

1. Let's start with some good news. We're now over half way through the book. More good news is the second half of this book isn't the endless debate between Job and his three friends. Most of the second half of the book consists of a speech by a new man who'll come on the scene soon to discuss how God works, and finally God Himself steps in, in effect to put an end to all of this. He (God) gives the longest bible speech we have of Him talking. Before we get there, we still got two more rounds of "back and forth" dialogue between Job and his three friends. If you read this next section, you'll realize that Job and his friends are also tired of all this back and forth dialogue as both sides realize they're not getting anywhere. That's why this last section has a different flavor to it. This lesson covers the second to last round of that debate.
2. All of that leads to these three chapters. We're back to the first of the three speakers making a last speech to discuss how God works. This speaker even lists sins that he thinks Job must be guilty of committing. Most of his speech focuses on the question of "How God works". Yes that is my lesson title, as the first of Job's three friends (Eliphaz) discusses that question. Job is going to give a two-chapter rebuttal to how he sees God working in our world and in his future. I would say my main reason to read this lesson is it helps us to understand how God works in our lives as well as a few insights as to what He expects of us as believers.
 - a) This eighth of nine debate rounds almost puts a plug on the seemingly, endless argument that 1) Job is in pain, 2) God punishes the wicked so 3) God must be punishing Job. By the time we read these chapters, "The wind is out of the sail" of that debate. It moves into the great question of "How does God work anyway?" I'm still as convinced as I was in the last lesson that Satan is working through Job's three friends as they're still refusing to do anything to comfort Job, but simply debate him on why he's suffering so much. They remind me of the type of person one meets in church who knows their bible backwards, but you'll rarely see them show any sort of love or comfort to others. They're the "Mr. (or Mrs.) big mouth" in our circle of acquaintances.
 - b) Anyway, as the debate shifts from "What did Job do wrong" to "how does God work", it is a response to Job's insisting that His redeemer is alive and well (even in Job's day) and He will redeem Job from this horrible condition.
3. With that said, let me try to summarize these three chapters in a few thoughts, and then I'll start on the verse-by-verse commentary:
 - a) We're back to the first of Job's friends giving his final plea to Job.
 - b) Job just finished arguing that he knows his redeemer lives, and in effect, God will let Job be in heaven with Him forever. That's the idea behind the "redeemer". Job didn't fully get the idea of a "Fully God and Fully man" redeemer the way we Christians do, but I'm sure he got the idea that some sort of redeemer exists. Therefore, all of his friend's accusations of Job being guilty of some unrepentant sin has been one big "waste of breath".
 - c) With that said, Eliphaz's response is in effect, "Does God benefit from you being right?" It is the type of argument one makes that, "God exists but doesn't care what we do". It's not my view, simply by the fact that if God exists and He created us, He must have a purpose for doing all that creating in the first place.
 - d) Eliphaz then "for old time sake" makes a few accusations of sins that he's convinced Job is guilty of, and lists them without any evidence.
 - e) Then Eliphaz makes one more "If only you'd repent of your sins case, then God would be pleased with you". Eliphaz correctly argues that God exists and He wants us to live a life pleasing to Him. Isn't that a contradiction to how he started his argument? Yes and no. He starts by arguing that God doesn't benefit by us acting well. I'd state that is a wrong view of God simply because He created us to be a good witness for Him. I'd say Eliphaz is correct in that the greatest way to live is to fully trust God, and that's his other point.

- f) In summary, he's saying, God doesn't personally benefit us living as He desires as it does not affect what God does in heaven. However, living a life trying to please God is still the best way to live as a witness for Him. That's the "crux" of Chapter 22.
- 4. In Chapter 23, Job gets personal. I could summarize the whole chapter with the idea that he does not know why God is doing what He's doing to him and it feels like God's "shut down" with any sort of answer. Most of us veteran Christians know what it's like when God "goes silent" for some unspecified length of time. It's not pleasant. God puts us through this to test us. It's His way of saying, "You still trust Me, now, even through this?" One of the great misunderstandings about the book of Job is the question of "Why do the innocent suffer?" That question is never answered. Instead, it teaches how to be a good witness for God while we're going through suffering. That is what I've learned so far and what I know from reading this whole book many times.
 - a) Anyway, Chapter 23 is Job realizing God's still in charge. Job still can't figure out why he has to suffer the way he does and the reality of that pain hits him hard in this chapter.
 - b) It's sort of a cry to God that, "I can't take this anymore, where are You?"
 - c) The really good news for Job is God's great a great ending coming up after all this testing is over. It's sort of a reminder to us that whatever we're going through in life, "This isn't it" as eternity is infinitely longer than whatever suffering we must face in this life.
 - d) It's the "God's got a plan for us and eternal suffering isn't a part of that plan!"
- 5. Then in Chapter 24, Job gets more general. He changes his focus off himself, and onto man's fate for choosing either to stand up for God or ignoring Him. Job's still trying to be a good witness for God in spite of his pain. By stating, "Here is how God really works", he's effectively defending the idea that he is not guilty of some great unrepentant sin. Eternity is based on our trust that He exists, we've dedicated our lives to serving Him and making a difference for Him and we cannot earn our salvation by "trying hard enough". In other words, it's the Gospel message woven into a long debate with a lot of good points made on both sides.
