are accusing you of some sin you didn't commit. Let's say you're suffering horribly for something. If all we got was criticism as "it's our fault", it doesn't solve the problem, nor does it alleviate any of the pain. When we hear false accusations, it's often best to let others get their points out of their system. It's the old story of people aren't willing to listen to our response until what they get out what they have to say.
 - c) The point is all of this debate isn't solving the problem, but it's "killing time" until things get better. Besides Job had nothing better to do than to listen and respond. Now that I've stated the obvious, back to Eliphaz.
- 9. Verse 7: "Are you the first man ever born? Were you brought forth before the hills? ⁸ Do you listen in on God's council? Do you limit wisdom to yourself?
 - a) Time for a paraphrase, "Hey Job, are you as old as the hills? Do you know everything that God knows about life? Who do you think you are, to even question God about your issues in the first place?"
 - b) I assume most of us reading this assume we're going to face God one day in judgment. If we are a Christian, the issue will be are we guilty of sin. The correct answer is yes, and I want Jesus to pay for all of them. Judgment for the believer is all about whether we were a good witness for Jesus through whatever we had to go through in life! My point is what are we to say in our defense? Can we argue with God that He's wrong? Of course not. It is the reminder that Eliphaz has a point that Job has no right to question why God allows all that he allows. It doesn't mean Eliphaz's right about Job's suffering, just about his right to question God.

10. Verse 9: What do you know that we do not know? What insights do you have that we do not have? ¹⁰ The gray-haired and the aged are on our side, men even older than your father.
 - a) This is more of the "Hey Job, do you think you're smarter than we are" argument? If I was part of this debate, my response might be, "Of course not. I'm just trying to make the best decisions I can given what's in front of me. However, I'm not going to feel guilty over what I haven't done". So the debate continues.
 - b) By the way, in Verse 10 we get a "tidbit" about these three men. Apparently one or more of them were even older than Job. Eliphaz is trying to argue, "We've been around longer than you so what makes you so special?" As I said in the introduction, we're seeing both sides dig their heels in as to say, "I'm right, you're wrong, so just do as I say!"
11. Verse 11: Are God's consolations not enough for you, words spoken gently to you? ¹² Why has your heart carried you away, and why do your eyes flash, ¹³ so that you vent your rage against God and pour out such words from your mouth?
 - a) Here in Verse 11, Eliphaz is claiming to be "God's council". Just because someone is telling me biblical wisdom, doesn't mean they're 100% right in every situation and of course they are not applying it correctly. As I've been pounding the point home by now in Job, what's the biggest mistake is misapplication of biblical principles to Job's life.
 - b) If you ever paused to think that, maybe one of these three friends is right here, remember that in the end of the book, God Himself calls out these three guys as being wrong. Keep it in mind as we read these arguments.
 - c) Meanwhile, Eliphaz is implying that Job's working against God here. He's saying that the arguments all three guys are making to Job are correct. These guys are just trying to make their case. Eliphaz is also saying, "Why would you want to argue with God about your case anyway? Don't you know you can't win?"
 - d) As we read through all of this dialogue, what you have to realize is all three of these guys do give "biblical wisdom", but it doesn't apply to Job's situation. However, most of us get that by now, as we trudge our way through this dialogue!
 - e) Speaking of Eliphaz, we're only about half way through his speech, so let's keep going.
12. Verse 14: "What is man, that he could be pure, or one born of woman, that he could be righteous?
 - a) Given the fact that Eliphaz wasn't Jewish, he has a pretty good understanding of who God is and our relationship with Him. My simple point is even though he's wrong about what he's accusing Job of doing, he does get God "pretty well" in this story. We got to give him credit for that.
 - b) Speaking of Eliphaz's knowledge of God, he states the obvious that no person can ever be "right" in God's eyes. Let me explain that one. The idea of "righteous" includes the idea of being perfect. It's about being sinless. The underlying point is "Hey Job, who do you think you are to want to present your case to God?" Do you think you're sinless?
