

Job Chapters 4-7 - John Karmelich

1. As I think about this section of this book, I keep thinking about high-end boxing matches that are televised all over the world. Right before the boxing match begins, a microphone is attached to a wire that comes down from the rafters of the building. Then the boxing match promoter makes a statement like "Let's get ready to rumble" to get the crowd fired up. I was really tempted to make that cliché as my title or maybe call it "Let Round 1 begin". However, more I considered the start of this great debate that is most of this book, the more I realized the appropriate title is "that's not the point". I'll explain with an example: Suppose we're standing face to face with someone we've positively murdered someone. Instead of lecturing them about taking a life, we discuss how wrong it is to steal a car. What we say isn't wrong, it's just wrongly applied to that situation. That is the problem with the men who will be debating Job over most of this book.
2. With that said, let me back up and explain what is going on. In the first two chapters, we learn of a bet between God and Satan. The bet is essentially, "If God allows Satan to hurt Job really badly, Job will curse God". To get the bet started, Satan takes away everything Job owns which was very extensive wealth then, all of Job's children are killed in a single moment. After all that fails to get Job to curse God, the bet is changed let Satan cause Job to suffer with horrible physical pain. Then in Chapter 3, we got a speech by Job (who has no idea about the bet), how horrible his life now is, and he wishes he was never born. He had three friends who made an arrangement to visit him in his misery. In Chapter 3, all three of his friends just listen to him complain and never say a word. That speech will lead to a long debate between Job and his three friends over why he is suffering. Each of the three friends will get a chance to preach why Job's suffering and he'll have a chance to respond to each of the arguments. Each friend gets two "rounds" at Job and two get a third shot at Job when a fourth man steps in to make a speech. Then God Himself shows up to end the debate and essentially tell Job, "Who do you think you are to question what I do?" If I had to summarize this book in one paragraph, that's pretty much it. Since Chapter 4 starts this debate, you see why I compare this chapter to the start of a world-class boxing match.
3. OK then, whether or not we like boxing, why should I pay attention to the details of this debate if I know God's going to interrupt it in the end and say in effect, all three of those guys are off track in their arguments! Let's start by saying this great debate is "bible worthy". There is a lot we can learn about how God expects us to live as a witness for Him, by what is preached back and forth in this debate. The debate is also important as it teaches us a lot about bad advice. It's advice that may be correct in its theology, but wrongly applied to Job's situation. Keep in mind as we read it that God will state near the end of the book that what Job's three friends say is wrong!
4. Let's start with Chapter 4 since this is where we're at: One of the three friends, who most believe is the oldest of three, speaks first. Remember Job just finished a chapter long speech with the key point that he's so miserable right now, he wishes he was dead. The issue for Job's three friends is how should they respond to that speech? Do you say, "There, there, Job, it'll get better" or "Sorry for your loss". Do you give comfort to Job or do you tell him off for complaining the way he did? I'll just say these three guys "choose the later", and in the end of the book they'll suffer for what is said, although it is in a way where God does forgive them for their bad preaching.
5. OK enough of that, onto the specifics of these chapters. In this lesson, I'll take on four chapters. It is the first set of accusations against Job and his response to those accusations. In that sense we're reading "Round 1" of a "nine round debate" (Remember the ninth "round" is a new man speaking up right before God steps in to put a stop to all of this.)
 - a) So what happens in Round 1, and why should I care? We will get reintroduced to man we met briefly in Chapter 2. His name is Eliphaz the Temanite. If you care what's a Temanite then I'll let you google it. All you need to know at this point is he's not Jewish, yet he does believe in a single God. The essence of his argument is, "You must accept God's testing you and you must accept the bad aspects of your life just as you accepted the good of life."

- b) Like the argument about "complaining about a car theft instead of murder", Eliphaz does make some good points, but he's "barking up the wrong tree". That just means he'll state things that are biblical truths, but they're not applicable to Job's situation.
 - c) That leads to the all too important, "Why should we care issue?" Yes, we'll experience our own situations in life where people are "barking up the wrong tree" when they tell us or if we give them our opinion. One of the big picture things one gets while reading the things that Job's three friends teach is, "They're teaching good things, but so what"? It's not what is the issue of the moment. A related idea as we'll go through all these arguments is you'll see elements of "Pharisee" type of arguments when it comes to living as God desires as we read through these debates. What I mean by that is arguments of "We'll never please God if we're doing "this or that". It's the false idea of salvation is based on works and therefore God's punishing us for something we must have done wrong. Yes I never put it past God to punish us to "get us back on track", but it's not a hard fast rule. My point is sometimes a bad thing happens, just because it does. Job and his three friends have no idea about that bet between God and Satan and that becomes obvious as we read the debate.
 - i) As we read through this debate keep a couple of things in mind:
 - a) Job's three friends "constantly bark up the wrong tree" and
 - b) Job himself thinks he's got the right for God to explain why he is suffering. That's one big reason why God corrects Job in the end.
 - d) Bottom line, I'd like you to read through this debate, as it teaches us things about how it is God works in our life, what we can and can't expect from God in terms of answers, and it is a big realization of a lot of life's truths that do and don't apply to the situation at hand.
 - e) Bottom line #2: This debate teaches us a lot about life. Even if we're not experiencing any situation comparable to Job at the moment, learning how to deal with arguments that can be thrown against us is taught here. Learning how to best deal with real pain is taught in this debate. Finally, it teaches us how to trust God through the worst of what this life can put us through. Therefore, let's begin the debate and see what we can learn from it.
6. Chapter 4, Verse 1: Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied: ² "If someone ventures a word with you, will you be impatient? But who can keep from speaking?
