

JOB

A MAN OF HEROIC ENDURANCE

STUDY SIXTEEN

Another Long-Winded Monologue

Selections from Job 32–37

Elihu's not a learner. Elihu's busy with that long index finger, bouncing against the sternum of Job. He probably never had a single boil himself—and Job's covered with them.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

A FRESHLY minted Bible college graduate had just witnessed a spirited discussion between a distinguished seminary professor and three senior-level graduate students. His campus visit experience landed him in a classroom debate to observe the topic of the day: the sovereignty of God and human suffering.

The parties bantered back and forth, each taking turns engaging in theologically grounded and passionate debate. The graduate students adopted a pompous tone toward the professor—challenging, criticizing, and correcting the mature and measured professor. After several rounds of dialogue, the class ended and the young visitor met the four in the hallway. He finally spoke.

“I didn’t want to jump into the fray too quickly,” he muttered fearfully. “I mean, you’re a distinguished professor and you three have studied at this renowned school for several years,” he added, scanning the circle of theological wisdom while looking each one in the eye. But burning with anger, he launched like a missile: “I think you’ve all got it wrong on God’s character and how He works!”

He preached at the professor, droning on, sharing nothing new. He was pompous and self-assured, not teachable about the lofty things of God. The young man apparently had taken courses in lecturing in the Elihu Department of Homiletics.

Like the young student, Elihu, the fourth and youngest friend of Job, had sat back and waited his turn to speak through each round of dialogue between Job and his friends. Now that they had finally finished talking, Elihu saw his chance to grab the mic and to blast Job with his own long-winded lecture. Let’s listen to his speech and draw from Elihu’s words as much wisdom as this arrogant young man can impart.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

The apostle James warned us against angry speech:

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. (James 1:19)

The first lesson we learn from these chapters of Job is to *not* respond with anger as Elihu did. Rather, we are to “Cool [our] anger before speaking.” Invite the Lord to teach you other lessons from this section of Job and help you apply its truths.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Job’s three friends had taken far too long to say far too little to him when, in fact, Job could have instructed them. On the heels of their rounds of theological speeches, Elihu patiently waited for his turn, and then he lectured Job and the others for six consecutive chapters. There’s no dialogue. It’s all a monologue.

Who was Elihu? He was the son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram (Job 32:2). He may have been a relative of Abraham, since a man named Buz was a descendant of Nahor, Abraham’s brother.

Elihu delivers four speeches in Job 32–37. While he made some of the same points as Job’s other friends, he had a different purpose. Instead of trying to prove Job was a sinner (which the others failed to do), he attempted to demonstrate that Job had a wrong view of God. Though he blathers on for six chapters, his messages do contain some insightful theological truths—which we can discover.

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Observation: Preaching Too Long, Saying Too Little

When observing a large portion of Scripture, read the entire section like you might look at a map, seeing where you begin and end and then following the route along the way.¹ With a map image in mind, overview [Job 32–37](#). Identify Elihu's four speeches—Speech One, 32:6–33:33; Speech Two, 34:1–37; Speech Three, 35:1–16; Speech Four, 36:1–37:24. Note how Elihu begins by beating his chest in pride. By the end, however, his “heart pounds” for fear of God (Job 37:1). As you overview his speeches, how do you see Elihu's tone shifting from the beginning to the end?

In general, Elihu makes four mistakes along the way. He takes too long to get started. He comes across as pompous. He states what Job already knew. He never admits what he doesn't know and never allows for the mysteries of God. As you read the speeches, watch how these mistakes surface throughout.

Now that you have the overall direction, let's look closer at some of the points on the route.

Speech One—Job 32–33

Focus on [Job 32:1–10, 18; 33:13–15, 19–26](#). According to 32:1–5, why did Elihu's anger burn against Job? Against his three friends?

Why did Elihu wait before speaking, according to 32:6–7? What did he expect from his elders?

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In Job 32:8–10, 18, Elihu turned the tables on his elders. How did he call them out?

In 33:13, Elihu rebuked Job for complaining that God was silent. According to 33:15, 19–22, in what two ways did Elihu say that God speaks?

Then, Elihu suggested that (in those days) God may also have spoken through a mediating angel. In 33:23–26, what role did this angel serve?

Speech Two—Job 34

Read closely [Job 34:1–4, 7–16, 33](#). In this speech, Elihu centers his arguments on God's sovereignty—that God governs justly, without exception. In 34:7–10, what three accusations did he imply about Job?