13. Verse 15: If God places no trust in his holy ones, if even the heavens are not pure in his eyes, ¹⁶ how much less man, who is vile and corrupt, who drinks up evil like water!
 - a) Every now and then I'm amazed at the insights this book has. It is the oldest bible book in terms of date. Yet even in this book, we get a reference here to angels and yes, fallen ones! Revelation 12:9 speaks of angels that rebelled against God and were kicked out of heaven for doing so. My point is we're in Job, dated by far as the oldest book in the bible. Yet here in Job, some guy named Eliphaz (who existed before Moses) speaks of angels and the fact they've got free will and therefore, angels are "not pure in God's eyes". We know that he's speaking about angels in the first part of the verse because in the second part, Eliphaz tells us that people are "even worse".
 - b) Since I'm in the neighborhood, let me discuss angels quickly. Why did God create angels in the first place? After all if God is God, and He wants something, can't He just do it? So why are angels necessary? I think one reason is God wanted to create a things that people would see and not freak out, as angels have appeared in human form in the bible.

- i) We visualize angels as "baby like creatures with wings". The book of Genesis tells us of a number of occasions where they appeared human like to perform a specific duty on God's behalf. Yes special angels exist with wings described in the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Revelation with special powers. My simple point is don't make the assumption they all look the same or have the same function. Apparently God created them for the purpose of serving Him. Further, God gave them free will, as a "big bunch of them" decided to rebel with Satan. Why? The logical speculation is they didn't want God's love to be focused on humans as opposed to them.
 - ii) Anyway, the point here is way back in the book of Job, people realized that angels did exist and they were not perfect creatures. Eliphaz's other point is if angels are not perfect, how much worse are people in the sense that all of us are capable of sinning and rebelling against God's desire. So why did He create us that way? To see if some would choose to love Him back despite our built in sin nature.
 - iii) OK enough of all of that, back to Eliphaz.
- 14. Verse 17: "Listen to me and I will explain to you; let me tell you what I have seen,¹⁸ what wise men have declared, hiding nothing received from their fathers¹⁹ (to whom alone the land was given when no alien passed among them):²⁰ All his days the wicked man suffers torment, the ruthless through all the years stored up for him.²¹ Terrifying sounds fill his ears; when all seems well, marauders attack him.²² He despairs of escaping the darkness; he is marked for the sword.²³ He wanders about--food for vultures; he knows the day of darkness is at hand.²⁴ Distress and anguish fill him with terror; they overwhelm him, like a king poised to attack,²⁵ because he shakes his fist at God and vaunts himself against the Almighty,²⁶ defiantly charging against him with a thick, strong shield.
- a) Sometimes it's better to read a book in "large chunks" as to get a flavor for what the author is trying to communicate. Here is Eliphaz saying, "Hey Job, you think you're so smart? I'll tell you what I've seen in my lifetime. I've seen wicked people suffering horribly. Such a person will wander the earth barely surviving. Worse such a person knows that hell is not too far in the future, and despite living that horrid lifestyle and realizing that horrid future awaiting them, that person still doesn't turn their lives over to God!
 - b) The implication here is, "Hey Job, you don't want to end up like them, so confess that sin and let's all get on with our lives!"
 - c) Those of us who've lived a while, know all too well that there are tortured souls who do go through life suffering horribly. There are also others who simply go through life, as they ignore the God who created them and make other things the central focus of their life as opposed to honoring and making a difference for the God who created them in the first place! My point is not everyone who turns from God spends their time on earth living in agony like the way Eliphaz poetically describes people in this verse.
 - d) I'm sure Eliphaz realized that not all people suffer in this life like he is describing here. He is saying in effect, "Hey Job, obviously you're in horrid pain. "Obviously" you committed some sort of sin to tick God off this bad, so if you don't want to end up like the horrid soul I just described in all these verses, confess what you did and that'll be that!
 - e) Again, if I were Job, I'd be incredibly tempted to just say, "OK, I confess, so will all of you please stop the accusations and let's move on!" The reason Job doesn't do that is because he realizes to lie like that is a sin against God. Remember that the purpose of this test is to see if we still won't sin in spite of whatever suffering we're going through at the moment. The next time we're going through something horrid, keep in mind the possibility that it's a test and God's well aware of what we're going through at that moment!