- a) Eliphaz starts innocently enough. He sort of opens with, "Hey Job, I know you like to talk and complain about your situation, but are you willing to shut up for five minutes so I can get a few words in edgewise?" The shorter version is "Job, can I give you my opinion?"
 - b) Eliphaz's opinion of why Job's suffering will be the main thrust of the next two chapters. I see him effectively saying, "Hang tough, Job, I'll give you a chance opportunity to respond to my points, but first, please be quiet for a moment so I can make them."
7. Verse 3: Think how you have instructed many, how you have strengthened feeble hands. ⁴ Your words have supported those who stumbled; you have strengthened faltering knees.
- a) Keep in mind that these three men are friends with Job, so that means they've known him for a while and are aware of how Job lived. They knew Job believed in a god and honored Him as such. They knew Job had a large successful business and therefore must have had a lot of employees. What is also implied is Job helped lots of people who are having their own problems and Job's years of wisdom has helped others. Yes Eliphaz's "battering up" Job for the tough lessons he's about to throw at him. It's like saying, "Hey Job, you gave a lot of good advice to others, so let me throw a little of my good advice at you. We're more willing to listen to criticism if people first give us a compliment first. That's a nice way to start what'll be a tough speech for Job to listen to.
8. Verse 5: But now trouble comes to you, and you are discouraged; it strikes you, and you are dismayed.
- a) There's the understatement of the lesson so far. Remember that Eliphaz listed to Job go on and on about he wishes he were dead and may the day he was born be cursed. Here we're reading of Eliphaz stating the obvious of "Hey Job, you're down in the dumps right now!"

- b) Eliphaz is well aware that Job's looking for a reason why all of this is happening and yes, this man has his opinions that we're about to get too. Think of these opening verses, as a "start easy on Job, before he gets to the really tough stuff he wants to get off his chest!"
 - c) Speaking of getting tough on Job, we're about to get into that here:
9. Verse 6: Should not your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope?
- a) Let's get the key point stated here and now: Eliphaz's great mistake over the next bunch of verses will be to get Job's focus off of God's goodness and onto his own life. Remember that Job and his buddies have no idea why Job's suffering. They don't know about the bet. The essence of the argument of the three friends is, "Hey Job, you must have really pissed God off to be in this much pain!" This is about putting a guilt trip on Job for his suffering.
 - b) Remember that God is allowing Job to suffer to see how he'd react and still trust in God in spite of all that's happening. Job can't make it better by confessing some sin he's done. All Job can do here is sit here and listen to wrongly applied advice. In my lesson introduction, I stated that the advice his three friends give isn't necessary bad advice, it's just doesn't fit Job's situation. As we go through the specifics of these chapters, keep that in mind.
 - c) OK then, onto specifics. Eliphaz is essentially saying, "Shouldn't you still trust God in the situation your in?" You've always trusted in God through everything, now that you're in a lot of pain, shouldn't you still trust God to see you through it?" One can sense that he is setting Job up for condemnation to come! Speaking of which:
10. Verse 7: "Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed? ⁸ As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it. ⁹ At the breath of God they are destroyed; at the blast of his anger they perish.
- a) Here we get one of the basic Christian and Jewish premises of life that, "No one gets away with anything", in that there is a just God who will judge the world fairly". It's the idea of people may get away with stuff in this lifetime, but they'll eternally suffer if they've refuse to live as God desires. Remember this was written before the first five bible books were in circulation. It's not that Job and his buddies knew the Jewish law. We instinctively know that say stealing and murder is wrong. We all have a built in conscious to do what's right.
 - b) Catch something else here, this Eliphaz guy believed in a single God. He probably didn't know him the way Job did, but he believed in a single God. My point is not everyone who lived before the say Abraham or Moses believed in multiple gods or false god. Eliphaz is a man who had some wrong concepts about God, but still believed in His existence. That is a step in the right direction.
 - c) A common speculation about the book of Job is that Eliphaz's the oldest of Job's friends. It is based on the fact that he has correctly seen life and knows how it works. He knows that people who are wicked will suffer for it. Given that logical statement let us think carefully about what Eliphaz is saying here:
 - i) Have innocent people ever died unexpectedly? (Of course!)
 - ii) Were "upright" people ever killed? (Yes)
 - iii) Do those who cause trouble suffer in this lifetime? (Not always.)
 - iv) Does God kill on the spot those who are causing trouble? (Not that I've seen.)
 - d) The underlying point is those who've wasted their lives will suffer eternally but often can get away with it in this lifetime. Anybody's who's lived a while has seen this occur. That's stating the obvious. My point is give Eliphaz a little credit. He's well aware of this. I think he's stating all of this to imply, "Job, you must have done something wrong, because often God will pick on those He loves in order to get them on the right track".
 - i) Have you ever noticed that devout Christians can't get away with anything? In life it seems like those who are trying to please God, suffer more for sin, then all those who don't care about God in the first place. Why is that? Because religious people care about pleasing God and therefore we can't stand the guilt of failing to live as He desires. Eliphaz knows this and he's "pouring that guilt over Job's head!"

- ii) Again, Eliphaz isn't wrong about his observation of how life works. It's just a case of him wrongly applying it to Job's case. OK then, let's continue:
- 11. Verse 10: The lions may roar and growl, yet the teeth of the great lions are broken. ¹¹ The lion perishes for lack of prey, and the cubs of the lioness are scattered.
 - a) All of a sudden Eliphaz goes on a "two verse rant about lions". The main point is that if a lion has nothing to eat, it too will perish. That's stating the obvious, what's the point?