 - a) With that said, if you'd like more details, it's time to start my verse-by-verse commentary:
- 6. Chapter 22, Verse 1: Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied: ² "Can a man be of benefit to God? Can even a wise man benefit him? ³ What pleasure would it give the Almighty if you were righteous? What would he gain if your ways were blameless?
 - a) As I said in the introduction, we get the third and final speech by the first and presumably the oldest of Job's three friends Eliphaz. What we do know about him is he believes in the existence of God and since Job's "technically not Jewish" (most likely he lived around the time of Abraham). The existence of Eliphaz and Job reminds us that some people existed who believed in God even before the whole "Jewish thing" got rolling. As I've also been pounding the point, I see Eliphaz as the local "know it all" who knows a lot of stuff about God, but doesn't have any love (application of God's love to us!). Most of us know at least one "Eliphaz" and there's not much to them other than to express their view of such topics of why God exists.
 - b) OK enough background. His opening remarks in these three verses is essentially, "I don't believe God benefits from us living as He desires". As I said earlier, he's right and wrong at the same time. He's right in the sense that God doesn't go through mood swings based on how we act on any given day. Eliphaz is also right that by being a good person, it's for our sake that we benefit, not for His. God doesn't get in a "better mood" if we're doing the right thing. That's the essence of his arguments. What Eliphaz misses of course, is the fact that because God loves us and created us for a purpose, He wants us to be a good witness for Him. Eliphaz is right in that God doesn't "Get a tingle up His leg when we do good." What God does want is an eternal relationship with those of us willing to fully trust Him with every aspect of our lives. We also do that by being a good witness for Him to those in our sphere of influence.
 - c) My point is God wants us to be good not to earn His love, but just to be a good witness for Him in the world around us. With that said, Eliphaz is just getting warmed up.

7. Verse 4: "Is it for your piety that he rebukes you and brings charges against you?" ⁵ Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins endless?
 - a) Despite seven rounds so far of seemingly endless debate, Eliphaz is still convinced Job has to be guilty of some sin. He won't waste his final shot at Job without one last time making a few more accusations of sins that Job might have committed.
 - b) It's the old "You must have sinned pretty horribly to tick God off this much" argument. It is getting old by now and I'm convinced Job and his three friends are tired of making it. It comes down to the fact that Eliphaz can't think of any other reason why Job's suffering the way he is. Since no one is perfect, Job must have done something horrid to deserve this!
 - c) For the sake of the newcomers, neither Job nor any of his friends are privileged to a bet God and Satan made in the first two chapters. The short version is God allowed Satan to harm Job to see if he'd sin despite horrid pain and a lack of any sense why God allowed that to occur. Therefore, Job and his friends are left to ponder for chapter after chapter, why all this suffering is occurring. As I also said in my intro, the question of why people suffer is never answered in this book. My answer is that a proof of God's existence is the existence of evil. If evil as a force exists, there has to be something greater than evil that created that evil in the first place.
 - d) OK enough philosophy for these verses, back to Eliphaz accusing Job of sin.
8. Verse 6: You demanded security from your brothers for no reason; you stripped men of their clothing, leaving them naked. ⁷ You gave no water to the weary and you withheld food from the hungry, ⁸ though you were a powerful man, owning land-- an honored man, living on it. ⁹ And you sent widows away empty-handed and broke the strength of the fatherless.
 - a) In these four verses, Eliphaz lists a bunch of sins he's convinced that Job is guilty of doing. Of course, there is no evidence for it. Eliphaz is assuming that because Job was rich, he got that way by defrauding others around him and sending away people in need. Since there are no specifics in the story of how Job lived other than stating the fact he was wealthy by having lots of animals, what we're reading here is false assumptions by Eliphaz.
 - b) Is it possible that Job could have been guilty of any one of these things? Of course. What we did read about Job in the early chapters is he's the kind of guy who made sacrifices to God not only for sins he's committed but even sacrifices to say in effect, "In case I missed something obvious, here's another sacrifice on my behalf". I also get the impression that if Job did do anything like he's being accused of in here in these verses, he'd go out of way to correct the situation. I'm not saying Job was perfect. I'm saying he was the kind of guy who cared about living as God desired and worked to do so.
 - c) While I'm in the neighborhood, let me talk about sacrifices. First of all, for the Christian, it is necessary to remember that Jesus paid the full price for all our sins even the one we will commit "Next Tuesday". It's not a license to sin, but a reminder that whatever we do has already been paid for. I view sacrifice as "putting our money where our mouth is". It's not to gain more favor with God, but to show Him that we're willing to again put our money or our time to back up our belief in Him. No, we don't sacrifice animals today, but I'd say we should give to Christian causes both in terms of time and our resources. Again, it's not to earn points with God but just to be a witness to those around us of our commitment to Him with our lives.