 - f) OK then, back to Eliphaz.
- 15. Verse 27: "Though his face is covered with fat and his waist bulges with flesh,²⁸ he will inhabit ruined towns and houses where no one lives, houses crumbling to rubble.
- a) Whoever Eliphaz is insulting here, he's saying that person is "full of fat". Let me explain:

- b) The issue has nothing to do with what any of us weigh. Fat, as a concept is what is stored in our body that isn't needed at that moment. Its purpose is to be reserve for our survival if we're not eating enough.
 - c) With that said, the purpose of mentioning fat isn't to insult the person's health. It is a way of saying, just as that person has a lot of "waste" on their bodies so their whole life has lots of "wasted time". It's a colorful way (we're reading poetry, remember!) of saying all those people who waste their lives living for things other than God eventually lead wasted lives as whatever they "build" will fall apart.
 - d) One of the great realities of life is that everything we do in life that isn't for God's glory is in effect a waste of time as such actions will die. The final chapters of Revelation mention the destruction of the world as we know it. It's a reminder that any life not lived to glorify God is in effect a wasted life as what we do here not for God won't last forever.
 - e) OK John, you're "preaching to the choir" again. What does that have to do with Job? It's a false accusation that Job must have sinned horribly and now he's getting what he deserves which like fat, his life is a waste. No it's not true in Job's case, but that's the accusation!
 - f) The good news is he's almost done for this round, so let's continue:
16. Verse 29: He will no longer be rich and his wealth will not endure, nor will his possessions spread over the land. ³⁰ He will not escape the darkness; a flame will wither his shoots, and the breath of God's mouth will carry him away.
- a) Remember that Eliphaz is describing some fictional character who's ignoring God. He is saying that whatever wealth and things that person acquired in this lifetime, will rot away as again, living for things other than God is in the end, a waste of a life.
 - b) We're reading all of this not to get a basic Sunday School lesson on how life works. He is saying all of this as to plead with Job to repent of whatever he did! Again, he's not giving bad theology, just misapplying it to Job's life.
 - c) If nothing else, this whole section of the book is a great reminder that we may have all of our "theological ducks in a row", but still be wrong about what's going on in front of us.
 - d) OK five more verses of this to get through. Almost there!
17. Verse 31: Let him not deceive himself by trusting what is worthless, for he will get nothing in return. ³² Before his time he will be paid in full, and his branches will not flourish. ³³ He will be like a vine stripped of its unripe grapes, like an olive tree shedding its blossoms.
- a) One thing you got to say about Eliphaz, he likes to "pile it on thick". Eliphaz goes on for a whole chapter about how worthless a life is that's not used for God's glory. Eliphaz uses a bunch of "fruit metaphors" to make the point of what a waste life is when we only use it to benefit ourselves and not God. I could go into more details, but the text is pretty obvious to make that type of point.
 - b) Again, Eliphaz is stating all of this as he's convinced to no end that Job must have sinned something horrid. Recall that Eliphaz described a fictional person that has some success in life a few verses back. Eliphaz knew all too well that Job had tremendous wealth prior to all "this" occurring. Eliphaz is not subtly implying, "Hey Job, I'm watching your life story unfold before my eyes! So just confess and that'll be that. Realize Job will take the next two chapters to respond to all of this. That's the second half of this lesson.
 - c) First, we got two more Eliphaz verses to go.
18. Verse 34: For the company of the godless will be barren, and fire will consume the tents of those who love bribes. ³⁵ They conceive trouble and give birth to evil; their womb fashions deceit."
- a) Eliphaz ends his "tirade" with the reminder that those who don't care about God and only use their lives to get ahead, are doomed in the end. It is the reminder that none of us can win against God. To borrow a famous line, "Our arms are too short to box with God".