 - i) Eliphaz was trying to think of a powerful beast and lions popped in his head. That is why he uses lions as a way of saying, "Hey, even the strongest or most ferocious thing one can imagine will suffer if they can't do what their designed to do!"
 - ii) OK, we get that. What does it have to do with Job? In the past few verses, Eliphaz was saying, "if we do wrong we'll suffer". Here he's making the point that even the mightiest of animals suffer if they fail to do what they're designed to do! Predator animals were designed to kill and eat. If they can't do that they'll die. If people do fail to live as God expects them to live, they'll eternally suffer for that choice. It's a strange way of saying, we're supposed to live a certain way and we'll suffer when we refuse to do what God's designed us to do, which is to glorify Him by how we lived out our lives.
 - iii) Shorter version, "If lions don't do what lions were designed to do, they suffer. Also if we don't do what we're designed to do (glorify God by our lives), we suffer!"
 - iv) Point made, let's move on.
- 12. Verse 12: "A word was secretly brought to me, my ears caught a whisper of it. ¹³ Amid disquieting dreams in the night, when deep sleep falls on men, ¹⁴ fear and trembling seized me and made all my bones shake. ¹⁵ A spirit glided past my face, and the hair on my body stood on end. ¹⁶ It stopped, but I could not tell what it was. A form stood before my eyes, and I heard a hushed voice:
 - a) Bottom line, Eliphaz had a strange dream. He's describes it to us in these verses. When it comes to scary movies, some people are drawn to them as if they think, "Let's see how bad I can be scared". Others of us are not drawn to such movies as if we're thinking, "real life is scary enough as it is, I'll pass". I'm saying all of this as I see Eliphaz as the kind of man who's drawn to that type of movie. It's like he's thinking, "This is horrid, hope it lasts!"
 - b) Remember Eliphaz's big goal here, to convince Job that he must have really ticked God off as that's why he's in the state he's in. (It's not true, but that's what he thinks.) Therefore to see a scary image is Eliphaz's way of thinking, "Let me describe just how horrid life can be if you refuse to repent of whatever sin you must have committed Job!"
 - c) By the way, notice that Eliphaz described a "spirit" in Verse 15. My simple point is Eliphaz believed in demonic spirits. Yes it was a vision, but at the least he understood what it was.
 - d) OK, enough background on the vision, what was actually said in it? Verse 17:
- 13. Verse 17: "Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?
 - a) The obvious answer is no. The mistake Eliphaz was making is he's missing the point. We can never be good enough for God. He expects us to trust Him as a complete payment for our faults and through His power live as He desires. I'm sure Job understood he'll never be good enough for God. The point of this nightmare is a demonic spirit was saying, "We can never be good enough for God". Eliphaz is correct, but again, he's missing the point.
 - b) Realize what is the fault here: Trying to please God by our efforts. That's what Eliphaz is trying to encourage Job to do and when we get to his answer, we'll see Job doesn't fall for the bait.
- 14. Verse 18: If God places no trust in his servants, if he charges his angels with error, ¹⁹ how much more those who live in houses of clay, whose foundations are in the dust, who are crushed more readily than a moth!
 - a) As I said in the introduction, we're reading biblical truths in these speeches. The problem is they don't apply to Job's situation. With that said, let me get specific here.

- b) The verses imply that angels are not perfect. Let's face it, if a third of them followed Satan (based on Revelation 12:4) that means at the least, not all angels are perfect. We also see in 1st Corinthians 6:3-4 that Christians will judge angels. All I'm saying is the bible has clues that angels are not perfect beings. So how did this Eliphaz guy know this? No idea. All I know is angels being imperfect is a "biblical concept". Verse 19 reminds us that all people will be judge by God based on how we live our lives.
- i) Time for a quick "detour" on faith and works. Obviously none of us are perfect. So why try to please God if we can't? The answer is we're to use our lives as a witness for Him. That means "we try" even though we can never be perfect. We should do the best we can to live as God desires and avoid sin, as that's how God expects us to live as a witness for Him. I know I'm preaching to the choir, but I needed to say that here as Eliphaz is going on and on about this.
- ii) Speaking of going "on and on", Eliphaz gets colorful and says how God will crush people (referring to those who are wicked) like moths. Remember why he's giving us this speech. He thinks Job must repent for something, so he's describing the end of a life ignoring God and what happens to people who ignore Him all their lives.
15. Verse 20: Between dawn and dusk they are broken to pieces; unnoticed, they perish forever. ²¹ Are not the cords of their tent pulled up, so that they die without wisdom?
- a) Eliphaz is referring to people who get that God wants us to live an upright life. Since the Mosaic law hasn't been written yet, it's the basic idea of not stealing, lying, murdering or even the simple idea of caring for others. The point is people instinctually know what is the right thing to do, and those who's only interest is themselves (as in who cares what I steal, more for me), as an obvious example. I state that here because Eliphaz is making a point about how the wicked will die and "that's that". I don't know what he understood about hell, but I'm pretty sure he's only referring to this life.
- b) Again, this is another misapplication of what's true. Yes the wicked are wiped out, but again, one has to ask, what does that have to do with Job? He continues in Chapter 5.
16. Chapter 5, Verse 1: "Call if you will, but who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you turn?
- a) Well, Eliphaz got "warmed up" in Chapter 4, and he's really sticking it to Job in Chapter 5. Here he's saying in effect, "You think someone's going to help you in your situation? You must have ticked God off pretty badly if you're in that bad a shape right now." That is the essence of his argument. As we'll see later in the book, this isn't true. Yes God sometimes punishes people in this lifetime (think of those in prison), but obviously not ever horrible thing that occurs to people is something they did wrong or punishment for some sin!
