

A Study Outline of the Book of Job **Developed by Bob Young**

FOREWORD

Most churches face a difficult challenge in determining how to address the longer books of the Bible in adult Bible classes. Many books are too long for a traditional “chapter a week” approach. How does one deal with the Pentateuch, the Old Testament (OT) books of history, or the Major Prophets with a class structure that uses 13-week studies, or at most 26-week studies? Even the New Testament (NT) book of Acts may begin to wear on a class after six months. And every time a church devotes a long period of time to a certain biblical text, the study of other important books is automatically excluded. Some who have studied adult education curriculum suggest that the entirety of the Biblical text should be treated in a 5-6 year rotation to insure constant contact with and awareness of the word of God. How does one treat the large amount of OT material in a short time frame?

This outline suggests a way of treating the text of Job in an abbreviated class. The material is divided into 16 sections, but lessons could easily be combined by a teacher to cover the 13 weeks of a quarter, or expanded as needed. The material presents a relatively detailed outline of Job, hoping that student will be able to understand the text better, since minor paragraph divisions are seldom marked. Class sessions include general outlines, observations, and detailed outlines, all designed to provide an overview of the text covered in the lesson.

This material has been gathered from a variety of sources over the course of the years. Unfortunately, some of those sources are now unknown to me. The material here is the result of the notes I have written in my Bible, along with several standard Bible study helps which suggest paragraph divisions and content in the text. The notes which appear in the NIV Study Bible have also been helpful.

This study is not an academic study designed to answer all of the questions that can be raised about the text and how it should be divided or understood. This study is designed to be a practical approach to the text which can help students see a logical and natural progression, and possible sub-points within the larger paragraphs that are customarily marked in contemporary versions of the Bible. The wording of the sub-points in the outline is designed to suggest a possible understanding of the section.

Each lesson begins at the top of a page to make it possible to copy and hand out a single lesson at a time.

---Bob Young

The Book of Job

LESSON 1 -- Chapters 1-2

Introduction

Job 1-2 is a wonderful study in the connection between form and content

Job 1-2 is not poetic in form, but it has a discernible form

Outline

- 1:1-5 Introduction, Orientation
- 1:6-12 Heavenly Scene, Challenge #1
- 1:13-19 Earthly Scene, Disaster #1
- 1:20-22 Job's response
- 2:1-6 Heavenly Scene, Challenge #2
- 2:7-8 Earthly Scene, Disaster #2
- 2:9-10 Job's response

Note the parallels between 1:22, 2:10, and 3:1

Observations

This is the "set up." We can observe the "movement." We can observe repeated phrases. We should read in awe. We must not "overread." We must be observant. What is happening?

Why? What might I see again? What might I need to remember? Key words? Phrases?

We tend to read already knowing the conclusion. We must read with freshness.

With that word of warning, I risk giving a general outline of the book.

- 1-2 Dilemma
- 3-27 Dialogue: doubting and denial
- 28-37 Discussions: destiny
- 38-42 Discourse: God's declaration
- 42 Decision

The Book of Job

LESSON 2 -- Chapter 3

Introduction

Measuring the Book of Job

- Prologue, 1-2
- Lament, 3
- Dialog cycles, 4-27 (spiritual degeneration, disorientation)
- 28, Wisdom (foundation)
- 29-42:6, Speeches (orientation)
- 42:7-17, Epilogue

Thinking About Lament

- Job is lament in a community that did not want him to lament.
- The struggle of Job is how to be a faithful lamenter.

General outline of laments (cf. Psalm 13)

- Complaint
- Petition
- Praise

Outline

Narrator, 3:1

Rhetorical questions, 3:11-12, 16, 20-23

Lament/questions cycles

3:3-10

11-12, perishing at birth

13-15

16, the possibility of stillbirth

17-19

20-23, the desirability of death

24-26

Observations

How will we react to lament?

Can one lament and still be faithful?

As Christians, how shall we respond to lament?

- Don't try to identify the reason for the problem
- Listen
- Lament with

Function of prayerful lament

- To take real questions to God
- To provide a dynamic moment of encounter (sanctuary experience)
- To enable praise despite unanswered questions

The Book of Job

LESSON 3 -- Chapters 4-7

Outline

The first discourse of Eliphaz, 4-5

Job's reply to Eliphaz, 6

Job's complaint to God, 7

Observations

Is the problem what the friends know, or what they do not know?

How much awareness of God's activity do the friends appear to have?

What is the thrust of the argument of Eliphaz?

