

# JOB

## A MAN OF HEROIC ENDURANCE

### STUDY FIVE

## The Mournful Wail of a Miserable Man

*Selections from Job 3*

*If Job were in the hospital, he would have written a small sign and hung it on the doorknob when he got to this segment of his life and said, “No visitors today, please. I don’t want to see anybody else.”*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**G**REAT people with grand accomplishments frequently have sorrowful starts. Look beneath the polish of their remarkable achievements in their lives, and you’ll be surprised to discover that many were birthed from wombs of woe.

That aptly describes Gustav Mahler, the world-renowned Austro-Bohemian composer and conductor from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The prodigy’s path to renown was not one of privilege but of great pain. Mahler’s life was tragedy-torn.

His father, a cruel alcoholic, frequently physically abused his infirm mother. By age 15, Gustav suffered the loss of seven siblings. He later married and had a cherished daughter—who passed away at age four. Gustav was forced out of his role as director of the Vienna Court Opera, a victim of a vicious anti-Semitic campaign. Suffering loss after loss, he was then diagnosed with a chronic, serious heart condition which ultimately claimed his life at age 50.

Poignantly, his personal tragedies and shattered life deeply shaped his most powerful and moving composition, *Symphony No. 9*. His music lives on, treasured by music lovers worldwide.

Job lived thousands of years ago, but his life continues to touch our hearts because he truly understood suffering. In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, Job’s woes reach a heightened state of agony. Here, we see the man—in a place where we, too, sometimes live—at the end of his rope just trying to hang on. Let’s join him there and find an empathetic companion for our grief.



INSIGHT FOR LIVING



Scan to listen to  
Chuck’s message.

The Bible-Teaching Ministry of Chuck Swindoll  
Study 5 • Page 1

SEARCHING  
THE  
SCRIPTURES  
BIBLE STUDIES

# The Mournful Wail of a Miserable Man

## *Selections from Job 3*

---



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Job had hit bottom. He was in a miserable state, despairing of life itself. Years later, King David echoed similar anguish:

*I am dying from grief;  
my years are shortened by sadness. . . .  
I am wasting away from within. . . .  
I am ignored as if I were dead,  
as if I were a broken pot. (Psalm 31:10, 12)*

Thank the Lord for His sustaining mercy toward you even in those periods when you feel lost in the valley of darkness. Invite His presence as He ministers to you through His Word.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The opening two chapters of the book of Job narrate the account of Job's ruin—how wave after wave of excruciating disasters swept away everything dear to him. Despite it all, he demonstrated a mature faith, a pinpoint theology, and a godly perspective when he declared in his grief,

*"The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.  
Blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21 NASB)*

In Job 3, however, dark clouds enshroud Job in despair. After days of silence, in a raspy and parched voice, he finally spoke. His words weren't pretty but raw with grieving . . . questioning . . . wailing. They're hard to read. The same man who blessed God earlier appeared to be cursing God, but he wasn't. In his pit of depression, he was cursing his own life.

Two comments set the stage for Job's soliloquy. First, chapters one and two are narratives to be read as a news article or a book. Chapter three through the remainder of the book, however, are Hebrew poetry. So, with this shift in literary genre, we now engage with elements such as meter, repetition, vivid word pictures, and impassioned hyperbole.

Second, for days, Job held his tongue even while the vice of physical suffering was crushing him. Finally, he could not contain himself any longer, and he let loose. No wonder his words erupted in a torrent of raw emotion. He spoke out of physical pain, but also, he spoke out of spiritual pain—which was much more agonizing. *Where was God in Job's trials?*

# The Mournful Wail of a Miserable Man

## *Selections from Job 3*

---

Remember, Job knew nothing of Satan's challenge or God's affirmation of him. Job's outburst welled up primarily because it seemed God had abandoned him. There is no deeper heartache than the heartache of abandonment. He had lost touch with his loving Father.



### **Observation: Witnesses to Job's Wailing**

Read [Job 3:1–26](#) with your heart open to Job's lament. Sit with him in his grief as his tears flow, and be willing to shed a few of your own.

### **Job Laments the Day of His Birth—Job 3:1–10**

Assaulted twice by Satan, Job had been careful not to curse God. According to Job 3:1, as Job spoke, what did he curse? How do these curses differ?

Unleashing his curses in 3:3–10, Job let loose a series of “wish verbs,” notably “may” or “let.” How many “may” or “let” verbs do you count? Keep in mind, this is poetry. What emotion was he expressing in this list? What kinds of things did Job wish for?

In 3:8, Job references ancient Near East mythology. According to the NLT footnote, what was Leviathan? While Job did not believe in mythology, what exaggerated point was he making?

