

JOB

A MAN OF HEROIC ENDURANCE

STUDY ONE

Setting the Stage for Disaster

Job 1:1–12

When the author of Job picked up his stylus to write his book he could have begun with a blunt, three-word sentence, “Life is unfair.” Difficult, most of us have learned to handle. But unfair?

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE book of Job reads like a grim screenplay. Its account of this ancient man’s troubles reflects the soul-crushing reality we all face. What happened to Job could happen to anyone. Job’s home could be our home. His family, our family. His grief, our grief.

A single mom packs up her life and tearfully relocates 1,200 miles away for a promising job with a nationally recognized company to provide for herself and her three children under the age of fifteen. Generous salary, stock options, and critically important health care benefits await her. But six months into her new role as an exemplary employee, she receives a pink slip notifying her of her release.

One week later, she notices a lump in her breast. A biopsy reveals she is suffering from stage-four cancer. Five days afterward she receives news that her ex-husband—who three years earlier ran off with his office secretary—is doing wonderfully. High-profile job, big salary, and a spacious home. Now, circumstances compel her to relocate yet again, moving into her aging parents’ small, three-bedroom home. Both parents suffer from poor health.

Here’s a good woman who was trying to do the right thing when bad things happened. Life isn’t just difficult. Sometimes, *it’s unfair!* For this struggling mom, and for us. Welcome to Job’s world.

In this first *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study on the book of Job, we meet a man who lived through some of the most excruciating trials imaginable. He endured horrors that few of us have experienced. But his book does more than recount his trials. It pulls back heaven’s curtain to help us think about God when life feels unfair.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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Job asks God the burning questions we all ask, *Why do good people suffer while bad people prosper?* Instead of giving us answers in Job, however, God gives us Himself. Job teaches us that knowing God is better than knowing answers. *Where is God in suffering?* With us. If we can hang on to our faith, we'll emerge from our trials as Job did—like gold purified through fire . . . a trophy of God's majestic grace.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Our God is ever unchanging, ever faithful, and ever good. He is near to those who suffer.

*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;
he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.* (Psalm 34:18)

Express your faith by asking the Lord to illumine the truths found in the book of Job and to guide you in the face of your unexpected trials, hardships, and suffering. Record your prayer below.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The book of Job sits on the wisdom shelf of Old Testament literature, alongside Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. The *author* may have been Job himself or a trusted eyewitness under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The *genre* of Job is mostly poetic, written in parallel lines.

The book opens by telling us that Job “lived in the land of Uz” (Job 1:1) and was a godly man, husband, father, and a wealthy landowner. Though we cannot pinpoint the *location* of Uz on a map, scholars believe it was east of Canaan, near the desert of northern Arabia. For reference, consult the map titled, “*World of the Patriarchs*,” found at insight.org. From internal textual clues, Job likely lived during the period of the patriarchs, approximately 2100–1900 BC.

The *message* of Job touches the heart of every person who experiences suffering. Through dialogues and monologues, Job and his counselors attempt to explain with human wisdom the unexplainable. In the end, God Himself speaks. Why does He permit suffering? For reasons that are good but often remain foggy to us.

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The following chart overviews Job, highlighting its themes, the central characters, and key sayings. Familiarize yourself with the chart, and then we'll dive into the early chapters that set the stage for the remainder of the book.

JOB OVERVIEW BIBLE CHART

	INTRODUCTION TO THE SUFFERING	DISCUSSION OF THE SUFFERING				CORRECTION IN THE SUFFERING		SUBMISSION UNDER THE SUFFERING	RESTORATION FROM THE SUFFERING
	Job 1–2	Job 3	Job 4–14	Job 15–21	Job 22–31	Job 32–37	Job 38–41	Job 42:1–6	Job 42:7–17
	Scene 1 Job's integrity and prosperity	Job Speaks (Eyes on Self) Curses birth Curses life	Three Friends Speak (Eyes on Humanity)			Elihu Speaks (Eyes on God) Elihu to three friends Elihu to Job	God Speaks (Emphasis on Sovereignty)	Job's confession Job's repentance	God's anger with the three friends God's blessing on Job
	Scene 2 Satan's proposition and God's permission		First Round of Speeches Eliphaz	Second Round of Speeches Eliphaz	Third Round of Speeches Eliphaz				
	Scene 3 Satan's persecution and Job's patience		Job	Job	Job				
	Scene 4 Satan's persistence and God's permission		Bildad	Bildad	Bildad				
Scene 5 Poverty and plagues	Job		Job	Job					
KEY SECTIONS	Historical	Theological / Philosophical				Logical	Revelational	Confessional	Historical
KEY FIGURES	Job, God, and Satan	Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar				Elihu	God	Job	God, Job, and the three friends
KEY SAYINGS	"Have you noticed my servant Job?" <i>(Job 1:8)</i>	"At last Job spoke . . ." <i>(Job 3:1)</i> "Eliphaz the Temanite replied . . ." <i>(Job 4:1; 15:1; 22:1)</i> "Bildad the Shuhite replied . . ." <i>(Job 8:1; 18:1; 25:1)</i> "Zophar the Naamathite replied . . ." <i>(Job 11:1; 20:1)</i>				"We can't even imagine the greatness of [God's] power." <i>(Job 37:5)</i>	"Everything under heaven is mine." <i>(Job 41:11)</i>	"I take back everything I said." <i>(Job 42:6)</i>	"So the LORD blessed Job . . . even more than in the beginning." <i>(Job 42:12)</i>
THEME	God's sovereignty and humanity's struggle in the midst of suffering								
KEY VERSE	Job 42:2								
CHRIST IN JOB	His intercessory and saving work foreshadowed in Job's cry for a mediator <i>(Job 9:33; 33:23–24)</i> and faith in a Redeemer <i>(Job 19:25–27)</i>								

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Observation: A Heavenly Dialogue About Job

Searching the Scriptures is a four-step Bible-study method beginning with observation, in which we look closely at what the biblical passage says.¹ Read each verse carefully, note key details and themes, and then answer the questions below.

