

JOB

A MAN OF HEROIC ENDURANCE

STUDY THIRTEEN

The Futility of Unscrewing the Inscrutable

Job 25–26

Job ends where Bildad should have begun. “Who can understand?”
—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

A study of Job is essentially a study of God. It was God who told Satan what he could and couldn't do to Job. It was God who permitted Job's trials and who, at the end of the book of Job, would reveal Himself in all His majestic glory.

One of the core truths we learn is that God is a mystery. Job never knew why God allowed his suffering. As finite beings, we cannot know God's mind. “How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!” Paul wrote (Romans 11:33). We cannot explain the inexplicable. We cannot fathom the unfathomable. We cannot unscrew the inscrutable.

Perhaps a few insights from astronomy will illuminate the inscrutable ways of God. Astronomers and theologians gaze at the heavens and marvel at their awe-inspiring wisdom that transcends human understanding. What can we know about our universe? First, its *scale*. The overwhelming vastness contains countless galaxies that surpass our comprehension, with some educated estimates placing the number of galaxies in the trillions. Second, its *design*. Planet earth resides in the “Goldilocks zone,” or habitable zone, providing the perfect balance of temperature, water, and light necessary to sustain human life—some 93 million miles from the sun.

Third, its *beauty*. In the voids and recesses of space, the Carina Nebula, a star-birthing region, possesses bountiful beauty while serving no direct purpose to support human life. It's simply an expression of God's exquisite creativity.

We admire God's creation, but we can never understand it all. It's too vast. If God's creation is so vast, then how vast must the infinite God be? His greatness surpasses anything our minds can conceive! Certainly, God is good, loving, and merciful—but He is equally inscrutable.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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Job 25–26

In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, Job became the teacher while Bildad became the student. In so many words, Job said, “Bildad, because you only philosophize and don’t help me, let me explain to you the incredible and incomprehensible nature of the living God.” Let’s step into Job’s classroom and learn from him truths about God that only sufferers like Job can impart.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

*How great is our Lord! His power is absolute!
His understanding is beyond comprehension! (Psalm 147:5)*

God’s transcendent ways are awe-inspiring yet sometimes unsettling. In prayer, entrust yourself to His all-knowing care as you prepare to study His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

After God secretly conversed with Satan and Satan afflicted Job with untold pain and suffering, God stepped into the shadows. For thirty-five chapters in the book of Job, we don’t hear from God. He didn’t speak to Job, give him visions, or provide him with relief and comfort. God was silent.

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar filled the void by heartlessly assaulting Job in three waves of pious philosophical speeches. Toward the end, however, they seemed to run out of arguments. In the third wave, Zophar didn’t even bother to speak, and Bildad’s lecture comprised the shortest chapter in the entire book, indicating how little he had to say. Bildad no longer attempted to prove Job wrong. He simply told Job what Job already knew.

If only Job’s foolish friends had applied what they preached about the incomprehensible ways of the living God. If only they had admitted, “We don’t know why you are suffering,” and then put their arms around Job, they might have been the salve Job needed. Unfortunately, they just kept lecturing.

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Observation: More Philosophizing and Put-Downs

Use your skills of observation as you read Bildad's final speech and Job's response. Look carefully at what each person says about God and His ways.¹

Bildad's Speech—Job 25:1–6

What initial observations can you make about Bildad's speech in [Job 25:1–6](#)?

While concise and even theologically precise, it was loaded with pride and accusation. It was the right speech directed to the wrong person. How did Bildad portray God in 25:1–3?

How did Bildad contrast God and humanity in 25:4–6? What word pictures did he use?

Bildad directed his final statement in 25:6 to Job. Why was this put-down so harsh?

Having run out of arguments, Bildad simply lectured: “Remember, Job, that God is all light and you are all darkness. That’s why you’re suffering. Matter of fact, Job, ‘maggot’ and ‘worm’ pretty much say what you are.”
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Job's Response—Job 26:1–14

Read Job's response in *Job 26:1–14*, which opened with a volley of sarcastic verbal missiles.