Detailed Outline

Eliphaz

4:1-5	compliments to Job
6	you can count on your piety
7	if you are innocent you will not be destroyed
8-11	the wicked are destroyed
12-21	a mystical illustration
5:1	where will you plead your case?
2-7	there is no place for resenting God and acting foolishly
8-16	a hymn to God
17-26	a poem of blessedness
27	conclusion

Job's reply to Eliphaz

6:1-4	listen with sympathy to one wounded by God
5-13	the hopelessness of my condition (refrain of chapter 3?)
14-21	I need help from dependable friends
22-23	what I need will cost you nothing
24-30	be honest with me as I have been with you

Job's complaint to God

7:1-10	the common lot of humankind
11-16	therefore it is right for me to anguish against apparent injustice
17-21	are you interested in mankind for more than testing him for offenses?

The Book of Job

LESSON 4 -- Chapters 8-10

Outline

The first discourse of Bildad, 8

Job's reply to Bildad, 9-10

Observations

What is the thrust of the argument of Bildad, based on what Bildad says and how Job replies?

Detailed Outline

Bildad

8:1-3	accusing Job, Bildad's impatience
4-7	God is not unjust, so Job must be suffering as a result of sinfulness; Job should plead for mercy because God restores the upright; Bildad thinks Job a hypocrite
8-10	the wisdom of history supports my view
11-19	wisdom: words of instruction
20-22	apply the wisdom

Job's reply to Bildad

9:1-3	I am not sinless, but I am innocent of any sin that deserves such suffering
4-10	hymn: God's greatness
10-11	unfathomable, invisible God
12-13	sovereign God
14-15	just God
16-17	unapproachable God
17-20	unexplainable God (Job does not know God has allowed Satan to work in his life)
21-31	Job's despair, the enigma of Job's situation, the enigma of God
32-35	Job's call for mediation
10:1	Job's despair restated
2-7	Job imagines a conversation with God
8-17	Job questions God, possibly as adversaries in court
18-22	Job's lament restated (cf. chapter 3)

The Book of Job

LESSON 5 -- Chapters 11-14

Outline

First discourse of Zophar, 11

Job's reply to Zophar, 12-14

Observations

What is the thrust of the argument of Zophar, based on what he says and Job's reply?

Detailed Outline

Zophar

11:1-6 Zophar fails to identify with Job even though he summarizes his ideas

7-12 Zophar's view of God's greatness and Job's weakness

13-20 Job's problems are rooted in his sins; the solution is to repent

Job's reply to Zophar (and to all of the three friends?)

12:1-6 Job's sarcastic reaction

7-12 all creation proves God's sovereignty and decisions apart from human experience

13-25 God is sovereign in creation and in history (note the negatives)

13:1-12 inadequate counselors

13-19 final argument in "round #1"

Job speaks to God

13:20-22 Job's two requests—withdraw punishment, communication

23-27 Job suggests the connection between sin and suffering/death

13:28-14:1 man's destiny is death

14:2-6 poem about man's destiny

7-12 man is more flower than tree

13-17 plea for relief

18-22 pessimism—God will not act

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LESSON 6 -- Chapters 15-17

Outline

Second discourse of Eliphaz, 15

Job's reply to Eliphaz, 16-17

Observations

What is the thrust of this argument of Eliphaz? How does it relate to his previous argument? Eliphaz was formerly the most sympathetic, but now appears to have run out of patience.

Detailed Outline

Eliphaz

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 15:1-6 | Eliphaz's severe denouncement of Job |
| 7-10 | Eliphaz questions Job's wisdom |
| 11-13 | Eliphaz rebukes Job for his animosity to his friends' first efforts |
| 14-16 | Eliphaz repeats his argument (see 4:17-19) |
| 17-26 | Eliphaz supports his advice with traditional understanding (wisdom) |
| 20-35 | a wisdom poem |

Job's reply to Eliphaz (with some comments seemingly directed toward God)

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 16:1-5 | Job's questions about the lengthy speeches and judgment of the advisors |
| 6-14 | Job shows his situation to be the opposite of what Eliphaz describes in 15:25-26 |
| 15-17 | Job's summary of his misery |
| 16:18-17:2 | Job wonders if he will live long enough to be shown as justified |
| 3-9 | Job requests a pledge from God |
| 10-16 | Job questions the response of the friends to his lament and shows it is utterly useless and wrong |

The Book of Job

LESSON 7 -- Chapters 18-19

Outline

Second discourse of Bildad, 18

Job's reply to Bildad, 19

Observations

What is the thrust of Bildad's argument? Does it change or advance from his first argument? Notice Bildad's increasing resentment.

