

JOB

A MAN OF HEROIC ENDURANCE

STUDY TWELVE

How to Handle Criticism with Class

Selections from Job 22–24

There is no finer example of grace under pressure than this man whose book bears his name.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

FEW people enjoy receiving criticism. Fewer invite criticism as a tool for growth. Fewer still handle criticism with class.

Sir Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister during the Second World War, was one of those rare individuals who welcomed, even invited, criticism as a necessary tool for personal and professional growth. His closest confidants noted how he handled it with class. Churchill embraced several qualities that enabled him to navigate strong headwinds of criticism with grace.

He tabled his ego and listened with humility. He considered his critics and detached his personal life from his professional role. He valued truth over status in the eyes of critics. In these ways, Churchill weathered intense criticism with courage.

Ernest Hemingway, the famed American novelist, condensed the meaning of *courage* to three words, “grace under pressure.”¹ Churchill embodied grace under pressure . . . and so did Job.

Job maintained composure in the crucible. He listened with patience and humility. He understood and considered the arguments of his friends-turned-harsh-critics. He valued the God of truth over the so-called truth spewed by his friends. When needed, Job capably countered his false accusers, but he always exhibited self-control. There’s much we can learn from his grace under pressure.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we’ll see Job take it on the chin once more from Eliphaz. But in this round, he doesn’t address Eliphaz directly. Instead, he directs his response to the Lord, his source of courage under fire.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Job responded to criticism much like Jesus . . . who

*did not retaliate when he was insulted,
nor threaten revenge when he suffered.
He left his case in the hands of God,
who always judges fairly. (1 Peter 2:23)*

Are you in the crucible of criticism? As you prepare to engage in this study, entrust your case to the strong Savior in prayer.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Job's righteous character drew Satan's malicious intentions like a magnet. Recall from the beginning of our study of Job, God permitted Satan to severely test Job in two tidal waves (Job 1–2). In the first crushing wave, Job suffered bankruptcy through the loss of his vast enterprise, endured the loss of personal servants, and witnessed the death of all ten of his children and their families. Tidal wave number two ravaged his health with excruciating boils from head to toe. Job's world turned upside down—and Job never understood why.

Three friends traveled from afar to bring sympathy and comfort. Their time with Job began well, sitting with him in silence. But then, they spoke, offering no support—only continual swells of caustic, cutting criticism. In order from oldest to youngest, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar pummeled him with waves of pious theological platitudes. Swell one and swell two washed over Job, who answered each accuser with incisive wisdom. Swell three was now underway. His so-called friend Eliphaz rose up again to assault Job with words, but, as we'll observe, Job's grace under pressure held firm.

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Observation: “You’re a Sinner, a Hypocrite, and Unrepentant”

Observation helps us see a passage plainly so we can understand more clearly what the passage means (interpretation).² Read Eliphaz’s speech and Job’s response to God in [Job 22–24](#).

Eliphaz’s Final Speech—Job 22

Eliphaz opened by strumming the same chord. This time, in his third and final speech, he made three accusations against Job, which we’ll observe in the following segments: [Job 22:2–7, 9–17, 21–26](#).

“Job, You’re a Sinner”—Job 22:2–7, 9–11

How would you paraphrase Eliphaz’s sarcastic point in Job 22:2–4 and accusation in 22:5?

Like a prosecuting attorney, Eliphaz presented what detailed charges against Job in 22:6–7, 9?

Without evidence, he pronounced Job guilty. According to 22:10–11, what metaphors did he use to portray guilt and judgment?

“Job, You’re a Hypocrite”—Job 22:12–17

Eliphaz accused Job of hypocrisy—hiding his sins from God. In Job 22:12–14, what metaphors did he drum up to portray Job’s supposed words?

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According to Job 22:15–16, what implication did he draw about Job’s path in life? What did he wrongly attribute to Job in 22:17?

“Job, You’re Unrepentant”—Job 22:21–26

In this section, Eliphaz preached an excellent evangelistic message . . . but to the wrong person! What commands did he impose on Job in 22:21–23a? Why were those commands unwarranted?

According to 22:23b–26, what accusations did Eliphaz reiterate?

*In these verses, not once does Job interrupt. Let me ask you a hard question.
Would you have sat there and let all that be said, without interrupting?
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Job’s Response—Job 23–24

When Eliphaz completed his diatribe, Job looked past Eliphaz and lifted his gaze to heaven. Job understood that it was the Lord who would justify him, not Eliphaz. Observe Job’s appeal to heaven in the following segments: [Job 23:1–13, 15](#); [24:2–9, 13–15, 25](#).

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“I’m Unable to Locate the Presence of God . . . but I Trust Him”—Job 23:1–12

As if in a courtroom, Job took the stand and testified that he couldn’t find the Lord amid his trials (Job 23:3, 8–9). Despite his isolation, what confidences does he express in Job 23:4–7, 10–12? What did Job hope his suffering would produce?

