



1 Introduction: Job becomes a good friend

As I mentioned in *Finding a Face*, during my time of trial I was given a pink journal from a dear friend who came over to run some errands for me. The journal became a place of reflection. The unconditional love of many touched my life deeply.

In July I wrote:

I get tired of looking like a monster but am amazed that people engage me in conversation, hug me, and treat me as human being. I've been blown away by others' love.

Because my face became a physical mess looking crusty and ugly, I felt drawn to study Job's life. After all he had been afflicted with painful boils from head to toe—his physically disfiguring malady and excruciating pain are beyond our understanding. Some of my friends felt that reading the book of Job would not be so up-lifting. "It's such a depressing book." But I sensed I would be encouraged to look into Job's life more closely. He suffered severely and yet remained faithful to God. I needed to learn from him.

I began to read with an open heart.

The Real Deal

The book of Job was not a made-up story. Job was a real man. According to biblical authors of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the New Testament, Job was seen as a living, breathing man of God. And admired as so.

The prophet Ezekiel describes Job when he wrote what the LORD himself declared:

"the righteousness of Noah, Daniel, and Job together would not be enough to save the evil of the house of Israel, but their righteousness could only save themselves." *Ezekiel 14:14*

The Book of Ezekiel was likely written between 593 and 565 BC during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. Notice how Ezekiel placed Job as a major part of a mighty trio—Noah, Daniel, and Job. Apparently the evilness of Israel had become so bad that even the righteousness of these three men couldn't save the people.

According to the prophet, Job was a real man of great righteousness, just like Noah and Daniel. If Noah and Daniel were actual, chronicled people of history, so was Job. So his extraordinary life and story matters as much as the stories of Noah and Daniel matter.

Additionally, in the New Testament, James (Jesus' brother) deliberately picked out Job as the supreme model of living faith. Around 45-48 AD he wrote,

"As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord . . . You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful." *James 5:10-11*

James describes Job as a man of suffering, patience, and endurance. He was equally admired as all the brave and faithful prophets. While the prophets of God admonished people to come back to God, many were persecuted and killed—by the very people they were trying to save. Job was admired and placed high in honor like the prophets because of his heroic endurance. He too would experience the mocking and rejection of people, while afflicted and grieving, yet remained faithful to God.

So, we can see that both parts of the Bible depict Job to be a genuine “flesh and bones” person. The prophet Ezekiel admired Job. And James who lived over 600 years after Ezekiel, also admired Job. His life story has been highly regarded over thousands of years. I wanted to know more. Today, Job’s story causes us to admire this man of great suffering and faith. As we look at his life, we grow to admire Job just like we admire Noah and Daniel and their great faith in the midst of testing.

Job takes a journey of discovery

As we look at Job, one of my desires is that this man’s life is one that will explode the small boxes that we have all created about God and how he works—especially in the lives of people when they suffer. God works in ways that are not only confusing and incomprehensible, but he works in ways that we feel at times seem quite disturbing.

We may find ourselves angry with God or feeling distressed. “Why don’t you intervene more?” We may find ourselves feeling distraught, “I’ve begged you for so long to act, and it seems that the evil is only growing, and the situation is getting worse.”

As we question God and wrestle with him, we are responding similarly to others of faith, even as Job did. The book of Job is basically Job-centered and God-focused. God becomes the end of the quest as Job and we try to understand the whys of how God works, especially in the midst of the pain of suffering. In the book of Job we have one miserable man. We also have accusing friends, a disloyal family, and an entire community all going after that one miserable man. We have a God who shows up in the end. God doesn’t try to make sense of all the individual arguments and assertions. He simply is.

And we will discover in the book of Job that God is not pleased at all when we humans make him seem small by our self-assured assumptions. In fact God’s anger is fired up every time we claim that he, the God of the universe, who dwells in unapproachable light, has a set system in which he always works narrowly within, according to our minuscule perspective.

Reading about Job has led me to write this portion of the book—a journey that has been quite challenging and restorative. Job was a remarkable man, yet quite human. I grew to care for this man because he never conveyed a false moment. I hope you will also discover many of the deep and radiant gems that Job’s life, Job’s story, can bring.

I eventually called the many insights from my study of Job—“the gems of Job.” This collection of gems became gleaming treasures of light and life during a dark time.



Thought questions—

~Ezekiel speaks of three righteous men. How do you think Noah, Daniel, and Job were righteous?

A Quick reminder—

As we think about it, God declared Noah to be righteous, while at the “young age” of 500 years old. There had never been rain, let alone a flood, when Noah was commissioned to build an ark. Noah worked on the massive project by faith and in obedience to God, while living in an evil and violent world. He most likely endured ridicule throughout the illogical process. He continued to be righteous as he built the massive ark over a number of years in order to save a small remnant of people and preserve God’s living creatures.

Remember the story of Daniel and the lion’s den? This righteous man openly prayed facing Jerusalem as he directly broke the Babylonian governmental edict. Thrown into a lion’s den as punishment, Daniel trusted God. Interestingly, the king, King Darius, also trusted that this servant of the living God would be protected by his God. Indeed, an angel of God shut the lions’ mouths and Daniel lived on, continuing to be a man fully devoted to God.

And the man Job, as we shall see, would also remain true to God as he always had, turning away from evil. He carried on with his personal integrity in the midst of extreme losses of destruction of his work, his children, his reputation, and a body tortured with pain. As we look at Job’s life, we discover that he always fought for justice and took care of the poor, the orphans, his workers, and the travelers through his lands. He treated all people with respect and lived a moral life. God was the only source of his life—not his possessions, nor what he could see in nature, and not his works. Job is described by Holy God as being the most righteous man on earth. Remarkable righteousness.

~Righteousness was demonstrated in three very different ways, in different places, and in different times. All three men were displaying their righteousness to God in very public ways.

Is there anyone today who you personally admire similarly as you look at how these three men lived out their lives privately and publicly?

~Describe a time when you demonstrated righteousness to God through your actions that impacted the lives of others. What were your motivations? What were the outcomes in the lives of others?

Notes:

1. “Ezekiel spoke of all three of these men as being real, historical people, not legendary characters. If one recognizes Noah and Daniel as being real people of history, then there is no reason to think otherwise about Job... Finally, that Job was a real person is stated explicitly by God within the book of Job itself. In his second “speech” to Job, God declared that the mighty behemoth was “made along with you” (40:15, emph. added). If Job were just a fairy tale-like character, God certainly would not have spoken as having ‘made’ him.” <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=13&article=521>, (accessed 9/10/2017).

2. The Land of Uz, simply known as Uz, was the region located southeast of the Jordan River near the lands of the Chaldeans and the Sabeans. It was a fertile land with ample crops and livestock but bordered the desert. It is most notable for being Job's homeland. <https://www.google.com/search?q=job+lived+in+the+land+of&oq=job+lived+&aqs=chrome.5.69i57j0l8j0i390.6988j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>, (accessed 7/26/2021).

Images:

1. Painting of Job and his friends. [cms/CW/28256-Jobandhisfriends-Job-friends-Bible-painting.1200w.tn.jpg https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Job_and_his_friends.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Job_and_his_friends.jpg), (accessed 8/22/2015).

2. Diary photo personal photo.

3. Image of goat herders in middle east landscape. This image will be used for all of the thought question sections. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Goat_Herders_in_a_Middle_Eastern_Landscape_Frank_Dean.jpg, (accessed 6/10/2020).