 - d) Enough of that, back to Eliphaz:
9. Verse 10: That is why snares are all around you, why sudden peril terrifies you, ¹¹ why it is so dark you cannot see, and why a flood of water covers you.
 - a) Eliphaz is still blaming some "unconfessed sin" for the reason why Job's suffering so bad.
 - b) Yes he's using colorful language to make that point (we're reading poetry folks). The main point Eliphaz is making is that Job must be guilty of "something" as that's the only reason any of them could think of to explain why Job's suffering so much. Obviously, that's not the reason, but since Eliphaz can't think of any other reason, he's pounding the point here!

10. Verse 12: "Is not God in the heights of heaven? And see how lofty are the highest stars!"
 - a) Beginning in Verse 12, Eliphaz is focusing on God again. This verse is effectively saying, "You see all those stars in the sky, as sure as the fact they're way up there, so God is way up there as He created all of that. It's a simple point that if one considers how huge is our universe, there has to be something greater than all of that who created it in the first place.
 - b) It's just an opening remark to an argument of how God works.
11. Verse 13: Yet you say, 'What does God know? Does he judge through such darkness?' ¹⁴ Thick clouds veil him, so he does not see us as he goes about in the vaulted heavens.'
 - a) Here Eliphaz is sort of mocking Job's complaint that God isn't doing anything about what Job is going through. Remember that Job was convinced a mediator existed that will act between God and Himself. These verses are asking, "Doesn't God know all things? Would not God be fully aware of all the things going on in your life? Eliphaz is still arguing that Job must have sinned horribly and that's why God's not stepping in here. These verses are being sarcastic as if to ask, "Does God see from way up there?"
12. Verse 15: Will you keep to the old path that evil men have trod? ¹⁶ They were carried off before their time, their foundations washed away by a flood.
 - a) Most commentators believe these verses are referring to "the" flood. An old joke among bible scholars is if one wants to make a realistic children's toy based on the flood story, it should not only include Noah, the ark and the animals, but should also include lots of dead bodies floating on in the water! I mention that joke here because we get a reference to the fact that the flood killed off multitudes of people.
 - b) To paraphrase Eliphaz, "Are you going to keep acting like other wicked men? Look what their fate was when they ignored God prior to the flood." It's another way of arguing, Job you must be guilty of something, so confess it and let's move on.
 - c) I can't emphasize enough the idea that Job never claims he was perfect. Job just accepted the idea that once he confessed a sin and turned from it, it was forgiven, so we don't have to dwell on the past after that.
13. Verse 17: They said to God, 'Leave us alone! What can the Almighty do to us?' ¹⁸ Yet it was he who filled their houses with good things, so I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked.
 - a) Remember that Eliphaz is still describing wicked people. He sarcastically asks describing them, "Hey, why should I care about God? I've got plenty of good stuff around here. No, I don't need God to bless my life!" It's the reminder that people can be successful without God's blessing, but that will be the only blessing they'll ever get for eternity.
 - b) This will lead to Eliphaz's next point:
14. Verse 19: "The righteous see their ruin and rejoice; the innocent mock them, saying, ²⁰ 'Surely our foes are destroyed, and fire devours their wealth.'
 - a) It is also true through history that non-God fearing men have seen the "godly" suffer with their lives falling apart. The point is non-God fearing people will often "win" in this life. Remember that Job was making that same point in his last speech. Eliphaz is saying that he too understands that, but all "this" still means one needs to submit their lives to God.
 - b) Remember that Eliphaz is hopelessly committed to the idea that Job sinned horribly. So he is making this seemingly endless argument that just because wicked people prosper, that doesn't mean it'll be that way forever. Therefore Job "don't be like them". He continues:
15. Verse 21: Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you. ²² Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart.
 - a) From Verse 21 to the end of his final speech (Verse 30), Eliphaz is going to close by saying "Hey Job, just submit your life to God. Then you'll be at peace with Him. Then you'll get all of your wealth back and then God will have a relationship with you again!"
 - b) You can see that Eliphaz is hopelessly committed to the idea that "Job's got to be guilty of something". In his mind it's the only explanation for all the horror that Job's suffering. It is a pitch to confess some sin and then all will be wonderful.

- c) I admit, if I were Job, I would have been tempted chapters ago, to confess anything just to get these guys off my back. The reason Job "stuck to his guns" is he simply refuses to be a bad witness for God by "going through the confession motions" when there's nothing for him to confess. That's the deadlock here. OK then, back to Eliphaz.
16. If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored: If you remove wickedness far from your tent²⁴ and assign your nuggets to the dust, your gold of Ophir to the rocks in the ravines,²⁵ then the Almighty will be your gold, the choicest silver for you.²⁶ Surely then you will find delight in the Almighty and will lift up your face to God.
- a) Here we continue Eliphaz's final plea for Job to repent. He's essentially saying, "Don't be so wicked, take whatever wealth you have left, let go of it as God alone will be better than anything and everything else in life you may be trusting in. As I've been saying for many Job lessons, there's truth in his words, but none of it applies to Job's case. Eliphaz's main point is that Job needs to discard anything of value and simply trust that God exists!
