

# How to Respond When You Do Not Know What to Do? sermonaudio.com

*3-Year Bible Reading Plan*

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**Bible Text:** Job 1-2  
**Preached On:** Sunday, September 13, 2020

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Job. Now you may not be familiar with the book of Job. It is a part of our Bible reading plan right now but the easiest way to find it is to go to the middle of your Bible, typically it opens up to Psalms, and then turn to the left. Now here's one of the advantages of Job: it has 42 chapters so it's somewhat lengthy and somewhat easy to find. But today we're gonna be in chapters 1 and 2 and you and I have the privilege today of doing two things. 1. We're going to walk through the journey of a man's life who is one of the first individuals that the Lord gives us insight into his life. Now we recognize the Lord inspired Moses to give us Genesis which gives the earliest account of all things, but as far as an individual, Job is one of the most historically, one of the oldest figures and probably one of the oldest books that we have in all the Bible. So that's point 1, the second thing that we have the privilege of doing today is that we actually have the opportunity to see that somebody has it worse than us. Now think about that for a moment. We are walking through difficult days. We are navigating unprecedented waters and one of the things that has consistently been brought to my attention by individuals in recent days is this statement, "I just don't know what to do." Because we're walking through days that nobody else has seen, we're dealing with issues that in a combination thereof are more difficult than in previous days, and whether it's our personal life, our financial life, our relationships, whatever it may be, these are just those days where we look up and go, "There's no precedence. You know, there's no course I can take in college to go through a pandemic. They don't offer that down the street, How to Survive a Pandemic 101, it's not there."

So today I want to address the issue: what do we do when we don't know what to do? In the book of Job we meet a character who the Lord is going to call perfect, one who eschews evil and fears God. Now we understand what it means to fear God, we understand what it means to eliminate or to eschew evil in our lives, but I don't want you to get conflicted here when it says that he's perfect. You know the word "perfection" is not a synonym with sinlessness. Allow me to illustrate. In baseball you can throw a perfect game, it doesn't mean you were sinless. Your supervisor can ask you to turn into a project and their response can be it was perfect. You can take a test in class and the teacher can write 100, perfect, on it, that does not mean you're sinless in your endeavor, it just means that you're complete. It means that you satisfied the necessary requirements at

the time. And the reason I want to address that is we're about to walk through somebody's life who I promise is more difficult than anything you have or ever will walk through, and yet at the same time I want you to see that if it can happen to him, it can happen to us.

So as we turn to the book of Job this morning, beginning in chapter 1 we find ourselves not only in the land of Uz but in the place of heaven. It says,

1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. 2 And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. 3 His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred donkeys, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. 4 And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. 5 And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually. 6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. 7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? 9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? 10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. 11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. 12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

I want to fast forward to chapter 2. We discover that exactly what was allowed took place. His 10 children lost their lives. The land and all the prosperity thereof was eliminated from his life. We'll address this in just a moment. At the end of chapter 1, Job basically says that we are to bless God in the good times and in the bad times. Blessed be the name of the Lord. We pick it up in chapter 2.

1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. 2 And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in

the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. 4 And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. 5 But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. 6 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.

Now we discover in the book of Job that things go sideways real quick and if you've caught up with the Bible reading plan, by the time you get to chapters 3 through 37, we find a man who is sick with sores from top to bottom, he's lost his family, his finances, he even loses the intimacy of his friendships and the encouragement therein, but allow me to put the cart before the horse and invite you to come back next week because we're gonna study the end of the book of Job next week and we discover that in our faithfulness we discover that when we just trust that God knows what he's doing when we don't have a clue what he's doing, he not only takes care of us, he blesses us and Job ends up in the end with more favor from God than he even had in what we just read. But between now and then, we're navigating pandemics, we're walking through social unrest, we have businesses that are teetering on bankruptcy, we have relationships that are fractured at best, we have disappointment that is running amok, how do we walk through this thing called life, particularly in these unprecedented days?