 - b) The point of all of this is Eliphaz is convinced he's describing Job to a tee! It's an example of being "theologically correct" but wrongly applied! Eliphaz is a reminder that any of us can get "Godly advice" that's horribly applied. Job will say so himself, coming right up!

19. Chapter 16: Then Job replied: ² "I have heard many things like these; miserable comforters are you all! ³ Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing? ⁴ I also could speak like you, if you were in my place; I could make fine speeches against you and shake my head at you.
- a) The good news is we made it through Eliphaz's second of three speeches. The bad news is Job's going to give a two chapter reply. Those two chapters are the rest of this lesson.
 - b) The other good news is Job has had enough of all of this and starts this section by chewing out his three friends. It's as if Job's saying, "With friends like you, who needs enemies?" It is a rebuke of most of the book to date. Job's saying in effect, "You've made a nice bunch of speeches, but so what? I could have done that. I could stand over you and say yes here is how God normally works, but how does any of that affect me? I could do exactly what you three have been doing. However, it doesn't solve the problem nor is it doing anything to relieve my pain." Anyway, that's how Job opens up his two chapter defense of himself.
 - c) A better question might be is, if we're suffering horribly and all our friends were doing is "chewing us out" for some unconfessed sin we didn't commit, how should we handle it? Do we keep going round and round in circles stating truths that don't apply? Remember that Job and his three friends still haven't figured out why he's suffering (It's due to a bet between God and Satan to see if Job would curse God out. That's Chapters 1 and 2). Since that possibility never occurred to any of them, the dialogue continues.
 - d) We're only four verses into Job's response and we can already see him "digging his heels in" as to maintain his innocence. Let's move on as Verse 5 gives a great application.
20. Verse 5: But my mouth would encourage you; comfort from my lips would bring you relief.
- a) Job's saying, "Hey if I was in your shoes and I was trying to help someone who's suffering in some terrible way, I'd be trying to encourage them to go forward and trying to comfort them in their pain, instead of insulting them over and over again!"
 - b) If you want a great application about dealing with someone who's suffering horribly, start with figuring ways to comfort them and help them, as opposed to all those you must have sinned horribly speeches. Sometimes when I read Job, I have the urge the slap all three of Job's friends in the face and say, "Hey guys, ease up, can't you see he's in horrid pain?"
 - c) Unfortunately, everyone's dug their heels in, so let's read on.
21. Verse 6: "Yet if I speak, my pain is not relieved; and if I refrain, it does not go away. ⁷ Surely, O God, you have worn me out; you have devastated my entire household.
- a) I don't know how physically painful it was for Job to speak, but dealing with his physical pain as well as the emotional pain of losing his family let alone his wealth, had to be hard to deal with, to put it mildly. That's why it doesn't shock me that Job constantly jumps in "woe is me" moments throughout the book. If we're in horrid pain, even if we're trying to have a discussion with someone, that pain's there to remind us, "Hey I'm not going away in spite of all your talking".
 - b) Notice in Verse 7 Job still believes in God in spite of that pain and ultimately realizes God has allowed this to occur. Despite that, Job never curses God. He still honors Him as God in spite of all of this. That fact alone is admirable.
22. Verse 8: You have bound me--and it has become a witness; my gauntness rises up and testifies against me. ⁹ God assails me and tears me in his anger and gnashes his teeth at me; my opponent fastens on me his piercing eyes.
- a) Beginning back with Verse 7, Job's effectively blaming God for allowing all of those horrid things to happen to Job. I'm sure most of us in hard times have asked, "Why me, God? If you are there and You claim to love me so much, why are You allowing me to go through all of this?" It's a fair question to ask. Horrid pain has a way of reminding us, that it's not over until God says it is.
 - i) While I'm in the neighborhood, let me try to answer, "Why does He allow all of the horrid stuff to occur? If God exists, why does He allow all this tragedy?"

- ii) For starters, like in Job's case it's to test us, to see if we'll still honor Him as God in spite of all we're going through. Sometimes it's to see if we'll sit there and wallow in the pain or actually say, "I'm going to change this as I can't just sit here feeling sorry for myself anymore". Sometimes tragedies occur just because all of us live in a fallen world and we have to make the best of it.
