

JOB

A MAN OF HEROIC ENDURANCE

STUDY NINE

Graceless Words for a Grieving Man

Selections from Job 15–17

Of all the things Job had to endure, the final insult was enduring the graceless presence of alleged friends.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

MARY TODD Lincoln, the wife of US president Abraham Lincoln, endured more heartache and sorrow than any one person should have to bear.

Mary lost three of her four children to premature death and witnessed the assassination of her husband. Following her family tragedies, she plunged into deep depression and was labeled as “difficult.” Her intense grief and emotional turmoil led to a rift between her and her only surviving son. Her mental and emotional state sinking sharply, Mary was declared insane and committed to an asylum in 1875 until released into her sister’s care. Her final years were marked with intense physical struggles including vision loss, spinal pain, and suspected diabetes.

To make matters worse, she faced public criticism and ridicule. At a time when Mary desperately needed a healing infusion of grace, she instead endured rebuke, shame, and disgrace.

Mary’s suffering mirrors Job’s—not just in grief and physical pain but in depression and the sting of others’ cutting remarks. Initially, Job’s well-intentioned friends had come to offer Job cool sips of mercy. But the deeper Job sank into depression, the more they spewed graceless, hurtful words of judgment.

“What miserable comforters you are!” sighed Job as he shook his head in frustration (Job 16:2). In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we’ll watch Job enter a second cycle of dialogues with his friends. They presumed to speak for God but knew nothing of His grace—which Job so desperately needed.



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SEARCHING
THE
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PREPARE YOUR HEART

David's lament in Psalm 6 echoed Job's profound anguish and chaotic confusion.

*I am worn out from sobbing.
All night I flood my bed with weeping,
drenching it with my tears.
My vision is blurred by grief;
my eyes are worn out because of all my enemies. (Psalm 6:6–7)*

As you open God's Word, share your tears of sorrow with the Lord in prayer and open your heart to receive His grace through our study.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Job's dialogues with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were more like boxing matches. In round one, chronicled in Job 4–14, each man in turn stepped into the ring with Job, who was already weakened by grief and pain. Certain that his suffering was punishment for sin, they pummeled poor Job with rebukes and condemnation. Job countered by stating his innocence and lamenting his condition—which only provoked his opponents to swing harder.

Reeling from the onslaught of verbal punishment, Job's life hung in the balance. He needed understanding, but he endured only blame. When Eliphaz stepped back into the ring to start round two, did he take it easy on Job and show him mercy? No, *not at all!* He dished out even more graceless words for this grieving man.



Observation: A Miserable Cast of Quasi-Comforters

Begin with the step of observation, paying careful attention to each word, each phrase, and each sentence, asking the question, "What does this say?"¹ God's Word is living and life-changing, and the book of Job is a literary masterpiece. Read [Job 15–17](#) with an appreciation for its vivid metaphors and poetic beauty.

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Eliphaz's Second Speech—Job 15:1–35

As we consider Eliphaz's second speech and Job's response, we'll focus on these verses:
Job 15:2–9, 11, 15–16, 20–25.

A Series of Rebukes—Job 15:1–16

In his second speech, Eliphaz's sharp rebukes illustrated several common characteristics of graceless people like him. Can you detect *Eliphaz's pride* in Job 15:2–3? How do you see *Eliphaz's tendency to insult* in 15:4?

In 15:5, notice *Eliphaz's guilt-inducing tactics*. How did he insinuate that Job was covering up his sin?

Can you find evidence of *Eliphaz's condemning attitude* in his accusations in 15:6–9? Write down what you observe.

Eliphaz saw himself as God's messenger to rebuke, rectify, and resolve Job's hidden sins. How did his pretense of speaking "gently" (Job 15:11 NASB) demonstrate *Eliphaz's sarcasm*? What harsh assumption did he make about Job in 15:15–16?

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A List of Reminders of the Fate of the Wicked—Job 15:17–35

After his series of rebukes, Eliphaz spouted reminders of the fate awaiting wicked people . . . like Job. Focus on Job 15:17–24 to find words or phrases Eliphaz used to describe the misery that awaited Job.

This style of communication is not that unusual to those who lack grace. When you're down, they kick you. When you're struggling, they add to your pain. When you're confused, they blame and shame. When you're drowning, they hold you under. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Job's Response to Eliphaz—Job 16:1–5, 9, 11–14; 17:1–2, 11–16

We don't always know how to respond to graceless people when we're in grief. Job's admirable and pointed response to Eliphaz frees us to let our feelings flow. Let's divide Job's speech into four parts in *Job 16:1–5, 9, 11–14; 17:1–2, 11–16*.

Job's Disgust with Eliphaz—Job 16:1–5

In Job 16:1–4, how did Job rebuke Eliphaz? What teachable moment did Job employ in 16:5?

