



The
Problem
with

evil

study guide

An Inductive Bible Study For
Teens in the Book of Job

The Problem with Evil—Study Guide

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The
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The Problem with Evil is a four-lesson, inductive study set in the book of Job. These lessons are designed to engage you with the Word of God, to teach you some simple Bible study principles, and to allow the Holy Spirit to cause your life to change—the real purpose of Bible study.

Our honest prayer is that you will be able to endure the hardest of circumstances and bring great glory to God through the things you learn. We want you to know that God is really in charge, no matter how bad things look. He's given you a mission to confront evil in the world, to fight against it. And He's given us great things to look forward to, things that should be producing hope in our lives even now, even in the midst of suffering!

If you'd like to learn more about our ministry and more about how to study the Word of God for yourself, please visit us online at **www.transformstudent.org**.



“

If there is no God,
**why is there so much
good?**

If there is a God,
**why is there
so much
evil?**”

—Augustine

EVIL SAYS PLEASE

The problem with evil is that it exists...period. We can see it, feel it, touch it, and we're all left with scars by it at some point. While there's no scientific proof of God's existence to everyone's satisfaction, we see evil and suffering every day in the flesh. We don't see God with our human eyes, but we do see Sudanese refugee camps where millions of men, women, and children are forced to live because of civil war. We still see the 81.5 billion dollars of damage left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. I can recall when my friend backed over his child with his truck and killed her. We feel very real pain after a bad breakup or rejection by other people. Evil scars people and it scars the world.

Seeing that evil is a reality, we're left with some questions:

- *If God is real, why does evil exist?*
- *If God loves us, why does He let evil hurt us?*
- *Is God too weak to control or stop evil?*

OR

- *Is there a reason, a plan for all of this that explains the existence of God and evil?*

The number of books written on this subject is amazing. Everyone thinks they've got an angle and a new answer that will wrap up the discussion nice and tight. Don't be misled; no one has all the answers. The purpose of this study is to show you that there are biblical explanations for things in life we don't like even if we'll never understand every instance of evil and suffering in it. Don't even try, or you'll risk going crazy! But there is a plan and a loving God in control of all things, a God who wants you to work with Him to confront the evil and suffering in the world.

Keep in mind that as we study this subject, the Bible will be our source for truth. Precept Ministries International holds that the Bible is God's Word and authority on every subject it addresses. Each lesson in this study will give you a central question. Your aim will be to find out how God's Word answers the question and how you can apply it to your life.



CENTRAL QUESTION

Central Question for Lesson 1: Is God *really* in charge with all the evil we see in the world? Don't answer this yet, but keep the question in mind until the end of this lesson!

Observe the text:

Read Job 1:1-5 and circle every mention of *Job*, including pronouns like *he* and *his*.

LEADER NOTE

Marking the text benefits students in several ways:

- Makes the work visual.
- Engages readers. They can't daydream when they're marking.
- Makes them focus on one element at a time.

Job 1:1-5

- 1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.
- 2 Seven sons and three daughters were born to him.
- 3 His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east.
- 4 His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.
- 5 When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

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INVESTIGATE

“Investigate” assignments will focus on questioning the text to pull out as much information as possible—like a good interrogation. By learning to ask simple questions like who, what, when, where, why, and how (the 5 Ws and an H), you will learn more from your personal times of Bible study! Use the following chart to list what you learned about Job from Job 1:1-5. We’ve started the chart for you so you can see how it’s done.

If you’re going to read with a purpose (e.g., to get all the details), you must ask these questions about the things you mark. The text provides the answers, and you’ll be amazed at what you learn! The exercise below shows students how to make a list by asking 5 W and H questions. In later lessons we won’t give the questions as an aid. We want the students to perform this study skill on their own!

LEADER NOTE

Who?...What?...When?...Where?...Why?...How?...

JOB	
Who is the main character in this passage?	Job (v.1)
Where was Job from?	Uz (v.1)
What did you learn about him from verse 1?	Blameless, upright, fearing God and turning from evil (v.1)
What else did you learn about Job in verses 2-3?	
What does Job do according to verse 5 and why?	
What do we learn about Job’s character from this?	

say what?