- b) Time to take a quick break from "picking on poor Job" to discuss why does God allow all the suffering in the world? Why doesn't He help people if He's so good? I've seen many a miracle I can't explain and I've seen many great people suffer horribly until death. I love to say that if this life is all there is, it's a very unfair. If there is a forever, that'd be the only explanation for a just God. So why doesn't He step in all the time? I'll explain:
- i) Suppose every time we're about to complain about something an angel steps in to stop us. Suppose every bad thing that happens, an angel steps in to prevent it. If that were the case we'd be complaining that God never gives people the chance to prove ourselves! I cannot explain all tragedies. I just know that somehow it will work out for good for those who love God. That's based on Romans 8:28.
- ii) Meanwhile, it's time to get back to the "bash Job fest".
17. Verse 2: Resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the simple. ³ I myself have seen a fool taking root, but suddenly his house was cursed. ⁴ His children are far from safety, crushed in court without a defender. ⁵ The hungry consume his harvest, taking it even from among thorns, and the thirsty pant after his wealth.
- a) Short version, people who ignore God all their lives as a general rule suffer for that choice.

- b) Prison is full of people who've taken other people's lives and stolen from others. It is also full of people who've come to know God in prison and our trusting in His forgiveness. I'd say the focus of this verse is the false idea that ALL who ignore God will suffer in this life.
 - c) One has to see the wrong type of attitude Eliphaz is trying to pull off here. He's trying his best to convince Job that he must have sinned pretty bad, since "we all know" that people who turn from God suffer horrible things in this lifetime. Yes we know that's not true. I'd still say a lot of people do suffer when they go down that path and we get examples of the types of suffering one can endure. Remember my lesson title is about misapplied biblical truth. Yes the wicked will suffer in this life and the next one, but that doesn't mean Job is guilty of some major sin.
 - d) OK John, hold the "body blows" for a second. If we don't feel condemned for any possible sin at the moment, why should I care about all this debate? At the least, so we can realize how to properly apply it and not apply it. It's about seeing someone in a horrid condition and instead of saying, "Maybe you did this or that", what we should ask is how can we be of help? That's what Job's friends are failing to do. They're way too busy trying to figure out what Job did wrong then to actually try to help him.
 - e) Meanwhile, we've got more "blows" to absorb from Eliphaz in this chapter.
18. Verse 6: For hardship does not spring from the soil, nor does trouble sprout from the ground. ⁷ Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.
- a) Here's Eliphaz's next point that's true, but it's not applicable to Job. Many of the problems that we get in life are caused by things we did wrong or bad situations we got caught in. It is the simple point that we're not born with troubles. Of course lots of bad things happen to good people but that's besides the point. The point is we are born fairly innocent as far as problems. The reason he's stating that obvious point is he's backhandedly accusing Job of doing something wrong or else he "wouldn't be in this mess". Again, it's an example of not "hitting the nail on the head" as far as the issue of the moment.
 - b) The good news is we're almost through with Eliphaz's bad arguments.
19. Verse 8: "But if it were I, I would appeal to God; I would lay my cause before him. ⁹ He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted. ¹⁰ He bestows rain on the earth; he sends water upon the countryside. ¹¹ The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.
- a) We're way overdue for some good news. At the least, we can tell Eliphaz believes in God. We don't know how close he is with God, but it appears he accepts the idea that He exists and He does good things for us. He accepts the idea that miracles occur. He accepts that God is responsible for the "rain cycle" that grows things. He believes God "lifts up" those who humble themselves before Him and protects those who trust in Him.
 - b) OK enough good news, time for the bad news. All of this is meant as a backhanded insult. Eliphaz realizes Job knows all of this. It's his way of saying, "Job you must have screwed up something awful because God doesn't allow those who love Him suffer this much". It is a reminder to us that although those positive characteristics about God are true, there is going to be exceptions in life. In other words, God often allows us to go through things as a way of saying, "Do you still trust Me, even now, even through this?" Of course He loves us and cares for us. At the same time God gives us free will. Therefore, He'll often put us through all sorts of tests to see if we still trust Him.
 - c) All I'm saying is we don't know why things happen to us that do in life. Of course some of the bad things we go through in life we can take responsibility for. As most adults know, sometimes things just occur and Job's case is an extreme example of that. The point is we can't always explain all that happens to us in life, but we can be assured that He still cares for us, He's still watching over us and often He's simply saying, "Are you still trusting Me even though "this" is occurring in your life right now?" I'm not saying all the bad things of this life are God's fault. I'm saying He's aware of all we're going through at any time.

20. Verse 12: He thwarts the plans of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success. ¹³ He catches the wise in their craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are swept away. ¹⁴ Darkness comes upon them in the daytime; at noon they grope as in the night. ¹⁵ He saves the needy from the sword in their mouth; he saves them from the clutches of the powerful. ¹⁶ So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth.
- a) Well, "Mr. Obvious" is still at! He's stating more truths about God that again don't apply to Job's life. Again, the good news is Eliphaz believes in God and understands what it is He does in this world. The bad news is he's misapplying it to Job's situation.
 - b) Before I analyze what Eliphaz is saying here, he's is a good reminder that we can get bad advice from Christians at times. People may know their bible "backwards" and explain a lot about God's truth, but they make a bad argument as they misapply it to our situation! I've pounded my drum for many pages now that Eliphaz "got" how God works, but that doesn't make him a wise counselor in dealing with Job or correctly assessing the problem.
 - c) Eliphaz is stating a "general truth" about how life works. God is best seen in hindsight. It is a case where if you watch life, for the most part, wicked people don't get away with the plans they make forever. I've also seen God protect the innocent. Yes, we can think of an exception or two to that rule, but the bottom line is the only way this world would be fair is if there is a God who judges all things fairly.