 - iii) The point is, we can't change what's happened, only learn from it and move on. As we read Job, here's a man that's suffered more than anything I can imagine. I don't blame him for crying out to God to ask why. Grant it, Job's using colorful language to express that anger, but again we're reading poetry here.
- 23. Verse 10: Men open their mouths to jeer at me; they strike my cheek in scorn and unite together against me. ¹¹ God has turned me over to evil men and thrown me into the clutches of the wicked.
 - a) Job now takes two verses to focus on his three friends or maybe others who have put him down in his misery. I see Job complaining to God, "Hey if it wasn't bad enough that I had to suffer the loss of my wealth, my family and my wealth, I also have to deal with people who accuse me of things I didn't do". Yes it's another "woe is me" moment, but I'm sure if we had to deal with a tenth of what Job had to face, we'd have those moments too.
 - b) I assume his three friends are hearing all of this, I'm sure Job's words here just make them want to dig their heels in even more and say, "Is that what you think of us, let me tell you even more what we think of you". That's why this dialogue will continue for many more chapters. In the meantime, Job's had enough of their complaining about him and yes, he's pouring out his frustration to God over how his "friends" are treating him. Yes it reminds us of the saying, "With friends like this, who needs enemies?"
- 24. Verse 12: All was well with me, but he shattered me; he seized me by the neck and crushed me. He has made me his target; ¹³ his archers surround me. Without pity, he pierces my kidneys and spills my gall on the ground. ¹⁴ Again and again he bursts upon me; he rushes at me like a warrior.
 - a) Enough of the complaining about his friends. Now that Job got that out of his system he's back to focusing on his pain and pondering why God allowed it to happen.
 - b) Again, you can't blame Job for this. If we suffered that badly, we too would be wondering why "A good God" would allow all of this to occur. If you don't know the whole story, he will be blessed at the end of the book more than he suffers at this time. God's still testing Job to see if he'd sin through all of this. My point is when God allows tragedy to occur, it's ok to cry out to Him. He's not angry at us when we complain to Him. If anything, I'd bet he knows we need a healthy way to vent out our frustration. Yes, it's colorful. Yes, all of this reads like Job's describing dying. It's his way of venting out his pain.
 - c) By the way, as much as this text focuses on death, notice you never read of Job making an effort to actually kill himself. He never asks his friends to end his life. Yes, he ponders if God's going to put him out of his misery, but he never works to "speed up the process"!
 - d) So again, the question, if God is "so good", why does He allow tragedies to occur? Why does He allow us to suffer so much? One reason is to see if we'd still honor Him as God in spite of all of this. I find that "tragedy" or tough times tends to make us more of what we are in the first place! If you want to find out who really loves God, it's times like this when the "rubber meets the road" that we find out who is and who isn't truly committed to serving God. My point is despite Job's pain, he is still being a good witness for God in spite of all the complaining he's doing about his situation. Speaking of complaining:
- 25. Verse 15: "I have sewed sackcloth over my skin and buried my brow in the dust.
 - a) Some translations say Job's literally sewed his sackcloth (garment) to his skin. Either way it is simply another way of describing the horrid pain he's in at this moment.
 - b) So why is Job going on and on about his pain? For starters, it is hard not to focus on pain when it is non-stop. Second, what else is there to do? Even when he focuses on what his friends are saying, that's no easier, because all they're doing is coming up with what does not apply to Job. It's as if Job's saying, "I've got nothing better to do than focus on this!"

26. Verse 16: My face is red with weeping, deep shadows ring my eyes; ¹⁷ yet my hands have been free of violence and my prayer is pure.
- a) You can sense that Job's still doing his best despite his pain to be a good witness for God. That alone is a good lesson for us. He's stating how much all that pain has hurt him, but despite that pain, he hasn't hurt anyone and in effect Job still has no sin to confess. That's the point Job's been pounding home in this book so far.