Job's Character—Job 1:1

Job opens with a wonderful résumé of a good man. What words did the author use to introduce Job in *Job 1:1*? Why do you think his character is significant?

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Job's Family and Possessions—Job 1:2–3

How large was Job's family and his possessions, according to *Job 1:2–3*? How does the last phrase of 1:3 describe him?

Job and His Children—Job 1:4–5

How are Job's children described in *Job 1:4*? Job knew about their celebrations, although he didn't attend. According to *1:5*, what did he do on their behalf? Note the final phrase of 1:5. What does that statement indicate about Job's concern for their walk with God?

The Scene in Heaven—Job 1:6–7

The book begins with the phrase, "There was a man" (Job 1:1 NASB) and a description of Job's character. Suddenly, a shift occurs with the phrase, "There was a day" (1:6 NASB), and we are transported from earth to heaven. The elect angels ("sons of God") routinely presented themselves before the Lord to carry out His purposes. But according to *Job 1:6–7*, who joined them on that day? What dialogue occurred? What do you learn about the spirit world?

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Job . . . God's Servant—Job 1:8

Job 1:8 is the critical hinge in the storyline and cracks open the floodgate of calamity upon Job. What rhetorical question does omniscient God pose to Satan? How did God extol Job?

Satan's Accusations—Job 1:9–11

According to *Job 1:9–11*, how did Satan accuse Job? What accusations did Satan make against God? What else do you observe?

Satan Granted Permission to Test Job—Job 1:12

God gave Satan a permission slip in *Job 1:12*. What freedom did God grant Satan? What protection did God grant Job? Why do you think God accepted Satan's wager?

As Job sleeps, a scene opens to us that Job knows nothing about. It happens in our lives as well. When we're not aware of it, God is carrying out a plan that would amaze us and, on occasion, would shock us. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: A Righteous Man and Testing

Out of his devotion to God and love for his children, Job routinely “would purify his children” by offering burnt offerings for each one (Job 1:5). How does this practice support an early date for Job, during the period of the patriarchs before the Mosaic law?

A righteous man, Job had done nothing to deserve his troubles. Yet God permitted the unfolding of a plan that shocked Job . . . and us. How can we reconcile God’s sovereignty, His goodness, and His approval of Job’s life with Job’s looming trials? Take an early attempt at fitting these puzzle pieces together.

Satan is not an impish character with a red body, a scowling expression, and a pitchfork, sitting on one of your shoulders whispering naughty nothings in your ear. That’s a medieval caricature that Satan would love for you to believe. Based on *Job 1:7, 9–11*, how do you see Satan’s *intellect*, *emotion*, and *will* manifested in his wicked scheme?

Satan is the most attractive, brilliant, powerful archangel that God ever created. He has not lost his brilliance. He has not lost his power. He has not lost his beauty. He is also insidious, and his favorite method of working is behind the scenes. Because he is invisible does not mean he is, therefore, not real.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: Satan the Adversary

Satan, the Adversary of God and humanity, possesses many evil characteristics. Scripture reveals his cunning ways. In the table below, read the verses found in the left column. In the right column, briefly list our Adversary's characteristics and tactics.

Verse	Characteristics and Tactics
<i>Luke 8:12</i>	
<i>John 8:44</i>	
<i>John 10:10</i>	
<i>1 John 3:8</i>	
<i>Revelation 12:9–10</i>	

Satan is engaged in a wholesale commitment to destroying God's people and ruining, where possible, God's plan. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Accepting God's Plans Without Understanding Them

God's plans and ways are often tough to understand. From Job's experience so far with God's surprising ways, we glean four principles worth remembering.

1. *There is an enemy we encounter that we cannot see.* We have a real enemy. Though he is invisible, we experience his malicious and ruinous intentions.
2. *There are trials we endure that we do not deserve.* Yet, they are permitted. Nothing touches our lives that has not first passed through God's approval.
3. *There is a plan we explore that we will not understand, but it is best.* All circumstances may not be good, but "God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God" (Romans 8:28).

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4. *There are consequences we experience that we could not anticipate.* But they are necessary. We didn't ask for this or anticipate that. We try to predict outcomes, but sometimes we just won't know what will happen.

The good news is that we have Christ, and He is greater “than the spirit who lives in the world” (1 John 4:4). In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have power to withstand the attacks of our enemy.

What aspect of this study did you find most challenging to understand or accept? Why?

What did you learn about God through Job's experience so far?

What has God taught you about Himself through a tough trial you recently endured?

Satan left the Lord's presence plotting his next move as ominous clouds gathered over Job and his family. What terrible plans did Satan have for Job? We'll find out in the next *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, without knowing it, there's a plan underway that will reduce me and break me and humble me, and I don't know why. Your plan ultimately is to prepare me to be like Your Son, Christ. Help me to understand that a difficult or unfair life is still orchestrated by a just and wise God who loves me and has my best at heart. Prepare me now, my Father, for what is before me and find me open and willing, humble and trusting. For I ask it in the name of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2002, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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