Several things I think we need to learn from the individual known as Job. The first thing is this: there's some things we need to recognize. There's some things that we need to wrap our mind around and the first one is this, the significance of the spiritual world. I think if you were a financial planner or if you were a life coach, you could say nobody pulled it off better than Job, did he? I mean, here was a man who had a family that is worthy of the Christmas cards we send out every year. Here is a man who has the finances to fund any endeavor he would so choose. Here is a man who is so gracious and so giving that when his children are throwing a little party, he is making sure that there's no way they're transgressing the things of God. His spreadsheet, his investments not only financially but in his family, it all worked out the way he had planned and yet what do we discover? Look in chapter 1, verse 6, it says there came a day where the sons of God, by the way, we find out later in chapter 38 that the sons of God are the angelic beings and Satan, they present themselves before the Lord. There is a conversation that takes place in the heavens. There is a conversation that takes place between the Lord and the spiritual entities of the universe and here's what I want you to grasp: the material world that we so love to plan and so love to think out cannot compete with the reality of the spiritual world. When the Lord allows, when the Lord decides and we'll talk about this more in a minute, when the Lord gives leeway for things to change, it doesn't matter how educated you are, it doesn't matter how well you've planned, it doesn't matter what your portfolio looks like, if heaven decides to allow things to move, earth must follow. We must realize that everything that we walk through no matter how difficult it may look, no matter how

extreme it may feel, that behind the scenes, behind the physicalness of everything there is a spiritual reality to things.

Now having said that, I want to address something that I spoke of briefly in our men's Bible study on Tuesday morning that is critical not just to all aspects of life but particularly the lessons from Job. I want to talk about the difference between our standing and our state. I'll define those in just a moment but look in chapter 1, verse 8. It says, "the LORD said unto Satan, Have you considered my servant Job?" Now I want to unpack the difference between one's standing and one's state. One's standing is the relationship or the position that they have with another entity. One's state is the current climate or condition or the environment that one finds themselves in light of that standing. Allow me to use the same illustration I used with our men on Tuesday morning. If you are a member of a baseball team, your standing is you wear the jersey, you're part of the team. But if you're walking through a slump, your state has changed but your standing has not.

Let me get more serious. If there has ever been a time in your life, if there's ever been that moment where you realized that you have a sin problem, you've done things you shouldn't have done, you've said things you shouldn't have said, and you've thought things you shouldn't have thought, and you realize that the Bible is true, the wages or the result of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. If you have understood that and you have "hit your knees" and said, "Jesus, I can't do this on my own. I can't save myself. I can never rectify my sin problem. I believe that your shed blood and the empty tomb is enough to satisfy what is required for my soul to be saved." If you are what the Bible calls born again, saved, reconciled, redeemed, there's a lot of good Bible words there, then I've got good news for you: your standing is that you're a child of God. That's your standing. You're his son. You're his daughter. You are a part of his family so much so that when questioned about it in John 10, Jesus made this statement that nothing or nobody can pull us out of his hand. That is your standing but you do realize sometimes our state makes us question our standing.

Now I want you to put yourself in Job's shoes for just a moment. I mean, you can imagine things are looking good as far as his relationship with the Lord. His family is healthy. His finances are in abundance. But by the time we get to chapter 2, it's a mess, is it not? The funerals have taken place. The bank has called in on the loans, whatever analogy you want to use. And so there is a natural tendency for us to think that somehow that his position with the Lord has changed but go into chapter 2 for just a moment, I want you to notice what it says in verse 3. "The LORD said unto Satan, Have you considered my servant Job?" Why is this so critical? If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are a child of God, you are a daughter of God, a son of God, it doesn't matter if you're filthy rich or bankrupt, it does not change your position. It doesn't matter if you're sick or if you're healthy. It doesn't matter if you're beloved or if you're despised. Your state does not affect your standing and one of the lessons we need to learn from Job, what we need to recognize is this: if the world is falling apart around us, it does not mean that God has abandoned us. If the world is not as we had drawn it out, that does not mean that somehow that God does not care. What does he say? "Have you considered my servant Job?" He referred to him in the same context without his children and without his

finances as he did with both. Your state, your environment does not dictate your walk and your relationship with the Lord.