 - b) Many of us know what it's like to be falsely accused of something. Like Job, we had to be tempted to "confess something" just to get our accusers off our back! Still, Job's stating he has "racked his brain and can't think of anything". He's hoping that fact will sink in with his friends. Obviously, it won't which is why this story continues.
27. Verse 18: "O earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry never be laid to rest!
- a) Job's saying in effect, "I don't want to die with this mystery unsolved!" I'd argue that most people believe in an afterlife based on historical evidence. Most people believe that they'll be judged by God. The great question is, "Will God explain our lives to us in heaven?" It is the question of the moment. My view is God will explain why He allows "this and that" to occur one day, but that's just my opinion based on years of bible study.
28. Verse 19: Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. ²⁰ My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; ²¹ on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.
- a) One of the pleasures of studying the book of Job, is every so often, the book gives us little "gems" like these verses. Verse 19 is stating that he believes there will be an intercessor in heaven between God and Himself. Christians call that intercessor Jesus. It's the idea of an entity that can fully relate to God and fully relate to people! That intercessor must have all of God's wisdom to understand our lives, what we're thinking, how we lived and why we made the decisions we did. That intercessor must also be "human enough" to relate to all the mistakes we made. My point is Jesus is the only entity as fully God and fully human who can fulfill Job's desire of an intercessor between God and man.
 - b) Given the fact that this book is the oldest in the bible, it's amazing the insight it has when it comes to the concept of an "intercessor" between God and man and the necessity for us to have Jesus fulfill that role. The religious Jewish view is that there will be a Messiah to rule over the world and enforce God's laws but that only God Himself can relate to us as individuals. My counterargument is that having "someone" who's "been in our shoes" is the only way an intercessor could fully relate to us, which is why I argue Jesus is who He claims He is! OK then, one verse left in this chapter:
29. Verse 22: "Only a few years will pass before I go on the journey of no return.
- a) Somehow Job figured he's only got a few years left to live. I don't know if that is based on how old he was or how long he figured he could live in that present condition. Somehow he just figured I've got a few years left before I die and never come back. So after a pretty little speech about the necessity of a mediator, why throw this line in the loop? I think it's just Job's way of saying, "Yes there is a mediator in heaven and I'm going to see him in the next few years at the worst, based on the way my life's been going as of late. Obviously, Job's got no idea what God has planned for him which involves many more years of life in a blessed state, but let's be honest, when we're facing real pain, it's hard to see past that!
 - b) With that said, that's a wrap for Chapter 16. Job will continue for another chapter, but it's a short one that I'll describe to wrap us this lesson.
30. Chapter 17, Verse 1: My spirit is broken, my days are cut short, the grave awaits me.
- a) Yes Job believes in God. Yes he believes a mediator exists in heaven. Still, he's still facing the reality of all the pain he's in. A good part about pain is it reminds us of the reality that we all must face in this life, that it won't go on forever. Yes it's morbid to think about our mortality, but it's also good to contemplate that if God exists, He must have created us for some purpose. That purpose is to glorify Him by how we live our lives!

- b) Ok, why is Job getting into all of this? He's trying to get the point across to his friends that he doesn't know why he's in this mess, but he knows there is no unconfessed sin. All Job can do at this point is try to be a good witness for God with the time he has left despite all of the suffering he's going through at the moment. That too, is a wonderful lesson for us!
31. Verse 2: Surely mockers surround me; my eyes must dwell on their hostility.
- a) This is a "Hey God, look what I've got to deal with around here" prayer. He's saying if it's not bad enough I've got to suffer so badly, why do You allow it to be worse by having my friends "pile on" the way they have been? Job's stating the fact he knows he can't convince his friends of innocence so now he's asking God, "Why me? Why all of this?"
 - b) That leads us to the natural question of "Why me" when we're facing real pain! Of course I believe we should do all we can to alleviate that pain and get all the help we can. I think a better question to ponder is, "Why not me?" Ponder why God picked you to go through what you or I are going through. There is something He wants us to learn from it or to be a good witness for Him through that situation. That's what Job's contemplating here as he is pondering, "Why me, Lord" here at this point.