How did Elihu appeal to God's sovereignty in human affairs in 34:7–16, 33?

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Speech Three—Job 35

In his third speech, Elihu targeted Job's complaint that God was unfair for allowing him to suffer. "What's the use of living a righteous life?" Job was saying (Job 35:3). What was Elihu's point in [Job 35:4–7](#)?

In [Job 35:13–16 NASB](#), why did Elihu say that God was silent (as if Elihu knew the mysteries of God)? How did Elihu insult Job?

Speech Four—Job 36–37

Elihu's fourth speech declares God's majesty and His faithfulness to the righteous. Focus on [Job 37:1–5, 14–16, 21–24](#). According to 37:1–5, 14–16, 21–22, what symbolic imagery did Elihu use to describe God?

How did Elihu conclude with a reference to God's faithfulness to the righteous in 37:23–24?

Not every person needs an answer. Sometimes you just let them go on, and you don't owe them an explanation. You don't need to give them proof of something. Job doesn't even answer Elihu here. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: Elihu's Points

Elihu's long-winded monologue did contain three theologically sound points. First, he recognized that *God disciplines people to turn them from the error of their ways*. What principles do you find about God's discipline in [Job 33:19–28](#)? How key is the interceding mediator—a role that Christ fulfilled and the Holy Spirit continues?

Second, Elihu acknowledged that *God governs justly and is fair in His dealings*. It may feel like we are being treated unfairly, but we don't understand God's purposes. What principles do you find about God's justice in [34:16–19](#) and [36:5–10](#)?

Third, he declared that *God is sovereign and that He is in full control at all times*. List some of the glorious truths about God's sovereignty Elihu described in [37:1–18](#).

*God is never shocked. God is never surprised. God is never out of control.
And furthermore, God doesn't feel obligated to explain Himself. I think
if He tried, most of us wouldn't get it anyway because He is so profound.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

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Correlation: God's Magnificent Ways and Narrow Path

As great in power, slow to anger, and just as God is, His path is narrow. Apart from Christ, there is no righteousness. Without Him, no holiness exists. Without His grace, there is no ability to change. Read [John 14:6](#). How did Jesus teach and incarnate these truths?

Elihu's problem wasn't that he spoke too long but that he spoke too little of real value. Paul delivered a long message in [Acts 20:7–11](#). He spoke through the night! But God's love through Christ took center stage. If we must speak at length, let's speak of God's grace and truth—a message that is always welcome!

When God is too small in our minds, our problems are magnified, and we retreat in fear and insecurity. Job was not one of those. When God becomes great in our minds our problems pale into insignificance and we stand in awe and we worship the King. Ours is a great God. Great and mighty is our God.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: How Big Is Your God?

The words used to describe the character of our God are many: *transcendent, inscrutable, incomprehensible, mysterious, magnificent, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, holy, just, good, and gracious*. We could continue the list.

God doesn't come to us because He needs us; He comes to us because we need Him. He doesn't speak because He thinks He needs to be heard; He speaks because He knows that without His voice, without His Word, and without His message, we are in a morass of trouble, misery, and anxiety.

How big, then, is *your* view of God? Big enough for you to hold Him in awe? Big enough to handle all your pain, your confusion, and your worry? Big enough to love you unconditionally despite your sin and your failures? What is your view of God, particularly in times of trouble?

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Job's counselors blamed Job for his suffering—saying he sinned or he had a wrong view of God. Job, however, didn't claim to be sinless but to be *blameless* (Job 1:1; 12:4), which is different from sinless. Sometimes, as in Job's case, no one is to blame for suffering. In what ways have you suffered and yet it wasn't your fault?

God sometimes allows hardships, not to discipline us but to reveal something about ourselves or Himself that we wouldn't have learned otherwise. Have you experienced that type of suffering? What did you learn about yourself? About God?

Take a moment to write a brief prayer of thanksgiving to God for who He is—majestic, wonderful, mysterious, and kind—and for all the ways He has provided for you and guided you through your trials.

God is bigger than we can imagine. He is fair and just. He is in control and sovereign, always. He is able enough and willing enough to be all that you need, now and forever!

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A FINAL PRAYER

I worship You, my great and mighty God. The One who transcends time and space. The one beyond my comprehension, full of a grace that is not in me, a goodness I have never known in myself. The one whose mercy and love know no limit. You alone are almighty, magnificent, victorious, sovereign, holy, and just. Deliver me from every pursuit of my own selfish happiness, and may I find my satisfaction in You, Great God. 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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