Detailed Outline

Bildad

18:1-3 Bildad accuses Job of a belittling attitude

4 Bildad sees Job's over-emotional reaction as self-centered and irrational

5-21 another poem concerning the fate of the wicked

(Bildad's purpose seems to be to convince Job that Job is wrong in suggesting that the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper. Bildad seems to hold that all debts are paid in this life, at least in the case of the wicked.)

Job's reply to Bildad

19:1-7 Job again questions the attitude and humility of his friends in the face of his dire situation

8-12 Job describes his relationship with God under the metaphor of war

13-20 Job describes the hurts of alienation and rejection

21-22 Thus Job requests pity and understanding from his friends

23-27 Job's exalted description of his relationship with God

28-29 Job warns his friends of judgment

The Book of Job

LESSON 8 -- Chapters 20-21

Outline

Second (and final) discourse of Zophar, 20

Job's reply to Zophar, 21

Observations

What is the thrust of Zophar's argument?

Detailed Outline

Zophar

20:1-29 another "poem" on the fate of the wicked

20:1-3 Zophar sees Job's words as a personal affront

4-11 Zophar's observations that he himself is healthy and prosperous, thus righteous

12-19 a description of the wicked

20-29 the wicked can be sure that God will act

Job's reply to Zophar

21:1-6 Job requests more careful consideration of his words and his situation

7-15 Job's 'take' on the fate of the wicked

16 Job's conclusion is to avoid the wicked

17-21 Job's understanding of God's treatment of the wicked

22-26 the wisdom of God, reflected in the fate of humankind

27-34 your kind of thinking will never lead to consolation!

The Book of Job

LESSON 9 -- Chapters 22-24

Outline

Third discourse of Eliphaz, 22

Job's reply to Eliphaz, 23-24

Observations

This cycle of speeches is quite abbreviated in comparison to the former cycles.

Bildad's speech is very brief and Zophar does not speak at all.

What is the thrust of the argument of Eliphaz in this third round?

Detailed Outline

Eliphaz

- 22:1-4 Eliphaz argues that God is indifferent to man's goodness since it cannot diminish or enhance God. It is only when man is evil that God is aroused.
- 5-11 Eliphaz reprimands Job for his callousness.
- 12-20 Eliphaz finally concludes with the other two friends that Job must be an evil man
- 21-30 Eliphaz calls on Job to repent

Job's reply to Eliphaz

- 23:1-7 Job maintains with integrity that he would be acquitted if he could speak to God
- 8-12 Although Job cannot find God, God sees Job
- 10-12 Job maintains his uprightness before God
- 13-17 Job affirms God's sovereignty and man's morality
- 17 Job responds to a specific point of Eliphaz (cf. 22:11)
- 24:1-12 Job describes the injustice of the world
- 13-17 Job describes the unjust people who cause suffering in the world
- 18-20 Job calls for justice against such evil
- 21-25 God will just the wicked, but on God's timetable. However, it would be nice for the righteous to be able to see it

The Book of Job

LESSON 10 -- Chapters 25-27

Outline

Third discourse of Bildad, 25

Job's reply to Bildad, 26

Job's final answer to his three friends, 27

Observations

Again, this cycle of speeches is abbreviated in comparison to the former cycles.

Bildad's speech (studied in this lesson) is brief and Zophar does not speak at all.

Bildad has nothing new to add and Zophar has already admitted that he is emotionally disturbed by this entire matter (20:2) and thus does not comment further.

This concludes the three cycles with eight sets of discourses.

Cycle 1: Eliphaz/Job, Bildad/Job, Zophar Job 4-14

Cycle 2: Eliphaz/Job, Bildad/Job, Zophar Job 15-21

Cycle 3: Eliphaz/Job, Bildad/Job 22-26

The dialogue/dispute section of Job begins with Job's lament (3), continues with the three cycles of speeches, and concludes with Job's closing discourse (27).

What is the thrust of the argument of Bildad?

Detailed Outline

Bildad

25:1-3 God does warfare in heaven, not on earth

4-6 It is clear that humanity is depraved

Job's reply to Bildad

26:1-4 Job's sarcasm is directed only to Bildad. (Have Eliphaz and Zophar already been silenced?)