32. Verse 3: "Give me, O God, the pledge you demand. Who else will put up security for me?"
- a) Ok, what pledge is Job talking about? In context, remember that Job's maintaining that he is innocent of the charge of unconfessed sin. Job effectively is asking God, "I'd like You to convince my friends of my innocence. Can You do that for me? I've got no one else I can turn to at this point!"
 - b) Obviously, God doesn't step in and do this. This is a plea of frustration by Job as he's now out of options and saying, "Hey God, I don't know what else to do here, I could use some guidance here". Yes of course God doesn't do what He doesn't want to do. The reason we don't read of God jumping in the picture here (as it is in our lives) is there are things that He wants us to figure out on our own which is a way He answers our prayers. Until then we continue:
33. Verse 4: You have closed their minds to understanding; therefore you will not let them triumph.
- a) Meanwhile, Job's also stating that since his friends have "dug their heels in", Job is saying that God has closed their minds to accepting his innocence. Since Job is convinced there is no unconfessed sin and since he knows God is a God of justice, Job knows it's a matter of time before he will win in the sense that he can stand before God with no unconfessed sin on his conscious at that moment.
 - b) Job's not saying that God's going to speak up on Job's behalf. Job's saying that he and his three friends all will have to face His judgment one day, and therefore, God won't let Job's three friends "win" even though as I keep saying "they've dug their heels in". That's a nice reminder to us when we can't convince our friends of our innocence to know that there is a God who works on our behalf to do the right thing!
34. Verse 5: If a man denounces his friends for reward, the eyes of his children will fail.
- a) Now Job himself is stating biblical truths. The idea is that if a person is bad, it affects the people around them. People who ruin their lives with say drugs or alcohol will say they are hurting no one but themselves. They fail to see the lives around them being affected by the harm they are doing. That's the underlying point Job's making here.
 - b) The reason he's stating this is Job's going on the offense against his friends. He's saying in effect, "Since you're so busy making false accusations against your friend, you don't know that it's going to "come back to bite you" as that type of attitude will affect those closest to you whether you realize it or not". Job continues:
35. Verse 6: "God has made me a byword to everyone, a man in whose face people spit.
- a) Job's saying I'm well aware of my condition. He's sure he's become a "running joke to his community". If a wealthy man lost everything, including his family and his health, I am sure the community is aware of it and think Job must have done something horrible as to receive that sort of fate. The point is Job's well aware why he's accused of sin!

36. Verse 7: My eyes have grown dim with grief; my whole frame is but a shadow.
- a) Job's stating how painful it's been for him through all of this. He's well aware of the fact he's a shadow of his former self and he's sure his community is aware of his fate. Here in this verse, he's saying in effect, "It's not bad enough that I have to go through all of this for some unknown reason. It's even worse because I'm now the "laughing stock" around here. It's the question of how do I be a good witness for God after I've gone through all of this?" The answer again, is to make the best decisions we can given what is in front of us.
 - b) Meanwhile, Job's still on a role.
37. Verse 8: Upright men are appalled at this; the innocent are aroused against the ungodly.
- a) Remember that Job's maintaining his innocence. He's not claiming to be perfect. He just refuses to dwell on any already confessed sins, as he knows he's forgiven of those.
 - b) With that said, Job also realizes there are other people exist who are God fearing and Job is convinced that they will battle the "ungodly".
 - c) I'm reminded of the fact that the one thing we constantly need to pray for is "boldness". It is one thing to say "What that person did is wrong". It's another to be bold and take some sort of stand for what is right. Job's stating all of this as if to say, I may to too weak to do anything about my condition, but I'm sure there are other people out there who see what is unjust and will take the bold steps to stand up for what it right!
38. Verse 9: Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to their ways, and those with clean hands will grow stronger.
- a) Job's finishing his point with the fact that those who are committed to doing what is right "will do so" and grow in their boldness. A great truth of life is once one is committed to do what's right and have the boldness to go forward, momentum does great things after that. I've seen that many times. Job sees it to. He realizes that those who try to do what is right will do so when they make the effort.
