

Job 1-2 part 2 – Home group study questions

Feel free to pick the questions which will best suit your group, but do give a good amount of time to question 6 – this is the key application!

Opening question: when do you find it hardest to believe God loves you?

- 1) God absolutely delights in Job. What evidence do we see for this in chapters 1-2? (E.g. 1:2-3, 1:8, 1:12, 2:3, 2:6).
- 2) Since God loves Job so much, why was he willing to let Satan afflict Job?
- 3) God allowed Job to suffer so he could vindicate his beloved servant and lavish even greater blessing on him. How is the same true for us in Christ, according to 1 Peter 1:6-7?
 - You may want to touch on the issue of rewards here. We can feel uncomfortable with the idea of praise, glory and honour coming to us, because we rightly think that God's glory is always the most important thing. But God's glory is displayed to us partly through his lavish kindness, which exceeds anything we could ever deserve. If, as a group, you want to see where Jesus speaks of giving rewards, praise and honour to his people, here are a few examples: Matt 5:12, 6:4, 6:6, 6:18, 10:32; 10:41-42, 16:27; 25:21-23. And remember, creation is the *theatre* to showcase God's glory, not a *factory* to produce it – he doesn't *need* glory from us, though he absolutely deserves it!
- 4) The book of Job shows us that not all suffering is because of unrepented sin or because God wants to teach us something. Of course, Job did learn things about God through his suffering, especially in chapters 38-41, but that was not God's only purpose, or even his *primary* purpose. Why is this so important for us to remember?
- 5) When our suffering has no obvious purpose, the book of Job reminds us that there is a spiritual battle going on. God's reputation and our souls are at stake in Satan's attacks, but God is determined to vindicate his own loveliness and our faith in him. How does this give meaning and significance to our suffering?
- 6) How can we encourage each other to trust that God still loves us when we go through suffering with no obvious purpose? Suggest some concrete, practical ways.

An extra thought for the curious: you might wonder why on earth God expected Satan to present himself along with the angels at the heavenly council in 1:6 and 2:1? In fact, what is this heavenly council?! We aren't given an explicit answer in Scripture. Father, Son and Holy Spirit keep their own, eternal council. They rule as they see fit (Psalm 135:6) – they don't need angels or Satan to help them or advise them. But God does use angels to fulfil his purposes, which we often glimpse (e.g. Gabriel at Jesus's conception and birth, or Michael fighting the heavenly battle to protect Israel in Daniel 10 and 12). John Calvin suggests this is partly for our comfort – that we, in our weakness, should know that God has an entire army of mighty heavenly warriors fighting for the good of his people!

But Satan appears to be a rebel angel – one who has rejected God's rule. Why does God tolerate him? Scripture does not say explicitly. As Job learns in chapters 38-41, we need to trust that there is great and good wisdom in God's purposes, but it is too profound, complex and deep for us to understand. But we can safely assume that Satan's continued presence in creation leads to God's glory being displayed more wonderfully. For

example, we see God's sovereignty in the way he limits Satan's actions (commanding him to spare Job's life) and brings good even out of Satan's most evil act (Jesus's crucifixion). We see God's goodness, his patience and his graciousness more clearly too, in contrast to Satan's murderous and destructive desires. Satan calls us to throw off restraint, but his reign only leads to misery, discontent and enslavement. God calls for obedience, but his ways lead to eternal life, contentment and joy.

The best analogy I've come across is from the British parliament (thanks to Christopher Ash in his commentary on Job!). After an election, the Queen summons the largest party to form the government. The government carries out the Queen's wish that the country be well run (in theory!). But she also gives an official role to the second largest party. They are called 'Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.' Now the opposition party generally wants to bring down the government! But by holding the government to account, they actually bring about better government (again, in theory!). So they help to fulfil Her Majesty's will that the country be well run. Satan's position is a little bit like this. Of course, he hates God's reign over this world and wants to bring God's kingdom down. But his schemes ultimately lead to God's power and goodness being displayed even more gloriously.