

JOB

A MAN OF HEROIC ENDURANCE

STUDY SIX

Responding to Bad Counsel

Job 4–7

Not all advice is good advice. Not even when the person giving the advice thinks that it's the right advice. Sometimes it can be given in all sincerity, but it is faulty.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WE all give and receive counsel. Good counsel is life-enhancing, even lifesaving. Bad counsel is life-diminishing, even deadly. Satan's cunning counsel to Eve, for example, deceived her into disobeying God's prohibition to eat from the tree in the garden of Eden. Because she and Adam listened to bad counsel, death entered the world, and we all suffer under its curse. Be careful who you listen to!

When King Rehoboam assumed the throne after his father Solomon's death, instead of listening to Israel's elders, he sought the counsel of his foolish, immature peers. They told him to lay heavier burdens on the people, which caused the kingdom to split and spiral into war. Not all advice is good advice, so use discernment.

Unfortunately, bad counselors often think their counsel is good. Job's friends were certain they knew the reason for Job's troubles and what he should do to find relief. They thought they were helping Job, but their words cut like shards of glass that only deepened Job's wounds. Trying to "fix" and "correct" Job, they lost sight of their purpose in coming to him—"to comfort and console" (Job 2:11). Job's counselors were good-hearted, but their theology was bad.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll sit beside ravaged and wretched Job as he listens to his friends fire at him the first of several theologically flawed speeches. The physical attacks against Job were over, but the spiritual and emotional attacks had just begun.



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Study 6 • Page 1

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

Responding to Bad Counsel

Job 4–7



PREPARE YOUR HEART

“What miserable comforters you are!” Job complained when his friends kept hurling accusations at him (Job 16:2). Perhaps you’ve received sincerely intended but unwelcomed and poor advice from someone you love. Bring your hurt and frustration to the Lord, asking Him to provide you with an elevated perspective through your study of God’s Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Job had sunk into a deep depression. “Why wasn’t I born dead?” he moaned (Job 3:11). His wife advised him, “Curse God and die” (2:9). But Job resisted her bad counsel and refused to “sin by blaming God” (1:22). In fact, his *only* comfort throughout his ordeal was that he had done no wrong. As he said later, “Despite the pain, I have not denied the words of the Holy One” (6:10).

The worst part of his ordeal was God’s silence. Job pleaded with His Father to explain why He allowed such suffering, but no reply came. So, because God wasn’t answering, Job’s friends decided to answer for God! They had come to sympathize (2:11), but their sweet comfort soured into counsel of the bitterest kind.

All the words from these misguided and misinformed friends felt like judgments. Poor Job was caught in a sticky spider’s web of condemnation, and he couldn’t cut himself loose.



Observation: Besieged by Bad Counsel

Observation is patiently combing through the text to see all that the author has recorded.¹ As you read, highlight verses that sum up the main points. Put yourself in Job’s place. What would you be thinking? How would you feel? Enter the text with your mind and your heart.

Read *Job 4–7* and then focus on key segments as you answer the following questions.

Responding to Bad Counsel

Job 4–7

Eliphaz’s First Speech—Job 4:1–8; 5:7–12, 25–27

Look closer at *Job 4:1–8; 5:7–12, 25–27*. As the first to speak, Eliphaz set the stage with what question in 4:2? About what matters did Eliphaz initially compliment Job in 4:3–4?

But. With one word, Eliphaz shifted his tone and quickly moved to accuse Job. How did Eliphaz indict him in 4:5, and what condescending question followed in 4:6? What was his implication?

Eliphaz continued to let the arrows fly. According to 4:7, what did he assert through his questions? Based upon his personal experience, what assumption did he make about Job in 4:8?

Eliphaz made an insightful comment about the sinful human condition in 5:7. But then he resumed lecturing Job. Summarize the main points of his speech in 5:8–12.

Then what assurances did Eliphaz make to Job in a pompously “prophetic” manner in 5:25–27? Why were his promises insensitive, given Job’s two severe trials?

Responding to Bad Counsel

Job 4–7

Job's Response to Eliphaz—Job 6:1–4, 22, 24, 28

Now let's examine [Job 6:1–4, 22, 24, 28](#). Job heard enough of Eliphaz's pious preaching. He defended himself, maintaining his innocence against the condemning attack. In 6:3b, Job clarified the reason for his rash words. According to 6:2–4, what prompted his outpouring of grief? What word pictures did he employ in these three verses?

Job then challenged Eliphaz to unlock and identify the apparent sin(s) which brought his calamity. According to 6:22, 24, 28, how did he turn the tables on Eliphaz?