Verse 5 says that Job **consecrated** his children and offered sacrifices for them. As head of his family, he prayed that they would be dedicated to God and that his offerings would cover sins they committed.

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LEADER NOTE

It's important to get a grasp of who this man Job was. Look at your list and discuss what you have learned about Job and his relationship with God so far.

From these verses it looks like Job's got a great family; he's rich (rich folks had lots of animals back then) and he's seeking God. Basically it looks like Job is living a godly life and God has blessed him. Now we're about to hit a bump in the road. Actually, make that a mountain!

Observe the text:

Read Job 1:6-12 and mark every mention of *Satan* with a pitchfork and *God* with a triangle. Don't forget pronouns!

LEADER NOTE

Satan and God are key words in this passage.

- How can you know? Look at how many times they're repeated!

Job 1:6-12

- 6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.
- 7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."
- 8 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."
- 9 Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"
- 10 "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.
- 11 "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."
- 12 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

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INVESTIGATE

Remember what we learned about investigating the text? Notice how each question below is one of our 5 Ws and H. Support your answers from the verses you read!

Who?...What?...When?...Where?...Why?...How?...

1. According to these verses, **where** had Satan been before coming to God?
2. Read the following verse (1 Peter 5:8) and answer the questions below it:
Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

What did you learn about Satan in that verse?

How does 1 Peter 5:8 parallel what you saw in Job 1:7?

3. **How** does God describe Job to Satan?
4. **Why** did Satan think Job feared God? **What** had God done for Job?

say what?

“Fear” in verse 9 is talking about reverence for God that produces obedience. The verse could read, “Does Job follow (fear) God for nothing?” The fear of God shows that Job worships God and serves Him.

5. According to verse 12, **what** power did Satan have over Job?

6. **What** limitation did God put on Satan?

7. **Who** or **what** gave Satan this power over Job?

8. **Why** do you think God gave Satan this power?

You just read an account of a conversation between Satan and God in which God points out Job to Satan (thanks a lot, right?). Satan accuses Job of worshipping God only because he’s prospering and insists that if God takes away the prosperity, Job will reject Him. And God responds by giving Satan the power to do anything he wants to Job except to hurt him physically.

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One thing you need to remember is that Satan HAD TO ASK for God's permission to do anything to Job. Imagine Satan standing in front of God asking permission to hurt Job! You'll see how he attacked Job in a minute, but let's really concentrate on one thing as we continue to study the "sovereignty" of God. Sovereignty is a big word with a simple meaning: in charge. God is in charge of absolutely everything and has the right to do whatever He wants. This means even Satan and any way he chooses to do evil—that's why he had to ask God if he could touch Job. God had been protecting Job from Satan; then He let Satan use some different methods to attack Job. Look at the following verses and see what we mean.

Observe the text:

Read Job 1:13-19 and underline each *disaster* that happens in these verses.

You're about to mark a key word. A key word is critical to the meaning of the passage and frequently repeated. We often identify key words or phrases after we begin by examining the characters in a passage, such as Job. Then we might notice key words which reveal what subjects are being talked about, like suffering, or evil. In this case, we'll take a look at the "disasters" that happen to Job.

LEADER NOTE

Job 1:13-19

- 13 Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house,
- 14 a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them,
- 15 and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you."
- 16 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you."
- 17 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

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- 18 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house,
- 19 and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”



INVESTIGATE

Now for the moment you’ve been waiting for! Search this passage by using the 5 W and H questions like you have done throughout this lesson. Remember to let the text give you your answers.

Who?...What?...When?...Where?...Why?...How?...

1. **What** disasters happened to Job in these verses?
2. Having just read the conversation between God and Satan in the previous passage, **who** do you think caused these disasters? Were they just random?
3. **Who** or **what** did Satan use to do these evil things?

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4. **How** else did Satan attack Job's family and possessions?

