

JOB

A MAN OF HEROIC ENDURANCE

STUDY EIGHT

When Rebuke and Resistance Collide

Selections from Job 11–14

Zophar called Job, by implication, an “empty-headed man,” claiming that there was no possibility a person like Job could ever become wise.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

COCKROACHES. If you spot one, you can be certain you'll discover many, many more. Their astronomically high reproduction rates cause them to multiply rapidly, and their sophisticated survival mechanisms make them hard to get rid of.

While they serve as beneficial ecological clean-up crews in nature, in human habitations cockroaches' potential for disease transmission, food contamination, and structural damage cement their status as a scourge. If you crush one under your foot, then you inadvertently spread bacteria, allergens, and cockroach pheromones—which only invites more of their distasteful friends to the party!

But cockroaches can't be simply ignored. They won't go away by themselves. They'll only proliferate. You must deal with them directly and immediately. Confronting difficult people in your life can feel like dealing with these pests. When you confront them head on, they seem to proliferate, and the conflict gets more complicated.

That was Job's plight. His three friends began well in their desire to offer sympathy and comfort. But like cockroaches multiplying and spreading disease, their self-righteous pheromones invited further pompous theological counsel, quickly spreading harmful spiritual bacteria and damage to Job.

In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, Zophar takes his turn lecturing Job, and Job reaches his listening limit. He counters with assertive resistance and a righteous defense. As we study Job's response, we gain insight into his heart for God, even with all his confusion and questions. Job encourages us to hold onto our faith in God in our own seasons of suffering.



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SEARCHING
THE
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PREPARE YOUR HEART

With Zophar, Job modeled what Solomon advised many years later:

*Be sure to answer the foolish arguments of fools,
or they will become wise in their own estimation. (Proverbs 26:5)*

Perhaps you've faced untrue and hurtful words from someone you consider a friend. As you open God's Word, invite Him to give you His wisdom in your response through Job's example.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Job's three friends traveled to visit him with a simple agenda—"to comfort and console" (Job 2:11). Shortly after a week of quietly sitting with Job, however, they lost their agenda! In all their speeches, not a sympathetic sentence fell from their lips. Instead, we hear accusation, shame, insult, sarcasm, judgment, and condemnation.

First, Eliphaz, likely the eldest of Job's friends, lectured Job from his personal experience—"My experience shows that those who plant trouble . . . harvest the same" (4:8). Bildad was next. He blasted Job for not applying wisdom from "those who came before" (8:10) and heartlessly judged Job's children, saying, they "must have sinned . . . so their punishment was well deserved" (8:4). Now, in the passage for our study, Zophar turned up the heat even higher and blistered Job with legalistic condemnations—accusing him of hidden sin, guilt, and sheer ignorance. Some comfort and consolation!

Imagine poor Job in all his anguish listening to his friends pour insults like salt in his wounded soul. Let's look closer at Zophar's diatribe and admire Job's bold defense.



Observation: Zophar's Legalistic Accusations

When you engage with a passage of Scripture, begin with observation, which helps you enter the scene as if you were there.¹ Hear the words in your mind, feel the tone, and notice the main points as you read [Job 11–14](#).

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Zophar’s First Speech—Job 11

Zophar wasted little time in launching accusations against Job. Consult [Job 11:1–20](#) as you answer the questions below.

You Are Guilty—Job 11:1–4

According to Job 11:2–3, what false “evidence” did Zophar use to accuse Job of guilt?

Beyond his rude and tactless approach, Zophar then misquoted Job in 11:4. According to 6:24, 28, what had Job actually said of himself?

You Are Ignorant—Job 11:5–12

Job was “blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil . . . the greatest of all the men of the east” (Job 1:1, 3 NASB). Yet Zophar lectured as if Job was ignorant of God. What specifics did Zophar share in Job 11:5–10? What insult did Zophar add in 11:11–12?

You Are Sinful and Need to Repent—Job 11:13–20

Like a boxer who’s dazed his opponent against the ropes with a left hook, Zophar raised his fist for another blow. Implying that Job’s suffering was God’s punishment for sin, he moved with audacity to lay out the conditions for Job’s repentance. List the conditions for repentance with which Zophar saddles Job in 11:13–19.

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Zophar takes one final swing in Job 11:20, leveling Job with what warning and consequence?

Job's Defense—Job 12–14

Job reached his limit with the pious platitudes from his friends-turned-accusers. He countered each of Zophar's accusations, one charge at a time. Look closer at his defense in these segments: *Job 12:1–5, 9, 16–22; 13:1–5, 15–19, 23; 14:1–2, 7–14, 18–22*.