 - b) Realize this is Job's subtle way of taking digs at his three friends for not doing what's right and supporting his innocence.
39. Verse 10: "But come on, all of you, try again! I will not find a wise man among you.
- a) Remember how I called this lesson, "Digging our heals in"? Job's ready for "Round 5" and he still maintains his innocence. Job's saying in effect, "So far, all three of you have failed to make a good case of what I've done wrong. I'm still "standing", so let's go at it again!
 - b) As I've implied in this lesson, I'd be tempted at this point to tell those three to go away as I'm not going to listen to this anymore! Instead, Job's saying "Give it your best shot, I will sit here, listen and respond, because nothing you've said so far has made a difference!"
 - c) In effect, it's a put down of Job's friends that they lack the wisdom to grasp his situation.
40. Verse 11: My days have passed, my plans are shattered, and so are the desires of my heart.
- a) Here Job's stating that he believes "life" as he knows it is over. Again, remember that Job was a financially successful man, had a nice family and a good life. I'm sure he expected that lifestyle to continue until his death. It's a not so subtle reminder that we never know what the future holds. All of us have to deal with life as it comes including all the tough things we must deal with in life. Job's saying in spite of all of that, I've got nothing better to do for the moment, so let's continue the debate.
 - b) Only five more verses to go. Hang in there, we're almost done!
41. Verse 12: These men turn night into day; in the face of darkness they say, 'Light is near.'
- a) I sort of see Job being sarcastic here. Here is Job suffering something horrible and he has to listen to people tell him, "It's ok, Job, it'll be better tomorrow". If we're experiencing a "hell like situation", it's hard to accept the "it'll be better in the morning philosophy". Yes, it's a very grave view of life, but when one is suffering something horribly, it's hard to see past the pain and hope for the best.
 - b) So what do we do if we're in that much pain? The great biblical expression, "This too shall pass" does apply. It doesn't mean we kill ourselves, but we learn what we can from it.

42. Verse 13: If the only home I hope for is the grave, if I spread out my bed in darkness,¹⁴ if I say to corruption, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'My mother' or 'My sister,'¹⁵ where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me? ¹⁶ Will it go down to the gates of death? Will we descend together into the dust?"
- a) Job's back to contemplating death. Yes it's easy to do when we're suffering horribly.
 - b) This is Job ending his argument for his innocence by saying, "Hey if I die right now, how will any of us know who was right or wrong in this debate? Therefore, we must continue as we don't have a solution to this problem yet. The easy thing to do is to call each other a bunch of names or accuse each other of sin. The problem is it doesn't solve the mystery. I (Job) want to continue and live longer if for no other reason, than to see if we can come up with an explanation for all of this before I die.
 - c) Job's saying, "Look I can't force God to explain what is happening. We can only do what we can do and try to solve this mystery. So far, none of you have explained why I have to go through all of this and I can't figure it out either. Since I got nothing better to do with my time right now, I'm willing to debate this further until we can explain it.
 - d) Bottom line, "Round 4" (these three chapters) ends in a stalemate. Therefore, there will be a "Round 5", which is the next lesson.
43. OK, what's the "take away" from this lesson? Do we to dig our heels in like Job and maintain our innocence no matter what? The answer is about being a good witness for God no matter what we must deal with in our lives. There are times we must defend ourselves and times come where we have to stand for what is right. It also teaches us people around us can be theologically correct in their views but misapply that knowledge to our lives. Biblical wisdom is far more than learning what it says. The challenge is learning how to correctly apply it to our lives. That's a reason why God provides the Holy Spirit to help believers correctly apply it to our lives. If you get that, you get an important application of how to live the Christian life. With that said, it is time for me to close in prayer.
44. Heavenly Father, as this debate goes on and on, help us to learn what it You desire we learn from studying Your word and apply it to our lives. Help us to live as You desire and help us to be a good witness for You no matter what situation we're facing. Help us to use our lives to make a difference for You as that's why You created us in the first place! We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.