 - d) Let me quickly argue the opposite. Suppose there is no next life and this one is all there is. As Paul said, then we should "eat drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die". (That's from 1st Corinthians 15:32). What the question really comes down to is do we trust the bible as being written outside of time as we know it? That's why 30% of it is predictions to show it comes from outside of our time. Bottom line, Eliphaz has seen enough of life to realize we live in a world governed by something greater than ourselves. He believed God does help those who are suffering and bring down the wicked over time.
 - i) For example the problem with socialism is many people refuse to believe socialism itself is the problem. They just think the current leader is doing it wrong. They fail to see the system itself has never work. People like the concept because they think it is fair. What they fail to realize is it has never worked, no matter who tries it.
 - ii) Sorry to get all political here, but that's what I see from studying a history of those who try to rule over the world by everybody being "equal". That system removes the incentive to succeed in life. It's a perfect example of what Eliphaz sees.
 - iii) Meanwhile, we've got many more verses to go:
21. Verse 17: "Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. ¹⁸ For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal. ¹⁹ From six calamities he will rescue you; in seven no harm will befall you. ²⁰ In famine he will ransom you from death, and in battle from the stroke of the sword.
- a) From Verse 17 to the end of the chapter Eliphaz's essentially making the case God doesn't let the guilty suffer forever. He's arguing that God disciplines those He loves, but it won't last forever. He's also saying that when it seems like there is no way out of a bad deal, He will somehow rescue us from that fate. While many of us have seen that come true, I will also add for example, that many good men die in wars for good causes. Many good men and women die from cancer. Many innocent people are killed by drunk drivers. All I am saying is Eliphaz is speaking a biblical truth, but obviously there are many exceptions. It's a case of saying "Generally this is how God works, but not always".
 - b) Again, the issue is also misapplying God's truth to Job's situation. While it is true that God helps people out of situations, it's not the reason why Job's suffering. Essentially Job is in a lot of pain due to a bet that Job had no knowledge of. Therefore, while Eliphaz is teaching what is generally true, it's misapplied here.
 - c) OK John, we get all of that. Why is this guy going on and on about it? Why doesn't he tell Job, "repent of whatever you did, or just accept God's discipline" and then it'll get better?

- i) Remember there had to be a time gap between when Job first got hit by all of his pain and the time these three men could arrange a sit-down with Job. My point is Job's been in this state for a while. During all that time, I'm positive Job pondered if he did something wrong and he couldn't think of anything.
 - ii) A problem in life is people want to fix our problems, and all we want them to do is listen and just "be there". One of the great lessons I've learned in life is when I ask my spouse, "Is this one of those situations where you just want me to listen, or do you want me to fix it?" The problem is we do too much "trying to fix it" and ignore just being there and listening. That's the mistake Eliphaz makes. Speaking of him:
22. Verse 21: You will be protected from the lash of the tongue, and need not fear when destruction comes. ²² You will laugh at destruction and famine, and need not fear the beasts of the earth.
- a) Here is Eliphaz continuing to proclaim "God's truths" but still misapplying them here. It's true that God protects those who trust in Him. When we humbly seek Him and tell Him that we want His will to be done, it's amazing how often a solution to a problem will just work itself out. Like I love to preach, "Pray for His will, and then do the logical next step."
 - b) Given all of that, is what Eliphaz saying in these verses true? Do we say, not have to fear a wild lion if we're standing next to him and he's hungry? Do we not have to fear famine if there is nothing to eat? I'm sure all sorts of images are running through our minds of a situation where people have died from being in the wrong place at the wrong time. This is a truth about eternal life. If it was only this life, these verses would not always be true. At the same time, most of us veteran Christians have seen God do amazing things for all of us who are trusting in His guidance. Speaking of needing guidance, back to Eliphaz.
23. Verse 23: For you will have a covenant with the stones of the field, and the wild animals will be at peace with you. ²⁴ You will know that your tent is secure; you will take stock of your property and find nothing missing. ²⁵ You will know that your children will be many, and your descendants like the grass of the earth. ²⁶ You will come to the grave in full vigor, like sheaves gathered in season. ²⁷ "We have examined this, and it is true. So hear it and apply it to yourself."
- a) By now, I've pretty much beaten to death what Eliphaz is arguing. Essentially He's saying, "God is a good God, and if you just trust Him through your pain, life will turn out for the best. So stop complaining about your pain and just trust God!"
 - b) While all of that is true, it doesn't help the pain. Let's be honest, when we're in lots of pain having someone tell us to tough it out, doesn't help. Telling us, it'll be over soon, when we don't know how long it will last, doesn't help.
 - c) Let me ask a related question: What should we say when we see someone suffering? How does God want us to react? Not by telling them to repent, but by asking, "what can I do to help? How can I be of comfort?" One of the hardest things to do in life for many people is let others help us. Our pride turns down charity! Our pride of "we can tough this out all by ourselves" prevents us from being a good witness to God by letting others help us! If I saw Job like this, my thought would be, "let's find him a nice bed to be comfortable to deal with the physical pain he's dealing with" and not try to fix him.
 - d) Unfortunately, Job's three friends try the "fix it" approach and it is failing miserably. They are simply effectively saying, "life will be good if you just repent". Obviously Job didn't do anything wrong. Therefore, while Eliphaz's giving general truths about life, he's "missing the mark" as to why Job's suffering. That's the great take away from these two chapters.
 - e) Meanwhile, it's time for revenge. ☺ Here comes Job's response to all of this:
24. Chapter 6, Verse 1: Then Job replied: ² "If only my anguish could be weighed and all my misery be placed on the scales! ³ It would surely outweigh the sand of the seas-- no wonder my words have been impetuous.