There's a third thing we need to recognize and it is this: there are some shackles that are involved. Go back to chapter 1, verse 12. Satan tells him that, "There something up here, God. There's no way that somebody would love you like Job loves you except that you have favored him." I want you to see what the Lord says unto him. The Lord said unto Satan, "Behold all that he has is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand." So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord. The same thing happens in chapter 2. He says, "Oh, but if you just touch him," we'll address that in a moment. God says, "Okay, that's fine, you can touch him but don't take his life." Here's what you need to understand in 2 Peter 2:4 it talks about the angels who fell with Satan years ago, that they are bound by chains of the Lord. In other words, when we talk about shackles, we talk about handcuffs, whatever it may be, what do they do? They restrict our movement, do they not? They keep us in a location that has been defined by whoever is in authority and we discover here that no matter what havoc the Lord allows Satan in our life, it doesn't matter what degree of life that falls upon us that Satan is allowed to dispense, God still controls the amount, the distance and the depth.

Now I know what some of you are thinking: I don't like what he's allowed. We'll get to that in just a moment but here's the comfort. It reminds me of an old junkyard dog. Maybe that's an illustration some young people have never seen but I've seen an old junkyard dog. There's a reason they don't feed them. Why? Because if you trespass their property, they want to make sure that you suffer the consequences. I want you to imagine an old junkyard dog with a 50 foot chain. Just imagine the illustration, 50 foot. You do realize that if you're 51 feet away from him, he can't touch you. It might scare you, might get a little spit on you, but you can sit there and go, "Hey, little puppy, how ya doing?" Because he's on a chain and though he hasn't been fed and you look like a good supper to him, and even though he's been mistreated and he has been trained to enact havoc on your life, if you are outside of that, then there's nothing he can do. He doesn't have permission. He doesn't have allowance.

You say, "Why is this important?" Because anything that God has allowed Satan to pour out on you is not arbitrary at Satan's wish, it has been allowed by God. Now that's hard for some of us to take but we'll get to that next week when we talk about chapter 42 because we discover that it is the trials, the tribulations, the difficulties of life that actually form and fashion us to be what God was desiring us all along. We've got realize whatever you're walking through right now, there's a spiritual world that is more powerful than even the physical that we're addressing. We have to understand that just because it doesn't look the way we hoped it to doesn't necessarily change our relationship with the Lord. And last but not least, please understand that if Satan is pouring it out on you, it is because God has allowed it but God also holds the key to the chain and can say, "That's enough."

So here's the big question: how do we respond knowing these things, looking at Job's life, looking at our own struggles and our own problems? How do we respond to this? Well,

there's really three ways that you can respond and we're probably gonna start with the worst and then go to the best. I want you to fast forward to chapter 2, verse 4. I want you to hear the wisdom of Satan. Now that may sound like a strange phrase to you but he knows humanity pretty well, does he not? He was there when we fell in the garden of Eden. He's been there all along. He has watched us. He has observed us. He knows us pretty well. Look in verse 4 of chapter 2, "And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." You know, one of the ways that you can respond to the difficulties of life, the hard times of life, the "I don't know what to do's" in life, is you can think like the world and you can rationalize some things and say, "Well, what's the rational approach?" Let me unpack what that means. What do I need to give up or change to fix this mess? That's some rationale, is it not? What needs to be altered? What needs to be changed? What needs to be fixed? What needs to be addressed? What do I do? And oftentimes, particularly as a believer, when we start thinking like the world, when we start thinking "rationally," we start to compromise which, by the way, just means to simply abandon an eternal truth for a temporary fix. That's what it means.

Listen to what he says: a man will give up anything for his own health. Allow me to describe how we've walked through these in recent days whether you realize it or not. What I'm about to address is not a Western civilization problem, it's not an American problem, it is a human condition. That being said, this last week we remembered the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what we know as the 9/11 attacks. We remembered the lives that were lost, the families that were altered forever, even the terror that was invoked on this land. The emotions for those of us who remember those days so vividly, most assuredly returned. But let's think about the days following. You see, one of the things that 9/11 did not just in our culture but in the world's culture, it was a wake-up call. It was a wake-up call that you don't necessarily know who you're sitting next to when you board a plane. It was a wake-up call that when you walk into a large venue, you have no idea who may be there and what they may be up to. And so we got a little bit nervous and we started thinking rationally and we said, "You know what? There's some things that we need to give up to fix this problem because I'm not, I don't feel safe traveling like I used to. I don't feel safe in large venues like I used to." So here's what we did: as a human being condition, we decided to be rational and say we will give up all forms of privacy as long as you promise to keep us safe. Have we not? You can't go anywhere today where they're not videoing you, recording you. I'm convinced and, by the way, I'm not a conspiracy theorist, every conversation I have on the phone, I know somebody's listening. Every email I write, somebody's reading it. Be careful what you write because somebody's reading it. You say, "Oh, it's not that." Oh, it is. There are cameras everywhere. There's video equipment. But what have we done? We did it in the name of security, did we not? I mean, we mean well by it, right? I mean, I just want my family safe. I just want my community safe. So what? We have given up every form of privacy known to man.