Job's Cry to God—Job 7:5–6, 20–21

Finally, [Job 7:5–6, 20–21](#). Job turned his attention to God, crying out to his Creator and Redeemer about his anguished condition. What did Job say to God in 7:5? What does 7:6 reveal about Job's attitude?

In his plea to God, what two central questions did he pose in 7:20–21?

Job speaks like a tormented man, here and later. Physically he's miserable, emotionally he is at wit's end, and spiritually he is confused.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Responding to Bad Counsel

Job 4–7



Interpretation: Misunderstanding Righteous Suffering

Eliphaz's approach toward Job reflects a syllogism. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines *syllogism* as: "A deductive scheme of a formal argument consisting of a major and a minor premise and a conclusion."²

Applied to Job, Eliphaz's major premise was this: *all suffering is punishment for sin*. On that basis, he stated his minor premise, *you are suffering*, and then concluded, *therefore, you are being punished for your sin*. Why was his argument false, given what we learned about Job from chapters 1 and 2?

Eliphaz's logic doesn't hold water. Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, suffered but He didn't sin. What about the apostle Paul throughout his missionary journeys? How about Christian martyrs worldwide? They suffered for doing what was right.

How would you answer others advocating this faulty logic? How do you distinguish when that syllogism is true and when it's false?

At the close of chapter 7, Job pled his case before the Judge, the living God, asking, "Why me, God? What have I done?" But with Job, God was silent. It was as if the heavens were brass. Read the article titled, "[Understanding Divine Silence](#)," in the *Topical Encyclopedia* found at biblehub.com.

From your research, how would you define divine silence? What theological and practical lessons did you find which may shed light on why God was silent with Job . . . and sometimes silent with us?

The classic example of unjust suffering is the Savior's crucifixion.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Responding to Bad Counsel

Job 4–7



Correlation: The Benefits of Good Counsel

Even well-intended counsel may be misguided, leading to tragic consequences. But God's Word is our source for good counsel leading to blessing. Open the storehouse of Proverbs to find the wisest advice.

What is the point of *Proverbs 27:19* as it relates to the source of human counsel?

According to *12:15; 27:6*, how are foolishness and wisdom contrasted?

The benefits of wisdom are many. From *16:24; 19:20; 25:12*, what blessings do you find? What word pictures are used?

From these passages, reflect on the spiritual impact of godly counsel in your life. How can you discern good from bad counsel?

We have all benefited from someone telling us good things. They've counseled us and we've followed their advice and the benefits have been many.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Responding to Bad Counsel

Job 4–7



Application: Lessons Learned from Eliphaz and Job

Eliphaz modeled how *not* to give counsel, and we can draw three principles from his negative example.

1. *Assumptions reduce understanding and insight.* When our mind is already made up and we think we've got everything figured out, we lack understanding because we are no longer listening.
2. *Shame blocks grace and hinders relief.* Shame-based counsel leaves others under a load of guilt rather than offering the hope of recovery. We do well in our counsel if we remove from our lips the three words, "shame on you." They rarely do any good.
3. *Pride eclipses mercy and compassion.* If we come across as though we're the final answer to one's situation, we stop the flow of mercy.

Have you ever received bad counsel from an Eliphaz-type person? If so, how did this person demonstrate these characteristics? How did this person's words hurt you? What do you wish he or she had said?

Now let's consider Job's response and draw two helpful reminders.

1. *Sometimes peoples' words only make our troubles worse.* Don't listen to everybody, and don't fall into the trap of believing everything you hear. Pick your counselors carefully.
2. *Sometimes God's ways only make us more confused.* God is sovereign and His ways are infinitely higher than our ways. So, don't think you need to understand everything that happens.

Can you think of a time when you gave or received advice, but what was really needed was simply compassion? What was the situation? How effective was the advice?

Responding to Bad Counsel

Job 4–7

How have you experienced mercy and compassion from someone when you were hurting? What impact did his or her kindness have on you?

After Job poured out his grief and confusion, his friends seemingly forgot why they had come. They confronted when they should have comforted, and they tried to answer questions that have no answers. Remember, not all advice is good advice, so be discerning. Keep seeking the Lord. He truly understands your ache, hears your cry, and knows your heart.



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, this I know: The death of Your Son was not in vain. He died for me. Because I believe in Him, I will be with Him forever and will enjoy all of heaven's blessings. It's a tough journey getting there, full of confusion, struggles, and "I don't knows." Thank You that when the heavens open and I'm there, there will be no more questions. Until then, help me rest in what I know. In the assuring name of Jesus. Amen.

ENDNOTES

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?](#)"
2. Merriam-Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2014), see "syllogism."

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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