“I’m Unable to Understand the Plan of God . . . but I Trust Him”—Job 23:13, 15

God didn’t ask for Job’s permission to test him, nor does He ask for ours. What words in Job 23:13 point to God’s sovereignty over all our affairs?

Remember, Job was unaware of the heavenly wager Satan made with God. How does that reality inform his stark admission in 23:15?

“I’m Unable to Justify the Permissions of God . . . but I Trust Him”—Job 24:2–9, 13–15, 23–25

In Job 24:2–9, 13–15, Job poetically laments the injustices that God permits. What types of examples did he cite?

What was Job’s point in 24:23–25 about God’s permissions?

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God doesn't ask permission. He doesn't tell you ahead of time. He doesn't explain why it's so hard. He doesn't let you know how it will work out. He doesn't tell you how long it will last. You trust Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Handling Criticism . . . God's Way

Eliphaz falsely accused Job of being a hypocrite—the sort of religious phonies that the Lord Jesus soundly confronted. Read the article on [hypocrisy](#) from the *Holman Bible Dictionary* at [studylight.org](#). From your research, why does God hate hypocrisy?

Why was calling Job a hypocrite so unfounded? Why are Eliphaz's multiple accusations of Job an ironic twist?

Job's ability to exercise self-control in the face of baseless criticism teaches us to listen calmly, resist the temptation to defend and explain, and then address God directly with our heartfelt concerns. What other lessons do you find in his thoughtful approach? How do you discern when to directly answer a critic and when to disengage and address the Lord directly? What principles guide you?

While crushed in the crucible of physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational suffering, Job retained his confidence in God's sovereign, inscrutable, yet good plans. As Job resolutely declared, "He knows the way I take; When He has put me to the test, I will come out as gold" (Job 23:10 NASB).

When the trial has passed, you will be deeper and richer for it. God knows the way that we take. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: Scriptural Saints Handling Criticism with Class

Many others in Scripture handled undeserved criticism with class. Let's consider a few.

King David was forced to abdicate the throne when his son Absalom deceptively stole the hearts of the people. As David escaped, a scoundrel named Shimei cursed him and hurled stones at him and at his men. Read [2 Samuel 16:10–12](#). What could David have done to Shimei? Instead, how did he respond?

Nehemiah spearheaded the rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile. Read [Nehemiah 4:7–9](#). Despite intense ridicule and threats, how did he handle his opposition? What was key to his remaining composed and focused?

The apostle Paul was a grizzled veteran in contending with unfounded criticism and righteous suffering. Read [2 Corinthians 12:8–10](#). What was Paul's perspective toward suffering?

Paul later advised his protégé Timothy about contending with opposition. Read [2 Timothy 2:23–24](#). What was his advice?

Of course, Jesus, our Savior, is the ultimate example of showing grace under pressure. Let's turn to Him as we close our study.

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Application: God Is Trustworthy

While God may be elusive, mysterious, silent, invisible, and at times seemingly absent, He is utterly trustworthy. Job's example of handling criticism with class imparts three enduring lessons.

1. *Resist the temptation to explain everything.* Don't try to explain the unexplainable. God alone knows, but we don't. It's okay to admit, "I don't know."
2. *Focus on the future benefits, not the present pain.* One day in heaven when you pass the test, there will be rewards. "He knows the way [you] take; When He has put [you] to the test, [you] will come out as gold" (Job 23:10 NASB).
3. *Embrace the sovereignty of God.* Embracing God's sovereignty doesn't require understanding it. Just knowing He is good is enough to keep us close to Him through the trial.

Which of these principles is most helpful for you?

What encounters or situations make you feel pressured to respond, rebuke, or correct others when unjustly criticized? How does knowing that Jesus felt the same pressures without retaliating draw you to Him?

Like Job, do you ever feel as if you can't find God or that He seems far away? If you do, what promises can you take from Job's dependence on God which lead you back into His presence and care?

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What “gold” has the refining fire of unjust suffering produced in you? How have you glimpsed God’s sovereignty, love, and compassion when walking through the fire?

As you close your study, express to the Lord your faith in Him through your trial, even during the times when you can’t sense His presence. God is working in your life, forming a beautiful piece of divine tapestry. From your side, it looks blurred, knotted, and twisted. But from His side, there is incredible design, pattern, and beauty. Your trial is for your good and, ultimately, for His glory.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I’m very grateful for the way Your work unfolds. Though sometimes the plan brings pain and requires grace under pressure, give me the patience to endure. Give me the faith to believe. Give me the hope to trust. I pray in the name of Jesus and for His sake. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Ernest Hemingway, quoted by David Wyatt, in “David Wyatt on Grace Under Pressure,” October 5, 2023, hemingwaysociety.org/david-wyatt-grace-under-pressure.
2. 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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