I Am Not Ignorant—Job 12:1–5, 9, 16–22

According to Job 12:1–5, 9, how did Job mix sarcasm with rebuke when defending his level of knowledge and wisdom?

In 12:16–22, Job turned the tables. What attributes of God did Job teach Zophar?

I Am Not Guilty and Don't Need to Repent—Job 13:1–5, 15–19

In Job 13:3–5, Job addressed his counselors as “worthless quacks” and wished that they would show their wisdom by being silent. How do those sentiments expose their accusations as baseless?

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Job had no sin to confess and didn't understand God's purpose in his suffering. In Job 13:15–19, how did he express his clear conscience?

Job's Plea to God—Job 13:23; 14:1–2, 7–14, 18–22

Job then turned to God, pleading, “Tell me, what have I done wrong?” (Job 13:23). He spoke of humankind's frailty. According to Job 14:1, what two aspects of frailty did he observe? In 14:2, what two word pictures did he use?

In 14:7–14, he contrasted the life of a tree with the life of a man. What is his main point?

Summarize Job's words about God's sovereignty and the brevity of life in 14:18–22.

The rebuke of Zophar is met by the resistance of Job. And that is the only way to deal with a legalist. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Marks of a Theological Legalist

In theory, Zophar's theological monologue about God's sovereignty, infinitude, and greatness was on point. In a different context, his urging of Job to understand such truths and their implications would be appropriate. But he made an error that frequently occurs among legalists.

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Zophar presumed to speak for God, saying to Job, “God is doubtless punishing you” (Job 11:6). Then he taunted Job: “Can you solve the mysteries of God?” (11:7). How did Zophar contradict himself?

Why was his rush to judgment inaccurate when he said to Job, “Lift up your hands to him in prayer” and “Get rid of your sins” (11:13–14)? How was he behaving like a legalist?

Job refused to become Zophar’s punching bag. How do his responses model truth and situational awareness? What New Testament characters or situations reflect a similarly firm but righteous response (for example, Paul’s defense before the mob in Jerusalem in Acts 22)?

Job’s address to God reflects despair . . . but with a glimmer of hope, “Can the dead live again?” (Job 14:14). Read the commentary from chapter 14 in [Constable’s Notes](http://netbible.org) found at netbible.org. From your reading, how was Job’s understanding of resurrection fitting for his time? How does the progress of biblical revelation provide us with a more robust and complete view of bodily resurrection?

Legalists have a message for you. The message usually is a putdown, because you are not doing what they believe you ought to be doing. Or you are doing what they believe you should not be doing. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: Two Ears . . . One Mouth

Zophar's stinging words toward Job model what *not* to say to people in pain. Scripture gives wise counsel about the healing and hurtful uses of the tongue.

Read [Proverbs 10:19; 17:27–28](#). What is Solomon's point? How does his counsel apply even to fools?

The book of James, often considered the “Proverbs” of the New Testament, has much to say about the tongue. God gave us two ears but only one mouth. What guidance does James offer about listening and speaking in [James 1:19](#)?

In his rebuke to Zophar's legalistic rush to judgment, Job understood what Zophar didn't. How does [Daniel 4:35](#) capture the depth and mystery of God's ways, especially in Job's plight?

*Job winds up saying, “It had been better if you had just stayed silent.”
“It is God! It is the inscrutable, almighty God who is in charge of such things.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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Application: Questions to Ponder

Job always turned to God in his pain. Are you experiencing personal disappointments or periods of confusion in your walk with God? Job never lost his faith, but he did have questions. What questions do you have for God?

Take some time in prayer as you quiet yourself before God. Meditate on Job's hope as he dreamed about the day when God would call his name:

*You would call and I would answer,
and you would yearn for me, your handiwork.
For then you would guard my steps,
instead of watching for my sins.
My sins would be sealed in a pouch,
and you would cover my guilt. (Job 14:15–17)*

In Christ, we have the redemption and forgiveness Job dreamed about! Thank the Lord for the security you have in Him that guarantees your eternal destiny in heaven. If you're not certain about your destiny, pause now and put your faith in Jesus as your Savior. He covers your guilt through His atoning death on the cross. He gives you hope of life beyond the grave through His resurrection. What a wonderful Savior you have! He is your true Comforter.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I thank You for the searching truths of Your Word. For what seems to the passerby as philosophical meanderings, what I have here are dialogues of destiny. Truths to live by and insights that prepare me for now and for eternity. I am frail. My years are few and are full of trouble. It seems they proliferate. Thank You for not leaving me, when those problems surround me and I feel as though they are drowning me. Thank You for staying near. In Jesus' name. 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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