- a) Job opens with, "If you only understood how much pain I'm in, then you'd get what I am going through instead if trying to fix me." It's as if Job's Chapter 3 speech fell on deaf ears as Eliphaz was so busy wanting Job to repent, he didn't realize how bad the situation is.

- b) Job is giving his own two-chapter response here to Eliphaz as if to say, "what you said did not make a dent to my suffering, nor does it relieve the pain". Sometimes having the right attitude doesn't help if we're in horrid pain. It isn't that Job liked wallowing in his misery. It's a case of being in too much pain to be "cheered up by words". But doesn't he apologize to God near the end of the book? Yes, but it wasn't until the physical pain had ended that Job could use his life to make a difference. Sometimes we have to get to a point where we can even appreciate God before we can honor him. I like the story of a famous pastor near me, who dropped off a drunk at an AA meeting instead of taking him to church with him. When his son asked why don't you just take him to church? The father stated, sometimes one has to be ready just to hear God, let alone respond to it. In effect, that's what Job has to do here: Deal with his recovery first, so he could be of use to God.
- c) Meanwhile, I'll let Job continue as he's getting on a role!
25. Verse 4: The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God's terrors are marshaled against me. ⁵ Does a wild donkey bray when it has grass, or an ox bellow when it has fodder? ⁶ Is tasteless food eaten without salt, or is there flavor in the white of an egg? ⁷ I refuse to touch it; such food makes me ill.
- a) Job uses nature as examples of why he can't just "tough it out". If you don't know "bray" is the sound a donkey makes when it is crying out. His point is a donkey doesn't make that sound when it's busy eating. The same with an ox. It doesn't cry out when it's eating.
- b) Job's essential point is he's in so much pain, he can't do what he should be doing. Just like the drunk who can't use his or her life for any good until they sober up, so Job feels like he can't do any good until he gets out of that condition. That's why Job uses the example of a meal being tasteless to him. It's the idea of being in so much pain that he can't enjoy food.
- c) OK what does one do when one is that miserable? Obviously get help. There was a fairly famous book that came out a few years back about a man who died and spent many years in horrid pain recovering from a bad car accident. My point is sometimes one's in so much pain, nothing can relieve that condition. Lecturing someone to tough it out, or repent of a particular sin doesn't relieve the pain.
26. Verse 8: "Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for, ⁹ that God would be willing to crush me, to let loose his hand and cut me off!
- a) Before Job turns his focus on Eliphaz's arguments, Job wants to emphasize that more than anything else, he can't stand his pain. Job is essentially saying, "Come on God end my life here and now and put me out of my misery". God is ignoring that plea because He wants to see how Job will react to all of this pain and see if Job still trusts Him in spite of all this.
- b) The point for you and me is we can't explain all suffering and all evil. We're not God and we don't get to see the world from His perspective. We have the right to ask God to do or not do something, but in the end, it's His decision.
- c) If Job really wanted to die, why didn't he ask Eliphaz to get a knife and kill Job right there on the spot? Part of the answer is Job didn't want Eliphaz to sin by committing murder. It is Job realizing the only way out of this suffering would be for God to end it. Since that is not going to happen, we must push onward.
27. Verse 10: Then I would still have this consolation-- my joy in unrelenting pain-- that I had not denied the words of the Holy One. ¹¹ "What strength do I have, that I should still hope? What prospects, that I should be patient? ¹² Do I have the strength of stone? Is my flesh bronze?
- a) Job realizes that if he was dead, then he'd have eternal joy as he believes a next life exists, and he'd reach heaven as he has not "denied the words of the Holy One". My big question is, "If none of the bible was written when this story was written, how did Job know of any of the "words of the Holy One?" Is it possible he met Abraham or a descendant of Noah? All I'm sure of is in some way Job heard of God and believed in Him enough to trust Him with his life. It's a little like asking the question, "how do we know stealing and murder is wrong if there is no God that judges us, as sometimes people do get away with things?"

- b) From here he goes on a short rant essentially saying, "Do I think I'm strong enough to deal with all this pain?" In effect, this is directed at Eliphaz's arguments. Job is in so much pain he wonders, "Why should I patiently listen to you ramble on and on about things I haven't done? What do I have to gain by repenting of sins I haven't committed?"
28. Verse 13: Do I have any power to help myself, now that success has been driven from me?
- a) Job's saying, "I don't have the power to go on by myself. All I can do is sit here in pain. It is not a matter of repenting. It's a matter of trying to find comfort in what I'm dealing with and you're not helping by asking me to repent of what I'm not guilty of."
- b) So is Job being prideful here? I'm sure as Job listened to all those accusations that he must have thought, "Hey, I'll try anything to end this pain". It isn't pride, it's Job stating, you're missing the point of why I'm suffering, that's why I'm rebuking your arguments.
29. Verse 14: "A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty. ¹⁵ But my brothers are as undependable as intermittent streams, as the streams that overflow ¹⁶ when darkened by thawing ice and swollen with melting snow, ¹⁷ but that cease to flow in the dry season, and in the heat vanish from their channels.
- a) This is Job saying, "You guys and your arguments are not helping the situation. I'm sitting here in horrid pain and all you can do is rant about some sin I must have committed. Why don't you do something to help relieve the pain instead of looking for faults?"
- b) Job is also saying, even if I did something to tick God off, a friend is one who stands by us in our hour of need instead of complaining about what we did wrong! It's like thinking if we have friends like this, who needs enemies? We're reading in a poetic form that Job has three friends who are essentially useless, because they're not doing anything to help him in his pain!