 - b) Let me address those who are thinking, "Yes, I trust in God but I still have to pay the bills. Do I have to let go of all my earnings to be a Christian? If we did that, then we'd be part of the burden that others must support. The way I look at life is all I have belongs to God. It is how we use what "stuff" we have that matters. No, we don't have to give everything we own to the first cause we see. Part of being a witness for Jesus is having good discretion as to where to spend the money we have. Yes, God is first. However, over and above that, it is a matter of doing the right thing and acting responsible. That's plain common sense.
 - c) Meanwhile, four more Eliphaz verses and that's a wrap for him.
17. You will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will fulfill your vows.²⁸ What you decide on will be done, and light will shine on your ways.²⁹ When men are brought low and you say, 'Lift them up!' then he will save the downcast.³⁰ He will deliver even one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands."
- a) Ever since we started this debate many chapters ago, it seems like all three guys do make some good points about how we're supposed to act as believers. It is true that God hears the prayers of those who honestly seek Him and do dedicate their lives to serving Him.
 - b) That doesn't mean God is a "genie in a bottle" to grant our wishes. It means if we choose to use our lives to serve Him, God will make it possible to do His will, not ours. Yes then we will be good witnesses for him. What Eliphaz's wrong about is just because Job suffers does not mean he's ignoring God. If anything he's an outstanding witness for God despite all he's been through. Eliphaz is also right that those who trust in God will be rescued in the end, (as in resurrected), but our status in this life is not a guarantee of what happens in the next life. That's the main way Eliphaz has blown it.
 - c) The good news is Job will address some of these issues in his next speech. Speaking of it:
18. Chapter 23, Verse 1: Then Job replied:² "Even today my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning.³ If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling!
- a) Job's first response is in effect, "Hey Eliphaz, I'd love to be able to pray to God and realize He is listening to me. I (Job) feel like my prayers are bouncing off the ceiling". For most of us Christians life can get like that. If it happens to us, first see if there's anything we need to confess. (Not the same things over and over again, but anything new.) Then realize it's just a time of testing by God. It's one of those periods of time where God's saying in effect, "Do you still trust Me now, even when I've gone silent in your life?"
 - b) Meanwhile, Job's just getting warmed up complaining about God not "being there".
19. Verse 4: I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments.
- a) Let me start here by saying, Job doesn't believe he can "outsmart God". Job just wants to say in effect, "Hey God, I don't know why You're putting me through all of this. I've given my life to serve You and this is how You pay me back? I want an explanation". Yes God's going to give one to Job in about a dozen chapters from now, but if we try to bargain with God, we like Job will get lectured. Job later will repent of this statement here in Verse 4.

- b) That brings me back to the question: Does God owe us an explanation? No. So why does He allow very devout Christians to suffer horribly? The answer is usually so we can be a good witness for Him through what we're going through. God never promises His people relief from suffering in this lifetime. We can pray for it and often God will give us some. It is not a guarantee though. What God promises is eternal life in His presence if we choose to use our lives as a witness for Him. Anything else we get over and above that is a bonus.
20. Verse 5: I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say.
- a) Job's still pondering, "If God did talk to me, what would He say?" Job's going to get a very long response to that very question later in the book. The short answer is, "Hey Job where were you when I made everything? Who do you think you are to question me in the first place?" When we stand face to face with God, it's like being at the mercy of a judge. Since that judge is in charge we must accept whatever the judge says and there is no appeal.
 - b) The "saving grace" of life is that Jesus wants us to trust that He exists, that He paid the full price for our sins and the belief in that fact is our entrance ticket to heaven. As to why He allows us to suffer, we'll have to find out when we get there, because truthfully God does not owe us an explanation for why the world is the way it is. In the meantime, Job's still contemplating what He could possibly say in defense of what God could say to him.
21. Verse 6: Would he oppose me with great power? No, he would not press charges against me.
- a) The good news is I'm convinced Job realized he's not guilty of any great unconfessed sin, so there will be no "charges" against Him. What about the simple fact that all people are "born sinners" as both Christians and Jews argue and no one is "righteous" before God? I am not denying that basic point of theology. I'm saying that if we trust in those basic facts about God, we don't have to fear being sent to hell "for sinning too much".
 - i) So John are you saying if a person believes all of that and then kills is going to be in heaven? My reply is, "Is that person trying now to live as a witness for Jesus based on their trust in Him?" Remember why we were created in the first place, to have a relationship with God. He desires to forgive us of our sins so we can then have an intimate relationship with Him. He wants us to avoid sin as that's the best way to live and makes us a good witness for Him.
 - ii) I believe that's Job's point when he says "God will not press charges against me". It isn't that Job is claiming he's perfect, but simply forgiven of his sins.
22. Verse 7: There an upright man could present his case before him, and I would be delivered forever from my judge.
- a) Think about what Job desires more than anything else: To be close to God. Job desires to be in His presence. Yes, he wants an end to all his suffering, but Job realizes that in order to do that, he needs to get close to the God who created him in the first place.