Bildad has no corner on truth (Job 26:1–4). How would you paraphrase each of Job's three critiques of Bildad?

Job enlightens Bildad about the dead (26:5–6). How did Job instruct Bildad about the location and the experience of those who die?

Job enlightens Bildad about the Creator and His cosmos (26:7–13). What aspects of God's cosmos and creation did Job mention? What did he say about God's creativity, control, and completeness?

These are but the fringes of His ways (26:14). As magnificent and incomprehensible as all Job describes, it is only the beginning of God's ways and majesty. Read 26:14 in the NASB and in the NLT. In what ways did Job say that we are simply "scratching the surface" of who God is?

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What point was Job teaching Bildad?

To think that He, in all the galaxies around all this universe, comes and finds that little green pea called earth and locates us and knows even the hairs on our heads. “It is high; I cannot attain to it.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Reconciling God’s Ways and Human Experience

Well-meaning Christians sometimes teach that God intends His children to be happy and to not suffer. Job’s account, however, challenges this assumption. What about someone stricken with Lou Gehrig’s disease? What about the couple whose lives are forever altered by the heartrending loss of a child? What about the faithful Christian who receives only a no to fervent prayer for marital healing and restoration?

How do you reconcile God’s love with painful human experience?

In our attempt to navigate God’s inscrutable ways, we must admit, “I don’t know.” How does this admission bolster faith, not undermine it?

For what purpose might God conceal the reasons for His actions and keep His ways a mystery to us?

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Somewhere between here and our ultimate destination, this pilgrimage takes us on a circuitous course that at times is just impossible to grasp.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: God's Inscrutability and Human Sin

In the final analysis, God is sovereign. He is the Potter. We are the clay. He is Lord. We are the disciple. He is the Shepherd. We are the sheep.

In addition to the profound, unsearchable nature of God, what other theological attributes has God manifested and showered on believers, according to the apostle Paul in [Romans 11:33–36](#)?

Humankind has a serious sin problem that limits our ability to fully grasp God's ways. What cause and effect did Paul outline in [5:12](#)? How can that truth blur our understanding?

We demonstrate the highest form of wisdom when we exercise faith in God, in His Word, and in His promises when life doesn't make sense.

You know the living God by faith, but you don't know His ways. His ways are higher than your ways, His thoughts are greater than your thoughts. You don't have to know. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Thinking Theologically and Living Accordingly

Admitting “I don't know” allows room for faith to fill in the gaps between what we understand and what we don't understand about God. Even if we can't explain God's will, we believe in Him and His Word. Job was able to hold onto his faith because he had trained himself to “think theologically”—to look at circumstances from God's point of view—when he came to the limits of his understanding. Only then can we navigate life's tragedies when God allows them to transpire through His permissive will.

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You can't completely know or understand God, nor can you control Him. What does this reality mean for you regarding your current situation?

What attributes or aspects of God that you do understand are difficult for you to accept?

How did Job's teaching about God and His creation impact your perspective on His knowledge of and care for you?

If Job were your counselor, what do you think he would say to encourage you about how to relate to God in your trial?

Most likely, Job would urge you not to try to unscrew the inscrutable. It's impossible! Instead, he would tell you to trust God whose ways are higher than yours. Still believe He is good, though He is mysterious. Still believe He has integrity, though He is inscrutable. Though every story on this side of heaven doesn't always end happily ever after, still believe He is a God of grace. That's how Job kept his faith, and it's how you can keep yours through your hard times.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I pray that You will help me to be more gracious and less dogmatic when my path crosses the “Jobs” of my life, or when I endure them myself. Help me to be quicker to say, “I’m here, but I can’t explain all the whys.” Father, give me comfort in knowing that You—who are inexplicable and inscrutable and unfathomable—love me, care for me, and, of all things, have provided me a way to know You. Thank You for Christ, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Thank You for the path You have opened to heaven by faith. I walk it confident in Christ and not of myself. In His matchless name 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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