



# JOB

## SEPTEMBER 2019

Read on your own or with others,  
which ever you prefer.

This leaflet is just a brief overview of the 'big picture' of this book. If you have been reading the Bible for some time you will be aware there is much more to it than you'll find here.

If you are new to reading the Bible don't worry too much if there are details you do not quite get at the moment - focus on the 'big picture'.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The book of Job is part of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. The thrust of the book is a question about suffering and how we are to make sense of it.

Job came from Uz, a large area east of the Jordan river, and it is thought he lived at some point between 2000 and 1000 BC. He is a godly man who trusted the Lord.

In this book he goes through a time of immense suffering and struggles to understand it. At the end of the book his questions are answered, but not in the way he or we might expect.

### **1. THE TROUBLEMAKER: JOB 1-2**

At the start of chapter 1 we are introduced to Job. He is a follower of God who has become a wealthy man. Over the next two chapters all of his children die, and his possessions are destroyed.

As we read, we are shown two encounters between God and Satan of which Job is unaware. Here Satan is the accuser trying to undermine the reality of Job's faith – his claim is that Job only trusts God for what he can get.

Satan challenges God to let him take away Job's family and possessions and then later to attack Job himself. He believes that by doing this Job will forsake God (Job 2:5).

These early chapters remind us of two important truths. First, there is a spiritual battle raging. The events of this world are not only affected by the material things that we can see. Second, God is in control. Satan must ask for God's permission and can only work within the limitations that God gives to him.

### **2. THE CONFUSED COMFORTERS: JOB 3-37**

The bulk of the book is a conversation between Job and his friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and later Elihu). It is important to notice that these words are human answers to the problem of suffering, rather than God's answer. This means that while they contain some truth, they are often overly simplistic and contain plenty of

confusion and misunderstanding.

There are three main sections:

- **Job 3-27** – Job is struggling to make sense of his suffering. He knows he is not perfect, but as a righteous man he does not understand why he deserves the suffering he is going through.

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar believe incorrectly that Job must have sinned in a bad way for these events to have happened. The object of their words is to persuade Job to accept this and examine himself.

- **Job 28** – Here we break off from the discussion between Job and his friends. The writer poses the questions: 'where can we find the wisdom to answer the question of suffering?' His answer is clear, only God can give true understanding (Job 28:23-28).
- **Job 29-37** – After once more pleading his innocence, we now hear from a fourth friend, the youthful Elihu. At first sight his words seem to be different from those of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, but at heart his understanding of suffering is the same (Job 36:11-12).

### **3. THE FINAL WORD: JOB 38-42**

At the end of the book God speaks. Notice that he doesn't answer any of the specific questions that are raised by Job or his friends. Instead, God displays his wisdom and his greatness before them.

The point is clear. There are many things in life that we do not understand, but we can trust God because he does. This is reinforced at the end of the book as we see the genuineness of Job's faith. All has been taken from him, but yet he still trusts in the Lord (Job 42:8).

The book of Job is an important reminder that we cannot have a simplistic answer to the question of suffering. Suffering is weaved into the plan of God's purposes as he sees fit – for his glory and for our good. The clearest example of this is the cross of Jesus – a place of intense suffering and immense good.

## **ASKING THE QUESTIONS THE BIBLE WANTS YOU TO ASK**

What does this book teach you about Jesus? (Luke 24:45-47)

What does this book teach you about yourself? (James 1:23 & 2 Tim 3:16-17)

How were you encouraged? (2 Tim 3:16-17)

How were you corrected? (Romans 15:4)

What difference do the truths of this book make in your life? (Matthew 7:24-27)