Whether we like it or not, Satan did these terrible things. He used people and natural disasters to attack Job. Now what did we learn here about God, Satan, and their relationships to evil? Well, here are a few things to start with:


1. Satan is real and really evil: he wants only to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).
2. God is sovereign over Satan (Job 1:12).

If God is sovereign over Satan, then He must also be sovereign over Satan's tools.

Therefore:

3. God is sovereign over evil men (Job 1:15, 17).
4. God is sovereign over natural disasters (Job 1:19).

In these verses we saw that God did not cause the evil that happened to Job, but He did give permission for it all to happen. God was still in charge!



CENTRAL QUESTION

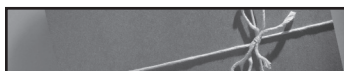
Central Question for Lesson 1: Is God *really* in charge with all the evil we see in the world? This time *you* have to answer!



FAITH WORKOUT

This Is Serious:

If you're willing to admit that God is in charge of everything, the good and the bad, then take some time this week to pray alone. Confess to God that you're not in charge and that He is. Tell God you'll follow Him no matter what has happened in your past and no matter what happens in your future. If you're not able to pray this yet and mean it, then simply ask God to help change your heart.



WRAP THAT UP!

What you've seen in Job 1 is a strong case for the sovereignty of God, God's control. Satan had to ask God for permission to do evil things to Job. The New Testament gives evidence for this also in Luke 22:31-34 when Jesus tells His disciple Simon Peter that Satan asked to "sift you like wheat." Jesus even tells Peter he'll deny Christ, but his faith won't fail because He'll pray for him! There is no doubt that Satan is evil, that he has a wicked plan for our lives, but God limits how and when he can attack us.

Let's deal with a false belief right now. Some Christians think Satan can tempt us but not harm us. Scripture makes it clear that the devil is very powerful; it even calls him the prince (ruler) of this world (John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2). According to Revelation 2:10, Satan can cause suffering resulting in death even for some Christians! But he can do this only according to God's permission. Satan goes around doing evil and using people to do evil always subject to God's rule and plan.

Nothing sums up God's authority better than the following accounts of two of the most powerful kings the world has ever known.

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Mark **God** with a triangle as you read the following passages:

Daniel 4:34-35

- 34 “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;
For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation.
- 35 “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven
And *among* the inhabitants of earth;
And no one can ward off His hand
Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’

Isaiah 45:1, 5-7

- 1 Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed,
Whom I have taken by the right hand,
To subdue nations before him
And to loose the loins of kings;
To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:
- 5 “I am the LORD, and there is no other;
Besides Me there is no God.
I will gird you, though you have not known Me;
- 6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun
That there is no one besides Me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other,
- 7 The One forming light and creating darkness,
Causing well-being and creating calamity;
I am the LORD who does all these.

It’s doubtful that knowing God’s in charge but allowing Satan to make a mess of things is really comforting to you. Just hold on—let’s take this one piece at a time. We’ll continue to examine God’s Word to see how He USES EVIL FOR GOOD. Yes, that’s right; God can use evil for good!

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NOTES...



Character

can't be developed in ease and quiet.

Only through

experiences of trial and suffering

can the

soul be strengthened, vision cleared,
ambition inspired,

and

success achieved.



—Helen Keller

**LESSON 2****WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU MAKES YOU STRONGER**

Don't panic, but we're going back to science class for a minute. If you want to get your body strong and in good shape, you have to work out. That means exercise, maybe running, lifting weights, or other physical activities. This is going to sound strange, but at the same time you are trying to get stronger, exercise actually tears your muscles down. When your muscles work overtime, they produce lactic acid—that's why you get that intense burning sensation during a hard workout. Lactic acid actually breaks the muscles down which is the reason for the soreness you experience over the next few days.

Obviously you don't get smaller and weaker from working out, since the body builds itself back up. It uses proteins to grow new muscle over the next couple of days so that the muscles you exercised actually become a little bigger and stronger than they were before you broke them down. If you repeat this process, over time you may get "ripped," ready to hit Muscle Beach.

God designed the human body this way, but what does this have to do with spirituality or the existence of evil and suffering in the world?