*Is it any surprise that those who go through times of deep, dark depression turn after the Psalms to Job? None but the lonely heart can feel such anguish.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

# The Mournful Wail of a Miserable Man

## *Selections from Job 3*

---

### **Job Laments He Didn't Die at Birth—Job 3:11–19**

Job continued his lament with several rhetorical questions. According to Job 3:11–12, what was his primary and anguished question? What other questions amplified his somber wish?

According to 3:13–19, what was his longing? He referenced kings, prime ministers, princes, the weary, captives, the rich, the poor, and the slave. What was he saying?

### **Job Longs for Death—Job 3:20–26**

In this section, Job longed to die so that he might escape his wretched condition. People with suicidal thoughts don't really want death so much as relief. Most of all, they want to be understood. According to Job 3:20–23, what word pictures did he use to express his longing?

Job's anguish reached a climax in 3:24–26. What was his daily experience? What did he fear and dread? What did he completely lack?

# The Mournful Wail of a Miserable Man

## *Selections from Job 3*

---

Five times in this chapter, Job asked God, “Why?” Cite the verses where “why” appears and what he questioned. What might it say about Job that he posed “why” repeatedly to God?

*If you have known the black hole of depression yourself, you read not with shock, but you read nodding with understanding because you’ve been there.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### **Interpretation: Working Through the Wail**

In the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, we follow observation with interpretation.<sup>1</sup> Interpretation focuses on the meaning of the text and the discovery of spiritual truth.

Job’s intense despair rubs against the teaching in some Christian circles that “anyone coming to Christ will prosper and be happy.” That life with God is like a rose garden without thorns—all beauty and no pain. Put this messaging under the spotlight of Job’s experience. What aspects are true? What aspects are false?

Some dismiss our feelings with clichés like “God is enough,” or “Just trust the Lord with your struggle.” True believers, they claim, don’t wrestle with deep depression, anxiety, or mental illness—which only adds shame and self-condemnation to our struggles. How do you reconcile Job’s painful experience and mournful expression with this prevalent view?

*We all have our unguarded moments. We all have times when we reach the end of our tether, when the clouds of doom seem greater than the sun of tomorrow. Our view is blocked and out gushes how we really feel.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

# The Mournful Wail of a Miserable Man

## *Selections from Job 3*

---



### **Correlation: Old Testament Giants Who Mourned and Wailed**

While Job's deep depression may be shocking to read, he was not alone in his wretched condition. Other Old Testament pillars, for different reasons, crumbled under the weight of their trials.

Moses led the Israelites on their exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land. What situation did he encounter in [Numbers 11:13–15](#)? What was his response?

The prophet Elijah served the Lord several centuries after Moses. According to [1 Kings 19:1–4](#), what was happening and who was pursuing Elijah? In his desperation, what did he pray?

Known as the “weeping prophet,” Jeremiah warned Judah of the coming Babylonian siege and captivity. Facing harsh opposition, he echoed Job's plea. What did he lament in [Jeremiah 20:14–18](#)? What details do you see that parallel Job's mourning in Job 3?

What conclusions do you draw about your emotions from these saints and their emotions?

*Even the godly can be depressed. “Oh God, where ARE YOU?”*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

# The Mournful Wail of a Miserable Man

## *Selections from Job 3*

---



### **Application: Reminders for the Suffering**

God didn't blast Job at the close of chapter 3 for his wailing, saying, "Shame on you, Job." God understood him. And God understands you.

Pastor Chuck Swindoll offers three practical reminders for the suffering.

1. *There are days too dark for the sufferer to see light.*
2. *There are experiences too extreme for the hurting to find hope.*
3. *There are valleys too deep for the anguished to find relief on their own.*

Have you ever felt a deep sense of loneliness or isolation, like Job? If so, what were the circumstances? What helped you make it through?

If you were to record a lament right now, what problems, pains, and petitions would you present to the Lord?

How does your life story demonstrate God's sovereignty, even amid your trials?

You never fully get over grief until you express it fully. God understands your suffering, your pain, and your grief. Don't go through grief alone. Find a friend. Talk with your pastor or a Christian counselor. Seek the Lord. Your Good Shepherd hasn't abandoned you. Lean on Him as you walk through your dark valley.

# The Mournful Wail of a Miserable Man

*Selections from Job 3*

---



## A FINAL PRAYER

*Thank You for going with me, Father, all the way to the valley of death's dark shadow. Thank You for being there as I go through it, though I don't sense Your presence. And for being there as I come out of it. Thank You for giving light in my most desperate moments. Thank You for giving me hope when my hurt can't be described in words. Thank You for rescuing me from the valley. In the name of Jesus, thank You for being so good. 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.

[insight.org](http://insight.org)

Insight for Living  
Study 5 • Page 8

[illegible]

[illegible]