5-14 Job's poem about the powerful sovereign God (note the figurative language)

Job's summary and final answer to the friends

27:1-12 Job reasserts his innocence

13-23 Job describes the ultimate fate of the wicked

The Book of Job

LESSON 11 -- Chapter 28

Outline

A wisdom poem in three sections

1-11 the source of precious metals

12-19 wisdom parallel, not parallel, more valuable

20-28 wisdom is found only with God

Observations

The question of how and when wisdom should be applied to the problem Job faces has been a major thrust of the speeches of his friends as well as Job's replies. Job's friends have depended on a traditional understanding of human suffering, based on long years of teaching, to justify their positions. In the world Job knew, his responses were untraditional. Human wisdom obviously falls short in attempting to answer the questions posed by the book of Job.

Against this background, we have here a wisdom poem that seeks to explore the nature of wisdom and its source (vv. 12, 20). This poem anticipates the end of the book and the God discourses. Only God holds the answers to the mysteries that Job and his friends are trying to understand.

Detailed Outline

1-11 the search of human beings for precious stones and metals

12-19 the search for wisdom is similar, dissimilar, and beyond comparison, because wisdom is much more valuable than the things the world values

20-28 wisdom comes from God

The Book of Job

LESSON 12 -- Chapters 29-30

Outline

Job's closing argument is made in three sections

- | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|
| 29 | his former state of health and wealth |
| 30 | he laments loss of everything |
| 31 | he maintains his innocence |

Observations

This section concludes the speeches of Job, presenting a kind of final summation of his protest against the statements of his friends. Job does not reply to the discourses of Elihu or God in the later sections of the book.

Job presents a summation, not unlike a courtroom scene with closing arguments.

He basically makes his claim in the three parts outlined above:

- He reviews his former state of health and wealth, happiness and family blessings
- He laments his loss of everything, especially his reputation and honor
- He maintains his innocence

This lesson treats only the first two sections of Job's closing argument.

Detailed Outline

The Former State, 29

Here is an excellent example of early Semitic rhetoric in a chiasm pattern

- | |
|-----------------------|
| A—blessings (2-6) |
| B—honor (7-10) |
| C—benevolence (11-17) |
| B'—honor (18-20) |
| A'—blessings (21-25) |

The Present State, 30

Job's lament is reflected in the native (lament) tone of this chapter in stark contrast to the positive notes of the previous section. The lament (qinah) meter may assist one in reading this section (try to read in a minor key). The terrors around Job are overwhelming and his lament is to be expected.

Notice that Job's rage over his condition, indicating a lack of understanding, has not subsided.

- | | |
|-------|------------------------------|
| 1-8 | but now... |
| 9-15 | and now... |
| 16-19 | and now... |
| 20-23 | Job cries out to God |
| 24-31 | the conclusion of the lament |

The Book of Job

LESSON 13 -- Chapter 31

Outline

Job's closing argument is made in three sections

- 29 his former state of health and wealth
- 30 he laments loss of everything
- 31 he maintains his innocence

Observations

We noted in the previous lesson that Job presents a summation, not unlike a courtroom scene with closing arguments. He makes his claim in the three parts outlined above:

- He reviews his former state of health and wealth, happiness and family blessings
- He laments his loss of everything, especially his reputation and honor
- He maintains his innocence

In the final section, Job presents a negative summation, then a positive. He again denies that he has sinned as charged, thus maintaining his innocence, and he affirms his loyalty to God.

This section uses some legal terms, and Job's defense is often misunderstood in his use of a series of oaths and maledictions (curses). This is the completion of his defense. The burden of proof now rests with God to demonstrate the truthfulness of the friends or of Job.

Detailed Outline

Final Defense, 31

This section is a series of disavowals, note the "if-then" statements accompanied by an oath for punishment if offense is present (5-8, 9-12, 13-15, 16-23, 24-28, 29-40).

The parenthetical statement of 35-37 is Job's final call for justice.

- 1-12 sins of the heart
- 13-23 questions of social justice
- 24-28 unfaithfulness to God (idolatry)
- 29-40 summary focused on mistreatment of others

The Book of Job

LESSON 14 -- Chapters 32-34

Outline

32:1-5	Prose introduction
32:6-33:33	Elihu's first speech
34	Elihu's second speech

Observations

In this section we meet a fourth counselor who has apparently been standing on the sidelines overhearing all of the previous dialogues and disputes. He claims he can show both Job and his friends are mistaken in their beliefs. The prose introduction appears to be the work of the author or compiler of the book. Four speeches follow (32-33, 34, 35, 36-37). The first two speeches of Elihu will be studied in this lesson, the final two speeches in the next lesson.