30. Verse 18: Caravans turn aside from their routes; they go up into the wasteland and perish. ¹⁹ The caravans of Tema look for water, the traveling merchants of Sheba look in hope. ²⁰ They are distressed, because they had been confident; they arrive there, only to be disappointed.
- a) Job gives an example of making a fatal mistake here: Caravan's are a way of transporting a big pile of goods or a big group of people in a safe way. It's a "safety in numbers" type of argument. However, if the leaders of that caravan go the wrong way or make a major mistake in their efforts to get safely from "Point A to Point B", they'll suffer for it. Yes I'm stating the obvious, but so is Job. His point is just as the caravan's leaders can mess up to a point of suffering, so Job's three friends can mess up by "missing the mark". It's a subtle way of saying, "You guys are way off base in your accusations against me, so how about we "put our heads together and figure out how to relieve my suffering" instead of trying to fix my pain by lecturing me on what I did wrong.
- b) Let me pause for a moment and remind us why this story is here in the first place. We can meet people who understand God and know how He expects us to live, but still give us a lot of bad advice about our situation. God wants us to be comforted by the fact we'll live forever by our trust in His existence and His eternal forgiveness of our sins. When we're dealing with our own pain or trying to help someone deal with their pain, what we need to do is find ways of helping them physically. God is more than capable of reminding us of our guilt for sin and it's not necessary for us to "rub it in their face!" Job is essentially telling his friends, "Cut out the guilt trip and help with my pain, as that's why you're here in the first place, isn't it?"
31. Verse 21: Now you too have proved to be of no help; you see something dreadful and are afraid. ²² Have I ever said, "Give something on my behalf, pay a ransom for me from your wealth, ²³ deliver me from the hand of the enemy, ransom me from the clutches of the ruthless"?
- a) Job's reminding his three friends, "Hey you may be in my predicament one day and won't know how to respond?" It's Job's reminder that they're not helping the situation by telling him to repent of some sin. Then Job reminds them that he's never made any demands of them in the past, so why are they being so tough on him now that he's suffering?

- b) It's Job's way of saying, "What did I ever do to you that gets you to treat me like this?" It is a backhanded way of saying, "You're not helping the situation by listing sins that I haven't committed." It's as if Job listened to Eliphaz deliver "body blows" for two chapters and he is "punching back" in these chapters.
- c) So again, why go on and on about this? Why doesn't Job just say, "You're all blowing it, so figure out how to make me feel better or get out of here?" One reason is to teach us that a person who's "Godly" can still give us bad advice! It's for us to learn by example of what's not working and what will work. OK then, let's plow our way through this then.
32. Verse 24: "Teach me, and I will be quiet; show me where I have been wrong. ²⁵ How painful are honest words! But what do your arguments prove? ²⁶ Do you mean to correct what I say, and treat the words of a despairing man as wind?
- a) Translation, "Where did I mess up?" Job's arguing correctly that Eliphaz is saying a lot of God's truth, but it doesn't apply to his situation. You can sense the harshness in Job's tone as he's telling his friend that the arguments he's making doesn't prove anything Job could have done wrong. OK, enough on that.
33. Verse 27: You would even cast lots for the fatherless and barter away your friend. ²⁸ "But now be so kind as to look at me. Would I lie to your face? ²⁹ Relent, do not be unjust; reconsider, for my integrity is at stake. ³⁰ Is there any wickedness on my lips? Can my mouth not discern malice?
- a) Verse 27 is a wonderful criticism of Eliphaz. Job's essentially saying that if he were facing an orphan or even a friend, he'd still be doing the wrong thing by making bad arguments.
- b) I could go on, but I'm pretty sure you get the point by now that a person can state biblical truths, but still "miss the point".
- c) Let me ask a quick question: Since Eliphaz didn't know about God's bet with Satan why is there such a long dialogue to essentially say, "You're missing the point". If nothing else its teaching us that people can be sincere in their arguments and misapply them. I've met my share of "church people" who make loud arguments, but miss the point. It's a reminder to be aware that just because one is "Godly" doesn't mean their advice is always right!
- d) OK, three long chapters done, one to go. I wanted to have "round 1" as one lesson as what is argued by Eliphaz is correctly rebuked by Job as to say, "What you say doesn't apply!"
34. Chapter 7, Verse 1: "Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? ² Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, ³ so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me.
- a) Job continues his complaining but is back to focusing on the main problem. He's still full of pain. The reason Job gets back into this is to say in effect, "All these things you're saying to me aren't helping with the pain. It's still as bad as ever, and all your accusations are not making a bit of difference, let alone apply to me."
- b) Try to keep Job's pain in mind as we read this "pity party" speech from Verses 1-10. Job is in so much pain, it's almost impossible not to focus on it and the speeches by Eliphaz and his two friends don't help things. Because he's hurting so bad, Job tells them of how hard life can be when one is suffering. Job gets all "third person" on them by describing a lowly hired servant who has nothing to look forward to in life here. I suspect Job's three friends are somewhat successful in their business, so Job paints a visual picture of a lowly servant who has nothing to look forward to in these verses.
- c) The "so what" is that sometimes we have to find images for people to relate to our pain so they can realize what we are going through. With all that said, the verses themselves are pretty self explanatory as they describe the suffering many go through in life with nothing really to look forward to in this world.
35. Verse 4: When I lie down I think, 'How long before I get up?' The night drags on, and I toss till dawn.
- a) Imagine being so depressed, you don't sleep well, and don't look forward to the next day.

- b) The hard part about depression is one never knows when it ends. Like I was taught when one experiences it, one has to attack it spiritually, physically and mentally and work on all three to get through it. My point is it doesn't just end by saying the right words. That is a reason why this goes "on and on" as to paint the picture of how pain goes "on and on".
