

JOB

A MAN OF HEROIC ENDURANCE

STUDY SEVENTEEN

A Penetrating Reproof from the Almighty

Job 38:1–40:5

Job realizes this must be some significant moment. He hears the voice he's been waiting to hear, but it isn't a voice of comfort.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

SOMETIMES God communicates with His children in a still small voice. Elijah, for example, longed to hear from his Lord when he fled for his life to Mount Sinai. As he stood before God on the mighty mountain, a terrible windstorm shattered the rocks, an earthquake shook its foundations, and a firestorm set it ablaze. But the Lord wasn't in any of these terrifying displays. Instead, God came to Elijah with "the sound of a gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:12)—which was just the form the hurting prophet needed to hear from God.

Sometimes, however, God communicates in a booming voice. When God gave the law to Moses at Mount Sinai, thick, heavy clouds, rumbling thunder, and sky-splitting lightning surrounded the mountain declaring His power to His people (Exodus 19:16–20). A raging storm on the Sea of Galilee formed the backdrop of Jesus walking on the water to show His disciples His divine authority (Matthew 14:24–25).

God's ways of relating to us are surprising and unpredictable. He may approach us gently, through a comforting promise from Scripture or a Spirit-inspired prompting in our conscience. Or He may get our attention through a pounding storm that forces us to cry out to Him. But He always has a purpose for revealing Himself. Whether through a gentle whisper or a stormy trial, *He wants us to know Him.*

Job had longingly waited to hear from God, and finally, in the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, God communicated with His suffering child.

Job *thought* he understood God. Throughout his life, he had served God, prayed to Him, and followed His ways. Now God was opening up a vast new world of knowing Him beyond anything Job could have imagined. It might not have been how Job expected to hear from God, but it was exactly the way he needed.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

We may think we know God, but when the Lord comes on the scene, we are amazed at how little we truly understand. The psalmist captures God’s awesome, holy presence.

*You are dressed in a robe of light.
You stretch out the starry curtain of the heavens;
you lay out the rafters of your home in the rain clouds.
You make the clouds your chariot;
you ride upon the wings of the wind. (Psalm 104:2–3)*

In prayer, invite the Lord to reveal His majestic nature and mighty ways as you study His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Worn to a frazzle from his devastating losses, his ravaged body, and his mistreatment from his alleged comforters, Job had been pleading with God for answers. “Why make me your target?” (Job 7:20). “What do you gain by oppressing me?” (10:3). “Tell me, what have I done wrong?” (13:23). “Why do you turn away from me?” (13:24). At last, God responded to Job’s questions—not in a gentle breeze. “Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind” (Job 38:1).

God answered Job’s questions . . . with questions of His own! From Job 38 through the remainder of the book, we find seventy-seven questions God asks Job—all meant to help Job understand Him in a new way.



Observation: Where Were You When I . . .

These chapters contain profound insight into the Holy One. Resist the urge to read too quickly or jump ahead. Take time to observe what the passage says before moving on to interpretation.¹

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God spoke in two series of questions. In the first series, in Job 38–39, God asked questions that revolved around the central query: “Can you explain or control My creation?” In 40:1–5, Job answered with *humility*. In the second series (which we’ll examine in the next study), God asked questions around the central query: “Can you change or subdue My creation?” Job answered with *repentance*.

Overview the first series of God’s questions and Job’s first response in [Job 38:1–40:5](#). As you read, notice what God *didn’t* do. He didn’t apologize for His silence. He didn’t reveal His heavenly conversation with Satan. He didn’t acknowledge Job’s deep struggles, although He was intimately aware of them, and He didn’t answer any of Job’s questions. Instead, He *did* reveal Himself to Job and remind him who’s controlling it all.

God’s First Series of Questions—Job 38–39

In Job 38–39, God transported Job from his ash heap to the dawn of time. God’s questions mirror the creation account in Genesis 1 as He asked Job about the earth, the skies, and the animal kingdom.

God: The Master Architect of Earth—Job 38:1–13, 16–18, 22

Focus on God’s questions in [Job 38:1–13, 16–18, 22](#). What was God declaring by appearing in “the whirlwind” (Job 38:1)? For what did God reprove Job in 38:2–3?

He pressed Job with pointed questions about His creation. In 38:4–7, what details did He highlight?

In 38:8–11, what second creative act did God showcase? What poetic language stands out?

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According to Job 38:12–13, how did the Lord refer to light? What did God ask Job about the mysteries of the deep in 38:16–18?