Twenty years later, we walk through another significant issue in our world. It wasn't just a single attack on a single land, a worldwide pandemic. What does it say here in chapter 2, verse 4? A man will give up anything for his own health. Now I'm not being sarcastic and I'm not being rhetorical but you tell me what we haven't given up the last six months.

We've given it all up, folks. We've said if it'll keep me healthy, you can take it. If it will keep my family from getting sick, you can change it. We have literally said exactly what Satan said we would say, we will give it all up if you just promise we won't get sick. And that's exactly what Satan said about Job and that's what the world says, the world says when you're walking through that difficulty, give up whatever you've got to give up to fix the problem. The problem is oftentimes we give up the things of God or we give up our convictions, we give up our beliefs, we give up our values just so that we can make it through whatever the issue is.

Here's the problem with the rational approach. You know there's gonna be another issue, right? There's gonna be another struggle. There's gonna be another something and though there's not much left to give, we'll give it then as well. But then there's the self-righteous approach. The self-righteous approach are those who I think mean well possibly but they like to invoke religion, they like to invoke spirituality, they love to quote and shall I say misquote the Bible. For those of you who have not met her, allow me to introduce to you Job's wife, the only person he couldn't get rid of in the story, but that's another message in and of itself. In verse 9 of chapter 2, I did not read this in its context earlier, I think it just needs to stand on its own. I want you to hear what his wife says.

9 Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.

Now I want to go backwards on that statement. Curse God and die. We know what that means. She's basically saying, "Job, give up, go in the ground. It's over, dude. You missed it." But I want you to see the first statement, have you not lost your integrity? Here's what she's claiming, she's claiming that somehow somehow Job's misbehavior toward God has caused this. Now allow me to describe for you and define to you what a self-righteous person is. We like to throw around the word Pharisee and not oftentimes do I think I'm quotable but I'm about to be. Those of you who takes notes whether digitally or the old fashioned way, this is one of those quotable Meyerisms. Are y'all ready? This is how you know you're dealing with a self-righteous person, when your problems in life are because of your personal sin and their problems are because of the attack of the devil. That's preaching. When somebody says, "Oh, the devil's attacking me!" But you're in sin. Tell me it's not so. It is so. Have you ever noticed that about self-righteous people? "Oh, the devil's always on me." But if you've got a problem, "Oo, you must need to repent." That's a self-righteous person. And what does she say? "Have you lost your integrity?" And do you know what she's basically telling Job? You've done something wrong.

Now I'm gonna go there just because I can and I'm feeling a little frisky today. We live in a world at least in the modern era of the faith healers. Y'all know who I'm talking about, right? Large stadiums, they love to throw wheelchairs. Alright, I mean, they love to do all that stuff. And I've warned you all before, if you ever see gold chairs, big hair, or Lear jets, get away. Just get away. But nonetheless, you know that when somebody goes to those "crusades" and they don't get their healing, you know what they always say, right? "Oh, you just don't have enough faith." Isn't that funny? That's self-righteousness. If

you're healed it's because I'm good, if you're not, it's your problem. That's what basically his wife is saying.

Does it strike you odd in the midst of a global pandemic that none of these guys are running around on tv curing COVID? Is that just me that's noticed it? I mean, they could take cancer and they could take diseases, they could take this and that, but all of a sudden they're silent. Do you know why? Because they're just like Job's wife because here's what a self-righteous person does: if things are going right, it's because of me, if things are going wrong, it's because of you. That's exactly what they do and that's what she says here.