36. Verse 5: My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering. ⁶ "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope.
- a) In Verse 5 we get clues to the type of physical pain Job suffered from. He's stating there is no hope for improvement as the days continue without end. His body is the proof to those around him of what Job's going through. Imagine being in so much pain, one longs to die but one still refuses to sin by killing oneself or asking another to "pull the plug". The truth is that Job's got no idea why he's going through this, and all the accusations made against him don't help with the pain nor bring an end to it. A reality is part of the problems with suffering is when people can't relate to it, they try things to fix it because they want to do something, but what they're saying isn't helping the situation.
37. Verse 7: Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again. ⁸ The eye that now sees me will see me no longer; you will look for me, but I will be no more.
- a) In Verse 7 Job essentially states that he'll never have joy again. Obviously he's wrong but he can't see past his current predicament. Job's "pity party" focuses back on his friends as if to say, "I'm going to die soon as I can't take this much longer, so you'll look for me but it will be too late". Obviously that isn't how the book ends, but Job doesn't know that. He's still suffering through this and doing his best to deal with the never-ending pain.
38. Verse 9: As a cloud vanishes and is gone, so he who goes down to the grave does not return. ¹⁰ He will never come to his house again; his place will know him no more. ¹¹ "Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
- a) I'm well aware that a lot of this dialogue is self-evident as to what he's complaining about. What is important to see is the big picture that Job's friends arguments are not helping the situation nor giving Job any comfort to his situation. One of the reasons this dialogue goes on and on is that when we're in horrid pain, it goes on and on, and usually we can't speed it up by complaining or repenting of something. One of the big picture things to see is the "waste of time" that all these debates are in terms of solving the problem. Still it's needed in order to get to the realization that God's going to do what God's going to do and we're "pawns" in His world, and that becomes obvious when pain kicks in!
- b) With all that said, Job's saying here, "Hey, I don't know how much time I got left to live in this condition, so I'll complain because I've got nothing better to do through all of this".
39. Verse 12: Am I the sea, or the monster of the deep, that you put me under guard? ¹³ When I think my bed will comfort me and my couch will ease my complaint, ¹⁴ even then you frighten me with dreams and terrify me with visions, ¹⁵ so that I prefer strangling and death, rather than this body of mine.
- a) In Verse 12 Job's saying, "Am some sort of horrid monster that has to be guarded so that it doesn't hurt innocent people?" Then Job refers to the nightmare vision that Eliphaz told in Chapter 5. It's the idea that no matter what you say to me, it's not helping the situation. It gets even worse when Job essentially says, "I prefer to die than to go on like this!" Notice Job doesn't ask his friends to actually kill him. It's just Job's way of saying "nothing you're saying to me is making a difference".
- b) Hang in there, we're almost through with this "pity party" speech.
40. Verse 16: I despise my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone; my days have no meaning.
- a) Remember that Job's life before all of this was significant. He had great wealth. He had a big family and he honored God. Now that Job's in "pain beyond belief", he's complaining that his life has no meaning. He's complaining his legacy will be none or just one that had to suffer tremendously. Like I said, this is the "pity party" portion of the story. Yes there's more to it, but were still in the middle of it.

41. Verse 17: "What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention,¹⁸ that you examine him every morning and test him every moment?¹⁹ Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant?²⁰ If I have sinned, what have I done to you, O watcher of men? Why have you made me your target? Have I become a burden to you?²¹ Why do you not pardon my offenses and forgive my sins? For I will soon lie down in the dust; you will search for me, but I will be no more."
- a) In these final few verses, Job turns his focus back on God. First, he asks the great question of "Why does God test us so much?" (The answer of course, is to see if we're still trusting in Him despite our pain of the moment!) Then Job asks, why does God ever let us be in a world without his involvement? (The answer is that God loves us too much to ever leave us alone. So if God loves us that much, why allow all this pain? Again, to see if we're still willing to trust Him through all of it.) Then Job asks the question, "Why me? Why is God picking on me? (Again, to see if we fail to trust in Him through that pain or difficulty!)"
 - b) By Verse 21 Job states, "I must be guilty of something, so God just forgive me and bring all of this to an end". The answer of course is it's still God's world and it works on His timing whether we like it or not. Yes death comes to all of us at some point, but what Job desires is an answer to why does man suffer and why is he suffering? One reason why God gives a big speech near the end of the book is to say in effect, "Why do I owe you an explanation to how I do things?" It's God asking Job in effect, "Are you Me? Can you explain how the world runs? Of course not, so make the best of the time God's given us and find ways to use it for His glory. Unfortunately, suffering is a part of life. We can go all "pity party" on God or we can be grateful for the good things He's given us.
 - c) Meanwhile, Job's three friends unfortunately are just warming up trying to fix Job as they will go on and on for more chapters trying to get Job to repent of some sin he hasn't done and do nothing to alleviate it the situation. One reason this long dialogue is a part of the story is to remind us that we don't know what God's got planned and we can't explain all the suffering that occurs in this world. What God does call us to do is give comfort to the suffering and be a witness for Him by putting other's needs above our own.
 - d) Speaking of "meantime", that's enough suffering for one lesson, time to wrap it up with a closing prayer.
42. Heavenly Father, we have no idea what you have in store for us "today or tomorrow". All we do know is that You've separated us to be a living witness for You. Therefore, help us to appreciate the time we have and find ways to use it for Your glory. Help us to make a difference in the lives of people around us. Give us the wisdom to change what we can't change and let go of what we can't change. Help us to have a biblical perspective about suffering and do what we can to help those in need. May Your Spirit guide us as we make that difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.