Good question!

**CENTRAL QUESTION****Central Question for Lesson 2:**

How is suffering designed to make me stronger? Keep this question in mind all the way through this lesson!

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Observe the text:

Satan doesn't give up easily; he comes to accuse Job again in Job 2:1-8. As you read these verses, mark **God / Lord** with a triangle and **Satan** with a pitchfork. This text is similar to chapter 1, but it records a different occasion.

Job 2:1-8

- 1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD.
- 2 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."
- 3 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause."
- 4 Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.
- 5 "However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face."
- 6 So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."
- 7 Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.
- 8 And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes.

say what?

This is going to be a little gross, but you need to get the picture. A **potsherd** is just a small piece of broken pottery. Job is sitting in ashes, picking at his boils to get out the pus and infection. The point is—he's absolutely miserable.



INVESTIGATE

Once again, you simply answer these questions as you did in the first lesson. Support your answers from the verses you read!

Who?...What?...When?...Where?...Why?...How?...

1. **Who** suggested Job to Satan?
2. **Who** actually touched Job and caused his suffering in these verses?
3. For review, since these verses serve as an example (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; 2 Tim. 3:16), **what** does Satan have to do before he can touch one of God's children? In other words, **how** did he get the power to hurt Job?
4. **What** power does God give Satan over Job? **What** limit does He set?

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5. **What** did Satan do to Job according to these verses?

6. Let's build on what we learned in Lesson 1. Use what you learned here in Job 2 to fill in the blank below:
 - a. God is sovereign over (in charge of) Satan.
 - b. God is sovereign over evil men.
 - c. God is sovereign over natural disasters.
 - d. God is sovereign over _____.

7. **How** does Satan expect Job to react to this torture?

We see God's sovereignty again here! Just like in Job 1, we see that Satan physically did the evil and that God allowed it. Do you think maybe God had some purpose in mind for allowing evil in this situation??? Do you have any idea why God is allowing this to happen in Job's life?

At this point, it's hard to think of God as being good when you see an example of a man who follows God but gets evil and suffering in return. Sometimes we suffer for doing wrong, but Job suffered even though he was doing what was right in God's eyes. Confusing, right? The book of Job doesn't come out and directly say why all of this is happening, and there's no indication Job knew about the conversations between God and Satan that we're studying. But if we look at other places in Scripture, we can start to get an idea of why bad things sometimes happen to good people.

LEADER NOTE

Cross-references are other scriptures that support, explain by using illustration, and / or give better understanding to the scripture you are studying. The best commentary on Scripture is Scripture itself. We'll now look at a cross-reference that explains why hard things sometimes happen to good people. In short, the following cross-reference in James should help you interpret what you're studying in Job.

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Observe the text:

Read James 1:2-4, 12-15 and mark every mention of *test / trial* with a check mark and *tempt* with an X.

James 1:2-4, 12-15

- 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,
- 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.
- 4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- 12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.
- 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.
- 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.
- 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.



INVESTIGATE

List what you learned about trial and temptation in the space provided. We did an example for you below, now you finish the rest.

Remind the students to question the text and use the 5 W's and an H to build their lists as they did in Lesson 1 (we're not providing the questions this time).

LEADER
NOTE

Who?...What?...When?...Where?...Why?...How?...

Test/Trial	Temptation
V. 2 - consider it joy when faced with various trials	V. 13 - don't claim to be tempted by God; God cannot be tempted by evil; God doesn't tempt anyone

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Test/Trial	Temptation

LEADER NOTE

Now evaluate your list by discussing with students what they learned about tests / trials / temptations. Lead your students to connect these verses back to Job 1. Here are some sample questions:

1. What should your attitude be when facing trials?
2. How can you have joy when facing trials?
3. What does the testing of your faith produce?
4. What will those who persevere under trial receive?
5. Where does temptation come from?
6. What happens when you give in to temptation?
7. What are some differences between a trial and a temptation?
8. How do you see these truths in Job's life?
9. Do the events in Job make more sense now? Do you see why God allowed these things to happen?