Job's Distress with God—Job 16:9, 11–14

Job feared that God was angry with him, which proved distressing. What graphic word pictures did he record to capture the *apparent* anger of God, whom he portrays as the heavenly Warrior?

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Job's Depression Over His Situation—Job 17:1–2

What two thoughts in Job 17:1–2 reflect Job's depressive outlook?

Job's Mournful Despondency—Job 17:11–16

What specific words demonstrate the depth of Job's despondency in Job 17:11–16? How does this poem function as a kind of funeral requiem? What do you think Job needed to hear from Eliphaz?

Lord, if You teach us something through this, teach us the value of grace. Teach us about grace. Show me again that grace is always appropriate—always needed. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Graceless Words and Groundless Assumptions

Job had hit bottom. He was disgusted, distressed, depressed, and despondent, and he was ready to die. His experience reminds us that life is full of trouble and no one is exempt from hardships. We need to show one another grace . . . because we may be the ones in need someday!

Why do you think Eliphaz resisted showing grace to Job? How did his use of sarcasm and insult evidence the lack of grace in his own life?

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Only a heart that has received God's grace can offer it to others. Eliphaz needed to experience God's grace himself! Review the article titled, "[What Is the Definition of Grace?](#)" at [gotquestions.org](#). Write down a few key points that help you understand God's grace and what it means to you.

What false assumptions did Eliphaz make in his misunderstanding of Job's character, his speeches, and the sovereign plans of God?

Because he couldn't refute Job's arguments, Eliphaz resorted to attacking Job's words and ridiculing his character. How does that graceless approach undermine God's work in a suffering person's life?

People who are graceless don't usually connect the dots, unless you are strong in return. Speaking the truth cuts through the fuzzy, vague, feel-good verbiage that often characterizes our talk. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Graceless Words and Groundless Assumptions

The graceless words and groundless assumptions from Job's alleged friends were not an isolated practice. Such words and assumptions are *reckless* and bring *repercussion*, yet there is a *remedy*.

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Read [Proverbs 12:18](#); [Matthew 12:36](#); [Ephesians 4:29](#). To what are *reckless* words likened? What *repercussion* awaits the speaker of careless words? What *remedy* does Scripture supply to counter careless words?

Groundless assumptions may also manifest themselves, born from deep misunderstanding. Consider two biblical examples.

Read the Old Testament account in [1 Samuel 1:12–14](#) about Hannah, the mother of Samuel, and Eli, a high priest, judge, and mentor to Samuel. Summarize the account. What groundless assumption did Eli make about Hannah?

Our Lord Jesus Himself frequently faced misunderstanding, ridicule, and judgment. Summarize His words in [John 7:23–25](#). What was the root of the Pharisees' judgmental assumption about Him?

On this earth everybody doesn't live happily ever after. That's a fairy tale. This earth doesn't deliver better. That's why we need grace. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Grace for the Disgusted, the Distressed, and the Despondent

Through our own experiences receiving graceless words and groundless assumptions, we can identify with Job. We need grace in this life—grace in stewarding our marriages, grace in raising our children, grace in navigating our employment, and grace in maintaining unity in our churches. We need grace to survive.

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While we can't control others giving us grace, we can certainly extend grace to others! Those who feel like Job—disgusted, distressed, depressed, and despondent—need two things.

1. *They need grace for the moment.* They need to know that God is there, that He's listening even when they can't hear Him, that He loves them, and that He is walking with them through the trial. They need us to provide a safe place for them to share their feelings.
2. *They need hope for the future.* Job held on to his faith in God, but he didn't have much hope. People in Job's situation need to hear a voice through the fog of their predicament, encouraging them and guiding them to safety.

Reflect on Eliphaz's graceless words toward Job. Have you walked in Job's shoes, needing grace and hope? What were the circumstances? How did it make you feel? What was the outcome?

Think of a time when your perspective on another person's trials changed once you learned more information. What happened? How did your attitude, and even your words, change once you saw that situation through new eyes?

Take a few moments to record your gratitude for God's mercy and grace to you amid misunderstanding from others.

As you close your study, return to David's lament in Psalm 6. When your heart breaks, what do you see through your tears? Do you see Jesus? Do you see Him weeping with you in your pain? Do you see Him suffering on the cross? Do you see Him emerging from the tomb, victorious over death? Do you see Him motioning for you to follow Him in faith? *Do you see grace?* In faith, step back from the edge of despair into the arms of your Savior, who welcomes you in your pain and offers you exactly what you need.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for Your grace. Thank You for loving me when I'm running away from You. Thank You for pursuing me when I don't want to have anything to do with You. Thank You for holding me close. Thank You for forgiving me, understanding me, renewing me, and helping me to go on. I love You, Father. I learn from You. I praise You. Blessed be the name of the Lord. In the name of Jesus, I pray. 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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