 - b) I'm convinced that in all of Job's pain he refuses to commit suicide or ask anyone to take away his life. Job realizes that despite his suffering, his life is still in God's hands and it's on His timing when it will end. Still, he desires an audience with God at the least to get an explanation for all his suffering. Obviously, Job never gets that, just as none of us will ever get one in this life. What God wants from us is to be a good witness for Him despite whatever "cards we are dealt in life" and make the most of the time we have to live.
 - c) So who is the judge that Job wants to be delivered from. It's the "guy" who accuses us of our sins to God. It's Satan as mentioned in the first chapter of this book. Satan's role is to tell God in effect, "People are not worth saving. Look how much they disobey you!" The only reason we're protected from those accusations isn't because he's wrong. It's because God loves us despite our sins and still wants a relationship with us. That's why the issue of forgiveness is woven all through the bible to pound that point home. Job knows he'll be delivered from "that judge" one day. He knows enough about God to realize He will be forgiven and thus the speech here.
 - d) With that said, Job will focus on the "where is God" located in the next few verses.

23. Verse 8: "But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. ⁹ When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him.
- a) One of the basic ideas taught in both Judaism and Christianity is there is no central place one can travel to, to find God. Yes, Jesus will literally rule the world one day from Israel, and yes, there was a temple located there for God for a long time. I'm not denying any of that. All I'm saying is if we want a close relationship with God, we don't have to travel to any specific place, at least until Jesus returns.
 - b) Remember what Job wants, a close relationship with God. Yes he also wants to know why God is allowing him to suffer, but Job will never get that answer, just as we won't either in this lifetime. Let's pause to remember why Job's making this argument in the first place:
 - i) Eliphaz was arguing, "Here is how God works" and Job's suffering for some sin."
 - ii) Job's response is in effect, "I am well aware of how God works and where I have to go and not go to find Him. I know I'm innocent of any unconfessed sin and I want to draw close to Him to find out why I'm suffering and what He desires of me."
 - iii) By the way, if you're wondering, "OK, what does God desire of me?" My answer is are you using your life to make a difference for Him? Are you using the gifts He's given you for His glory? Are you doing the things you enjoy doing and finding a way to do those things to make a difference for Him? Living like that will bring us far more joy than any other way of living. Yes we need "down time" and yes those bills still have to be paid. Over and above that, the great question of life is what is it we've done with the greatest thing God's given us, our time? OK, now that I've made everyone feel guilty, I've done my job. Back to Job.
24. Verse 10: But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold. ¹¹ My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside. ¹² I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.
- a) Again, realize Job's been "under fire" for many a chapter now, that he must be guilty of a "great sin" and that's why he's been accused over and over again by his friends. Job's now blatantly stating his innocence. It's as if Job's saying, "I've racked my brain for a long time now and I can't think of any sin that I need to confess. Therefore, I know that I'm going to pass this horrid test with flying colors. I don't know when it's going to end, but I do know that I'm innocent of any great unconfessed sin. I know that I fear God and have lived out my life to make a difference for Him. I know I'm not perfect, but I know that He'll judge me when I get to heaven. Because I live to make a difference for Him, I have no fear of the great judgment day."
 - b) I can just hear all of us thinking, "I'm not that good. Do I have to fear His judgment? Yes, we do in the sense that God's going to judge us based on what we did with our salvation. So what if I've blown it to date? Don't panic. Ask God what is it He desires of us the use of our time? I promise that God loves a prayer of surrender to His will, and He will lead us down the path He desires. If that's true why is God allowing Job (or fill in the blank) to suffer so much? Because that's what God desired of Job at that moment. We don't get any special waiver from suffering if we trust in God. "Stuff" happens to all people. The issue is are we still trying to be a good witness for God in spite of all of that? That's the issue Job is pondering here for all of us to consider. Meanwhile, Job's still on a role here:
25. Verse 13: "But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases. ¹⁴ He carries out his decree against me, and many such plans he still has in store. ¹⁵ That is why I am terrified before him; when I think of all this, I fear him.
- a) Let's be honest, it's scary to consider the fact that there is a God who's in charge of our life, and wants us to do His will. It's hard to worship a God we can't sense, let alone see. The reason we have a bible is so we can understand what it is He desires of us. Job didn't get that privilege so it's hard for him to ponder, "So what does God want from me anyway?"

- b) Job's pondering this great mystery about how God works, because Job has no idea what is in store for his future, just as we have no idea what's in store for our future. All we can do is make the best decisions we can and go forward with those decisions. We can't change the past, but hopefully learn from it and not repeat any of the same mistakes. That's what Job is pondering at this moment. The one positive thing about Job sitting there in all that pain is it gave him the time to ponder life's great questions. Sometimes I wonder if God is allowing stuff like that to happen to us, so we too can ponder how He works and how it is that He desires we live as a witness for Him.
 - c) Speaking of pondering, let's get back to Job.
26. Verse 16: God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me. ¹⁷ Yet I am not silenced by the darkness, by the thick darkness that covers my face.