If you do a little more Bible study, you'll learn that trials and temptations are two different types of tests, kind of like multiple choice and true / false. Both are ultimately used and controlled by God to see what you're made of under fire, and both can involve suffering (although He does NOT tempt—see James 1:13). But we can face them with joy if we focus on God's promises and not our bad circumstances. That's where God's joy is different from "happy"—happy is how you feel when your circumstances are good, but happy leaves the building when you face trials. God's joy hangs around no matter what because it's based on faith that you're going to live forever in heaven when all the trials of life are done!

Now do the events in Job make more sense? Do you see why God allowed or even caused these things to happen? Job is being tested, and God's Word says that you will likely be tested too! Knowing what you know now, let's see how Job responds to the test, how he reacts to the evil and suffering he's facing in his life. Will he respond to trials with joy, or will his suffering cause him to question God's goodness, power, and even His existence?

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Observe the text:

Read Job 1:18-22 and 2:6-10. Circle every mention of *Job*. These verses show Job's reaction to the suffering he experiences in both chapters.

Job 1:18-22

- 18 While he was still speaking, another also came and said,
“Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine
in their oldest brother's house,
- 19 and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness
and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on
the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped
to tell you.”
- 20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head,
and he fell to the ground and worshiped.
- 21 He said,
“Naked I came from my mother's womb,
And naked I shall return there.
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the LORD.”
- 22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

Job 2:6-10

- 6 So the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your power,
only spare his life.”
- 7 Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and
smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the
crown of his head.
- 8 And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was
sitting among the ashes.
- 9 Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your
integrity? Curse God and die!”
- 10 But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish
women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God
and not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

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INVESTIGATE

Answer the questions below. Support your answers from the verses you read! **Who?...What?...When?...Where?...Why?...How?...**

1. **How** does Job react to his suffering in chapter 1?
2. **What** does Job's wife tell him to do because of his circumstances in chapter 2?
3. Think back a little. **Who** else wanted Job to curse God and die?
4. **How** did Job respond to his wife?
5. **How** have you handled bad spiritual advice from someone you've loved in the past?
6. **How** do you think you would respond if you were in Job's situation?
7. **What** suffering have you faced in life, and **how** DID you respond? **What** did your reaction teach you about yourself?

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8. Whether you're suffering or not right now, it's coming again. **How** will you handle it differently the next time because of what you've learned from God's Word?

CENTRAL QUESTION

Central Question for Lesson 2:

How is suffering designed to make me stronger?

FAITH WORKOUT

Live your life knowing that God is going to test you. When you're tempted, hit with some hard circumstances, or experience various kinds of suffering, remember that God may be testing you. Make up your mind to do what is right, follow God's Word over your feelings and pass the test!

WRAP THAT UP!

Check out these verses about suffering:

1 Peter 4:12-16

- 12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;
- 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.
- 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

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- 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;
- 16 but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.

Philippians 1:29-30

- 29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,
- 30 experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

As Christians, should we ever be surprised when we suffer? No!!! The verses in Philippians tell us that suffering is even a sign of God's favor on us—that's what God "granted us" suffering means in Philippians 1:29. If you know God's Word, you know God will test you, but He has multiple purposes for it. He allows and even causes our suffering so that our faith can be made stronger—like a faith workout!

Look at Job's situation. He didn't know he was being tested (and you won't always know either!), but he accepted his suffering and still had the faith to say, "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." That's what we're talking about!!! If you've ever sung these words during praise and worship, you've prayed Job's prayer! How many people have been inspired by them? How many people have read Job's story and seen that relying on God is the only way to make it through persecution, cancer, or the death of someone they loved?

The next time you suffer remember: God wants to strengthen your spiritual muscles. He's preparing you for the next test, the next step of faith, and for how He wants to use you in this life! It's amazing that God can take evil and suffering and make a very good thing come out of them—our spiritual growth! This is not the only explanation for all human suffering, but it is one of many that should give you a more biblical understanding of the presence of evil and suffering in this world by the end of this study.

And we ain't done yet!

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NOTES...