Detailed Outline

Elihu's first speech

32:6-9	Introduction
10-14	Elihu's observation of the past dialogues and intention in his presentation
15-22	Soliloquy of self-reflection, for benefit of hearers
33:1-7	Elihu addresses Job by name in his initial introduction and challenge. He mentions several of the things Job has complained about previously.
8-11	Elihu summarizes Job's position as he understands it
12-22	Elihu teaches that suffering may be a source of chastening
23-28	Elihu raises the possibility that redemption might come through a mediator
29-30	Elihu mentions that God may have an ultimate purpose
31-33	Elihu asks for Job's attention based on these possibilities

Elihu's second speech

34:2-15	Elihu addresses wise men
16-33	Elihu addresses Job
34-37	Elihu addresses himself (self-reflective)

The Book of Job

LESSON 15 -- Chapters 35-37

Outline

Elihu's third speech, 35

Elihu's fourth speech, 36-37

Observations

Elihu addresses both of these speeches to Job—all of the third speech and the majority of the fourth. Only Elihu's second speech speaks directly to bystanders, although the self-reflective sections may also be for the benefit of the bystanders.

Detailed Outline

Elihu's third speech

- 35:1-3 Elihu focuses on the inconsistency of Job's position—how can Job expect vindication and at the same time claim God is neutral concerning human righteousness?
- 4-8 Elihu asserts God's "position" far above the human sphere, beyond the influence of human beings
- 9-11 Why cannot those who suffer innocently simply depend on God's justice and goodness?
- 12-13 God does not answer when men are arrogant or when men ask wrongly.
- 14-16 The solution is to wait, depend on God's character, and avoid senseless talk.

Elihu's fourth speech

- 36:1-4 Elihu speaks further of God's goodness and justice
- 5 God's power is the assurance of his ability to fulfill his purposes
- 6-12 Elihu's statement concerning God's justice and punishment
- 13-15 Mankind's basic problem is his heard heart—failure to yield to God, to cry out to God, or to hear God in the midst of suffering
- 16-21 Elihu warns Job to begin by turning from evil and responding to God's discipline wherein is true hope.
- 22-33 Elihu's description of God is similar to many of God's statement in the section that follows (chapters 38-40)
- 37:1-13 Continuation of the hymn describing God
- 14-18 Elihu challenges Job to think again about God's power in the world. The questions Elihu poses are similar in form to those in the God-discourse section.
- 19-24 Elihu's final challenge to Job is softened by Elihu's identification with Job's vulnerability before God. The message is that we humans have no place in being so bold, that we stand in God's presence only in shame and dishonor, and that we can depend on God to be true to himself.

The Book of Job

LESSON 16 -- Chapters 38-42

Outline

38:1-40:2	First discourse of the Lord
40:3-5	Job's response
40:6-41:34	Second discourse of the Lord
42:1-6	Job's response
42:7-16	Epilogue to the book

Observations

This lesson studies the first discourse of the Lord and Job's response.

The section should probably be understood as a theophany (appearance of God).

Both of God's discourses receive very brief responses from Job.

Detailed Outline

The Lord's First Discourse

38:1-3	Introduction
4-38	The created world testifies to God's sovereignty and power earth (4-7, 18); sea (8-11, 16); sun (12-15); netherworld (17); light-dark (19-20); weather (22-30, 34-38); constellations (31-33)
38:39-39:30	Animate creation testifies to God's sovereignty, power, and loving care lion (39-40); raven (41); mountain goat (39:1-4); donkey (5-8); ox (9-12) stork-ostrich (13-18); horse (19-25); hawk (26); eagle (27-30)

Job's response

40:3-5	Job refuses to complain in the very presence of God
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The Lord's Second Discourse

40:6-7	Introduction
8-14	Prologue to second discourse: God addresses questions of justice
15-24	First poem, description of huge beast, represents God's greatness and power
41:1-34	Second poem, also a description of a huge beast, makes same point as previous poem. This is the Lord's final speech

Job's response

42:1-6	Job acknowledges that God's purposes are supreme, and he accepts God's plan for his life, including suffering. He recants and repents.
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Epilogue

42:7-9	Job is now commended, despite his previous mistakes and attitudes. His friends are rebuked.
10	Job prays for his friends.
10-11	Job is doubly blessed
12-16	Conclusion: the contest with the Accuser is over and Job is restored. Job will only experience suffering if there is reason, even in the deep purposes of God, beyond our knowledge in this life. God is the one who always does right.