- a) Job is ending this speech about how life works with the realization he's terrified about the future. Let's face it, if we're in horrid pain, we'd be terrified how we're suppose to live out the future as well. Despite the fact that Job can't have "face to face" time with God, he still has the ability to speak and can talk out what it is he believes God desires of him.
 - b) Remember why Job's having this conversation in the first place. His friends falsely accuse him of some great sin. Job's response in effect is "I don't fear judgment day as I know that there is no great unconfessed sin in my life. Yes, I still fear God's judgment and I will still do my best to live a life pleasing to Him despite all this pain! I don't know what's going to happen to me for the rest of my life here, but I will continue to make the best decisions I can based on what's in front of me." That's essentially what God asks of us as well!
 - c) With that said, Job's got another chapter long response to go. The "switch" is Job no longer focuses on himself or his problems but gets back to the issue of "how God works".
27. Chapter 24, Verse 1: Why does the Almighty not set times for judgment? Why must those who know him look in vain for such days?
- a) This is one of those verses one has to read in context. It seems to imply that God hasn't set a time for people to be judged. In context, what Job's asking is why don't people fear His judgment or why doesn't God "make it obvious" we will be judged? Remember that Job's giving a two-chapter speech on the issue of why don't people think about God when they make the decisions they make? The last chapter focuses on the question of whether or not God is working in Job's life. He's expanding that question to ponder, whether or not God's working in the world. He's opening this speech by saying in effect, "God is working in our world but some people refuse to think about it."
 - b) Time for a quick "why should I care" question if I already believe Jesus is God? The issue is being a good witness for Him. There are lessons in this chapter that we can share with people who doubt or don't believe in God's existence and what are the consequences for ignoring that question.
 - i) As for Job and his three friends, all of them believe in God and judgment. Job's on this topic as if to say, "Yes I know God's going to judge everyone, but just because I am suffering right now, that's not a direct correlation of that final judgment." Yes I (Job) have to be careful how I live my life just like all of you do. However, none of that reality explains the suffering that I'm going through right now.
 - ii) With that background fresh in our mind, let's return to Job's speech about God and how He judges us:
28. Verse 2: Men move boundary stones; they pasture flocks they have stolen. ³ They drive away the orphan's donkey and take the widow's ox in pledge. ⁴ They thrust the needy from the path and force all the poor of the land into hiding.
- a) The short version of these three verses is that Job's giving evidence that evil people do a lot of bad things. These verses are examples of ways people are stealing from others. Let me explain these a little better and I'll see if I can "translate" them for us non-farmers here in the audience:

- i) The first is about moving boundaries. In ancient times, no written records existed that says where one person's land ended and another began. So stones were used to show boundaries. A way of cheating was to move those stones. In my day job, I occasionally deal with issues where people have built fences that were not on the property lines and the valuation had to deal with compensation issues. My point's simply that such issues still exist today, but often people are more subtle about it.
 - ii) The second has to deal with "stealing for a pledge". When people get loans, what's usually required is some collateral be put up. For example, if you get a home loan and you fail to make your payments, the lender has a right to take away the home. The point of this reference has to do with "stealing" before the person has the right to make the payments. The short version is this is about theft, plain and simple.
 - b) The reason I'm giving these details, is if we think about it, it's easy to give examples when someone is doing something that's not right. Because theft exists, and some will get away with it in this lifetime, a God is needed who will fairly judge people. As I like to say every so often, if this life is all there is, "it's very unfair". The only way I can sleep well at night is to realize there is a God who will fairly judge people for how they lived their lives!
 - c) Even as a devout Christian who believes that faith in Jesus is what's required to be saved, I still argue behavior matters. For the nonbeliever, God judges people based on what they do know about Him and their failure to live as He desires. For the believer, judgment will be based on what we did with the knowledge we have about Jesus and what we did with it. In short, behavior matters. That's Job's point here as well.
29. Verse 5: Like wild donkeys in the desert, the poor go about their labor of foraging food; the wasteland provides food for their children. ⁶ They gather fodder in the fields and glean in the vineyards of the wicked. ⁷ Lacking clothes, they spend the night naked; they have nothing to cover themselves in the cold. ⁸ They are drenched by mountain rains and hug the rocks for lack of shelter.
- a) In these four verses, Job uses the example of the extreme poor to argue for the necessity of God's judgment. In most modern societies today, there is government welfare as well as a good number of outreach groups to help such cases, but for millennia, there was much suffering like this. As Jesus said, "The poor will be with you always" (Matthew 26:11, etc.) That implies that in spite of man's best effort, there will always be poor among us.
 - b) The closest I have ever dealt with specifics (being a city man) was seeing people who live on "skid row". I've seen people scavenging for food or creating make shift shelters out of whatever they could find. Some of them are mentally challenged and won't accept help. Others have given up on life and many refuse to trust "non-skid row" types. My point is simply that Jesus was right, the poor will be with us always.
