

Episode: Genesis & Job Series No. 05

Narrator: Job and Satan

Primary Scriptures: Job 4-37

Story Summary: Job and his friends debate the reasons for Job's demise

Location: In the land of Uz

Time: In the time of Job

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Job 8:5-6; 37:23-24

Causation or correlation? When you rely on your own experience and judgments, you are always at risk of coming to the wrong conclusion. Job and his friends could see that he had fallen from his high position. Now they wanted to explain why. Without a good explanation, they could not fix his problem. Nor could they protect themselves.

Bildad's comments in Job 8:3-6 are an example of how he correlated righteousness with prosperity and unrighteousness with punishment. "Does God pervert judgment? Or does the Almighty pervert justice? When your children sinned against him, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin. But if you seek God earnestly and plead with him, if you are pure and upright, even now he will rouse himself on your behalf and restore you to your prosperous state."

Bildad and his friends were on very dangerous ground and did not realize it. They were blind to the fact that they had very little information about very important things. They misunderstood the nature of God and even ignored or misinterpreted reality to fit their own views. For instance, Eliphaz started his discussion with this observation, "Consider now: who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed?"¹ If Eliphaz had been able to understand, he would have realized he was talking to an upright man who was being destroyed. Surely, they had all seen innocent people perish because of war or other circumstances beyond their control.

When examined in detail, the eloquent debates of Job and his friends reflect the same inadequacies of modern arguments and debates. Whether they are expressed or not, the assumptions of a debate usually dictate the conclusions. Does God behave according to formulas or our own understanding? Is suffering always caused by our own actions or inactions? Can we manipulate God through our sacrifices and prayers?

Job and his friends reach an impasse. He knows that suffering is not always related to righteousness, but he cannot understand what causes suffering. His friends absolutely know that suffering is related to being unrighteous. Unfortunately, they will not be able to come to understanding because their base assumptions about God are incorrect. God is about to give them some new information.

¹ Job 4:7

Discussion Questions:

1. Was Job's original goal to be righteous or was it to be rewarded because he was righteous? Was he even able to see the difference between the two? Does Job 1:5 give you an indication?
2. How come Job did not attribute his misfortunes to his own actions?
3. Why did Job's friends think he had sinned badly?
4. If you lead a great life, is it easy to believe God is rewarding you for being a nice person?

2. Because he knew that he had not changed any of his actions. According to his philosophy, the only acceptable answer was that God had made a mistake in penalizing him. 3. According to their philosophy and experience, righteous resulted in rewards and unrighteousness resulted in penalties and suffering. Since Job was suffering badly, he must have sinned badly.

Application Questions:

1. Do you ever feel like God is mistreating you?
2. What do you do when things are going badly?
3. While you are on this earth, is there a correlation between good behavior and God's rewards? Would it be easy to confuse that with the fact that good behavior often naturally results in better results?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Why should you behave well?
2. Based on your actual behavior the past week, is it more important for you to please your friends or to please God?
3. How do you find out what God thinks about something?
4. Do you think there are definitive answers for all of life's questions?