So we've got choices. We can look at it like the world and just give up something. "Okay, God I can't do this anymore. What do you want? I'll give it up and I'll just get through it." Or we can start pointing the fingers and go, "Well, somebody has sinned but not me." So what's the right way? Go back to chapter 1. Let me show you what Job does. Classic passage in the Bible, verse 20 of chapter 1. This is after the first phase, "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." What is the right way to respond when you don't know how to respond? When things have fallen apart? When bankruptcy is looming? When sickness won't go away? When disappointment keeps running? When you find yourself in the last place you ever wanted to be? Don't rationalize it, don't get into all the self-righteous stuff. Do the right thing. What did Job do? He said, "Why would I charge God with this? Would I accept good at his hand and not bad? Would I accept prosperity and not poverty? Would I accept health and not illness? Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Now if the story ended in chapter 2, you would have rightful reason to put a big question mark by that, but as you read through the rest of the book of Job and as you get to the last couple of chapters, you discover something very critical is that God had him in the palm of his hand the entire time. He couldn't see it. He couldn't smell it. And the worst thing he needed to do and what we need to do is begin to question that somehow God doesn't know what he's doing. Your state does not change your standing.

So what are going to be the results? What's going to happen if you walk out of here in a few moments or if you're online, if you turn off here in a few moments? What's gonna happen? What are the results gonna be? If you decide, "You know what? I'm not gonna do it the world's way, I'm not gonna do it the pious self-righteous way, I'm gonna do it the right way"? Allow me to share with you some things that are most likely in your future. Possibly there's gonna be some miserable days ahead of you. Look in verse 7 and 8 of chapter 2, "Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes." You do know the old phrase "it's going to get worse before it gets better"? You do realize if you do it God's way, you don't get the quick fix, you don't get the Band-Aid and there is the possibility that it will

actually be more miserable the days ahead than it has been days past. And I know you don't want to hear that and neither do I but here's the news: did you know that ministry is born out of misery? In other words, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians that the Apostle Paul says, "I'm able to minister to you and your difficulties because of what I've walked through."

There's the possibility that things could actually get worse before they get better. If you don't believe me, read chapters 3 through 37. It actually gets worse for Job. And then we have the potential, the potential for some mockery, some verbal accusations. There are some men who show up on the scene in chapter 3, for the sake of time we won't go in there specifically, if you ever have somebody on social media befriend you and their name is Zophar, Bildad or Eliphaz, run. I mean, run. I mean, these guys show up and they're his friends. They're gonna sit with him for seven days. They're gonna console him. What do they start doing? They start pointing the finger is what they do. They start saying, "You've done something wrong. Your kids did something wrong. Somebody did something wrong." And what do we discover is oftentimes the mockery we get are from those who we least expect it, those that were closest to us. Sometimes when we do it God's way, when we respond God's way, those who we would expect to "hug us" are the ones that shun us.

And last but not least, it is actually probable that you will become a statistical minority. I don't mean that in a racial sense or sociological sense, I mean that in a statistical sense. There is the possibility, the potential, the probability that if you do it God's way, that nobody's gonna understand it, they'll probably make fun of you for doing it, and you may end up alone on a heap of ashes scraping the sores with clay. Can I give you another individual that walked through this same path? His name was Elijah. What a great prophet of God, a man who's known for his mighty miracles, a man who is known not only for being a significant figure throughout the Bible but if you read the book of Revelation, he's gonna be a part of all that stuff too. You know that Elijah faced the same issues of today, a little different. It was unprecedented. Baal worship had taken over. The challenge was offered on Mount Carmel. The fire descended and the Lord prevailed. Do you know what happened right after that? It says that Ahab, the king of Israel, went home quickly to find Jezebel, another person if they befriend you, don't fall for it. Don't fall for it. He goes after Jezebel. Why? Because she was a Baal worshiper, Asthareth to be specific. He knew his life was in danger so what does he do? Man, there's this great story in 1 Kings 17. I mean, he's riding on that high. God is answering. God is good. Chapter 18, he crawls into a hole and says, "Woe is me!" Do you remember what God says? "There are 7,000 others who have not bowed the knee." But he couldn't see any of them.

You see, the Zophar's and the Bildad's and the Eliphaz's may be the one who mock but the Lord will bring those you never knew existed, God will bring people you never knew were gonna be a part of your life, and when you think you're all alone you discover you're really not that. That's one of the lies the devil tries to get in our life. "You do it God's way, you're gonna be all alone. Nobody's gonna care. Nobody's gonna love. It's gonna be..." What happened in Elijah's life? He sent Elisha, to be specific, and that's a whole other message.

So today when you don't know what to do, can you today just say, "You know what? God does know what he's doing. I can trust him to do so." And biblically speaking it always works out better to trust him than to trust the world.