 - c) Yes, that's sad. What does it have to do with the context of this story? Job's making a case that life is unfair and some people have to suffer horribly. It simply shows the point since life is "unfair", many suffer in this lifetime. It doesn't mean their lifestyle is their judgment for how they'll live eternally. In effect Job's comparing his suffering to those people. They didn't commit any great sin (in many cases) to deserve that fate just as Job himself did not commit any great sin to be in the state he's in. That's what he's getting at here.
30. Verse 9: The fatherless child is snatched from the breast; the infant of the poor is seized for a debt. ¹⁰ Lacking clothes, they go about naked; they carry the sheaves, but still go hungry. ¹¹ They crush olives among the terraces; they tread the winepresses, yet suffer thirst.
- a) Job continues his rant about "how unfair this world is" in these verses. The point of these examples is the question of why isn't God doing anything about it? If God makes people suffer in this lifetime for sin as Job's friends are claiming in this book, then why does God allow the innocent to suffer so much? Just as one can't connect eternal judgment with Job's suffering, so we can't explain why so much suffering exists as God's not stepping in to put a stop to all of that. Job's saying he's not guilty of a great sin, just as the poor aren't either.

- b) That leads to the great question, if God is so good, why does He allow all that suffering?
 - i) The standard answer is this world is cursed by sin, and we must suffer through it.
 - ii) The other answer is if it bothers us so much, why aren't we doing more about it? I have a lot of respect for relief organizations who do a lot of great things all around the world to help alleviate suffering. It's like the old expression, "Give a man a fish and he'll be hungry the next day. Teach a man how to fish, and you've solved the problem." Yes that's not a perfect analogy, but the general principal works.
 - iii) Back to the question, why doesn't God step in? I've seen my share of miracles that can only be explained by God suffering. I've also seen my share of people suffer in many ways. I can't explain all tragedies. I just know that God wants us to trust that He exists in spite of that horror, and we will be judged based on what we did with the knowledge of His existence and how we lived based on that knowledge.
 - iv) In the meantime, let's get back to Job explaining the world's suffering.
 - c) I'd comment more on the last few verses, but they're pretty self explanatory examples of just how innocent people do suffer in this world. Let's continue:
31. Verse 12: The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out for help. But God charges no one with wrongdoing.
- a) Again, Job's making the point that horrible things happen in this world and we don't read of God immediately sending the evil to hell for those deeds. The obvious point is people do get away with stuff in this lifetime. Job's continuing his defense that just because he's suffering doesn't mean he's done anything wrong as God doesn't "zap a lightening bolt" on every person who does wrong. If He did, none of us would live very long.
32. Verse 13: "There are those who rebel against the light, who do not know its ways or stay in its paths. ¹⁴ When daylight is gone, the murderer rises up and kills the poor and needy; in the night he steals forth like a thief. ¹⁵ The eye of the adulterer watches for dusk; he thinks, 'No eye will see me,' and he keeps his face concealed. ¹⁶ In the dark, men break into houses, but by day they shut themselves in; they want nothing to do with the light.
- a) Stop and consider that this book was written even before the "10 Commandments". The point is I'm convinced people instinctively know stealing and killing is wrong. Even the topic of adultery is brought up in these verses. Adultery is "stealing a relationship" that does not belong to us. The point is those who don't fear God's judgment sneak around at the most opportune time to commit sins. The point is such people think they are getting away with what they are doing. The other obvious point is there is a God who judges all of that. The reason Job's stating such obvious points is because he's make the case that not all people are judged in this lifetime. It's his backhanded way of saying, just because he's suffering, doesn't mean he's being punished by God.
- b) Meanwhile, Job's continuing his rant about how wicked people get away with stuff!
33. Verse 17: For all of them, deep darkness is their morning; they make friends with the terrors of darkness. ¹⁸ "Yet they are foam on the surface of the water; their portion of the land is cursed, so that no one goes to the vineyards. ¹⁹ As heat and drought snatch away the melted snow, so the grave snatches away those who have sinned.
- a) Remember that Job's not talking about himself or his three debate buddies. He's talking about people who spend their lives ignoring God. The underlying message again is that the way God works is, "If you want to ignore Him, often He'll ignore you and let you live out your life without Him for better or worse". The consequences come after that.
 - b) That little speech is a good prelude to discussing these verses. Job's now at a point where he's saying what happens to them when they die. Verse 17 says, "they make friends with the terrors of darkness". It's a colorful way of saying, "When they die, that's it. That's all the pleasure they'll ever get for eternity". Just as they won't be around to enjoy what they have made ("No one goes to their vineyard), so all must die. Just as "heat melts snow, so the grave (death) is the end for all who sinned". (A little paraphrase in there.)

- c) Yes, Job's getting a bit morbid here, but he's reminding us that, "When you're dead, you're dead". The reason Job's making this point is to remind us of the purpose of life. If all you want to live for is pleasure in this life, you can get that, but one still must face judgment. If you realize there is a God who will judge us and live accordingly, then life has a purpose far greater than just living for ourselves. One of the reasons the bible is so thick is it shows us how God expects us to live. Sometimes by direct lectures, but more often by stories to point out to us examples of how He desires we do or don't live. Job himself is giving us a negative example in this chapter. Yes this chapter is here to show that just because Job is suffering, that's not an indication of a sinful life. More importantly, these three chapters is one big lesson on "how God works" in the world, and how we should deal with that fact!