God: The Master Architect of Stellar Space—Job 38:31–33

Then, in [Job 38:31–33](#), the Lord shifted Job’s gaze toward the vastness of the universe. Among His innumerable heavenly bodies, what three constellations did He spotlight? What language captures the uniqueness of each?

Suddenly Job’s boils don’t seem quite as significant. And the answers he was giving his friends with such dogmatism don’t flow with such eloquence anymore.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

God: The Master Architect of the Animal Kingdom—Job 38:39–41; 39:1, 13–27

The Lord next directed Job’s gaze to the animal kingdom. Large and small, He highlighted their diversity and detail, all part of His creative genius. Read [Job 38:39–41; 39:1, 13–27](#).

What animals does the Lord feature in 38:39–39:1? What spheres of their lives are mentioned?

In 39:13–18 God examines the ostrich. What habits does He note? How does God contrast it with the horse in 39:19–25 and the hawk and the eagle in 39:26–27. What details reflect God’s masterful creative touch?

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Job's Response—Job 40:3–5

Read [Job 40:3–5](#). Job answered none of God's questions, because he *couldn't* answer them! According to 40:5, what impact did God's reproof have on Job?

Job has three responses. One is a response of humility. The second is a response of relief. And the third is a response of surrender. That's exactly what God wanted to hear. What a great change for Job who has become this determined apologist defending himself thinking that he understood the providence of God.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Whirlwinds, Storms, and Theophanies

God's disclosure of Himself in the whirlwind is an example of a *theophany*. Read the article "[Theophany](#)" in the *Holman Bible Dictionary* at studylight.org. From your research, what is a theophany, and what is its purpose? What are some types? How did the incarnation of Christ end the need for theophanies?

God's plans *for* us and His ways *with* us sometimes come in the whirlwind. We prefer the calm and the safe—but God's ways are not our ways. Why does God sometimes relate to us through storms? What is He saying to us? What is His purpose?

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In [Job 40:3–5](#), Job responded to God’s questions with concise phrases surrounding a rhetorical question: “How could I ever find the answers?” How did Job demonstrate *humility*? In what ways can you sense his *relief*, knowing God is in charge, and his *surrender* to God—even though Job didn’t understand God’s ways?

We think in moments like these, Where is God when I need Him? He is there in the storm and in the whirlwind. Most of us could testify that our lives changed because of a reproof that came through some enormously significant event, usually stormy. God’s whirlwind messages are never forgotten.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: God’s Ways Are Not Our Ways

The mystery of Job’s severe testing reflects God’s sovereignty, supremacy, and inscrutability found elsewhere in Scripture. In [Isaiah 55:6–9](#), what points did the prophet make about God’s ways? What should our response be?

In [Nahum 1:3](#), what does the whirlwind and the storm represent? How should we respond?

God is totally and completely and absolutely different from us. Therefore, His ways are full of shocks and surprises. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Responding Correctly to God's Unusual Working

We are not by nature humble, submissive, and quiet. We prefer to be in control, calling the shots. And we don't like surprises, even God's surprises, nor do we enjoy having to wait for anything. If we were honest, our prayers often begin with "Lord, hurry up." We'd rather talk than listen. Be in charge rather than submit. Act first rather than wait for permission later.

In contrast, Job models a better way to relate to God. Pastor Chuck Swindoll offers these principles from Job's example:

1. *If God's ways are higher than mine, then whatever He allows I bow in submission. That results in humility.* Like Job, admit you don't have the answers.
2. *If God is in full control, then however He directs my steps, I follow in obedience. That relieves me.* As Job learned, there's great relief in letting God take the lead.
3. *If God has answers I lack, then whenever He speaks, I listen in silence. That instructs me.* Job's silence models how you can find calm. Open your hands to receive whatever God gives.

Which of these principles do you find most helpful in relating to God in your current storm? In what ways can you apply it?

When have you sensed God addressing you in your stormy circumstance? What did He say, perhaps through His Word or through a prompting in your spirit? What did He teach you through that experience?

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As you close your study, in the space below, invite God to meet you in your ash heap of sorrows and lift you into the wonder of who He is. What new wonders might He be revealing about Himself that help strengthen your faith in Him?

His ways are not your ways, but still, you can trust His love for you. Release your need for answers, keep your gaze on Him, and willingly cooperate with His plan. If you can do that, you'll find peace even in the storm.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for Your instruction, which comes in such surprising ways in a book as ancient as Job. Turn my heart to You, Lord. Break my will. Erase this streak in me that yearns to control. May I become Your kind of person—truthful, humble, teachable, ready to change. I ask this in the name of Christ my Lord. 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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