 - d) OK then, six more verses on this morbid topic. Almost there:
34. Verse 20: The womb forgets them, the worm feasts on them; evil men are no longer remembered but are broken like a tree. ²¹ They prey on the barren and childless woman, and to the widow show no kindness.
- a) Speaking of morbid, Job doesn't let up. It's the reminder that our bodies become food for worms when we die and eventually no one cares about us after we die. Verse 21 gives us another reminder of who these people are. It's like saying, "If a person doesn't care about God, they won't care who they hurt and they'll pick on the less fortunate of the world!"
 - b) Since Job brings up "dead carcasses" here, it's a good excuse to bring up the tough topic of how does God resurrect our bodies? What about the cremated? Since dead bodies come to "nothing", how does God resurrect them? Some argue that He resurrects our "DNA" as we were without any physical ailments. Some argue, "If God is God, He will resurrect us because He can. The "how" is His problem. A classic expression here is, "A God that's big enough to fully understand is not a God big enough to worship". The way I look at it, is I have an ability to think that's separate from the body. That's the inner me. That inner me can't be destroyed. If God created us, He must have created us for a purpose. It's because He desires somebody or something to love and choose people. What He wants is for us to freely choose to love Him back. That's why He gives us free will. God paid the full price for our sins so we won't have to worry about trying to be good enough for Him by efforts.
 - i) Anyway, I don't know the specifics of how we get a new body. I simply accept the fact that if we are going to live forever in heaven, we must have some sort of body that's suited for that "atmosphere" and won't wear out. The how is His problem.
 - ii) Our "problem" is how to live a life pleasing to Him and doing His will. Again that is why the bible is so thick as to teach us how to live as He desires. Not so we can earn His love, but just to be a witness for Him.
 - iii) OK then, time to get off my high horse and back to Job's "morbid stuff".
35. Verse 22: But God drags away the mighty by his power; though they become established, they have no assurance of life.
- a) This is another way of saying we're all going to die one day. Even the few people who are trying to "freeze preserve" their bodies until science can find a way to restore them" won't win. We are not God and "can't out live Him in this world" is the essential point.
 - b) Realize the reason Job's getting into all of this is the reminder that one can be "successful" (whatever that means) it won't last past their lifetime. Job's essentially making the point that just because God took away all his stuff, his family and his health, all of that isn't an indication that God's judging Job before his time.
36. Verse 23: He may let them rest in a feeling of security, but his eyes are on their ways.
- a) Here we get one more reminder that God is always watching every aspect of our lives. If we feel secure based on our success (again, whatever that means), it doesn't mean we are now exempt from His judgment. It's the reminder that a person can feel content based on what they've accomplished in life, but that won't exempt them from God's judgment. It's another backhanded way of Job saying, "Don't judge my eternal fate, based on "this"".

37. Verse 24: For a little while they are exalted, and then they are gone; they are brought low and gathered up like all others; they are cut off like heads of grain.
- a) OK, we've merciful come to the end of Job's argument about how "God works". By Verse 24 Job's beaten to death the idea that the mighty don't live forever, and eventually they'll be forgotten like everyone else from history. The reason Job spent so much time on this is to say in effect, "Don't judge a book by it's cover", which is his way of saying don't judge my (Job's) eternal fate or even a failure to confess a sin based on my circumstances.
 - b) With that said, one first left, and it's a "curve ball" that leads to the final discussion round.
38. Verse 25: "If this is not so, who can prove me false and reduce my words to nothing?"
- a) This is Job saying, "Ok, I'm ready for Round 9". Who can prove I'm wrong about my view of God after all that? No I'm not going to get into "Round 9" today as that's my next lesson and it's the final round of this debate. The final round is a short speech by the second of Job's three friends. Job will then go on to give a six-chapter speech that says in effect, I've had enough of all of this, time to bring it to an end. Of course, I'll discuss that more when I get there. Meanwhile, a few final words about Verse 25:
 - b) Job ends "Round 8" by asking in effect, "Name one thing I said that isn't true about how it is that God works in the world." Job believes he's given a "drop the mike" moment here as he thinks "I've said it all, so I'm out of here!" Unfortunately it doesn't end that way, so we do have a final "Round 9" to get through.
 - c) I'll end the lesson on that thought. What I'd like to remind each of us in my closing prayer is that if what Job says is true about life and that's the way God works, what should we do about it? The answer is to use our lives to make a difference for Him. I'll try to tackle that a little in my prayer. Speaking of which:
39. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, none of us know how long we'll get to live on earth. We just realize we can't do anything to earn Your love. All we can and should do is use our lives to be a witness for You. Help each of us to surrender our will to yours. Make it obvious to us what it is that You desire of us today. Guide us to make the best decisions we can based on the situation in front of us so we can honor You with our lives. Help us to use the gifts you've given us, to do the things we enjoy doing as to make a difference for You. That's how we honor You give us some grasp as to how You work in this world. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.