

Job 4-25 - Mechanics

Study 3



A large portion of the book of Job is made up of the discussion of Job and his three friends - Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. There's three cycles of these speeches, with Zophar missing out in the end cycle. Each of Job's friends though has a slightly different angle on what the problem really is, and what Job should do to fix it. And each, while sounding right and orthodox in what they say about God, is also slightly wrong.

Personal Preparation 1 - Eliphaz

Eliphaz is the voice of calm, cold calculation.

Read Job 15, one of Eliphaz's speeches.

1. Theology is the study of God, and the world in relation to God. Is there anything that Eliphaz says in Chapter 15 that you think is actually untrue of God or of man?
2. What's ironic about verses 7-9 in this chapter?
3. With the knowledge Eliphaz is armed with, what is the conclusion he arrives at about Job's suffering?

THINK: What is the relationship between what we know about God and our experience in this world?

Personal Preparation 2 - Bildad

Bildad regurgitates his own learnt, clearly defined and understood framework of God and the world. And what he's learnt from others, he passes on to Job, with all the subtlety of a sledge hammer.

Read Job 8, one of Bildad's speeches.

1. How has Bildad learnt what he knows? (see v.8-10)
2. And what conclusions does he come to about Job and his family? (v.4-7, 13, 20-22)
3. In what way is he right, and in what way wrong?
4. How do you think Job would have felt hearing these answers from Bildad?

THINK: Do you see instances these days of Christians using tradition to condemn (or control?) others?

Personal Preparation 3 - Zophar

Zophar is the voice of objective, remote, impersonal law. He says much the same as the other two, just a little more eloquently. But eloquence isn't the same as truth.

Read Job 11, one of Zophar's speeches.

1. What does Zophar claim about:
 - God (Verses 1-9)
 - Evil (Verses 10-11)
 - Being restored to God (Verses 12-20)
2. How do Zophar's claims match his knowledge of God, understanding of Job's situation, and the restoration of Job?
3. If Zophar and Job's situations were reversed, do you think Zophar would still hold the views he does? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions - Mechanics

A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing. And in the hands of Job's three friends, it's like a knife in Job's back. Their formulaic and simplistic view of the world works in their little bubbles...but it doesn't work in real life.

TO START: It's unpopular these days to speak about God definitively. We're encouraged just to have opinions. What are the benefits and what are the downsides of only ever expressing opinions of God?

In Job 42, we find out that God isn't happy with Job's three friends (42:7), and Job has to pray for them. They all come to the same wrong conclusion - that Job's suffering is brought about by sin - but the question we want answered is, what wrong path brought them to that conclusion?

1. Have a look at each of friends, and answer the questions below. (If you have a large group, you might want to break up in to three, look at one each, and then bring back what you find to your group.)

- a. How do they respond to Job's claim of innocence?
- b. Apart from Job's sin causing his problems, what do they all agree on about God?
- c. How would you describe the problem with their response?

- **Eliphaz** (Look at: 4:7-8, 5:17-18; 5:27; 15:4-6; 15:17; 22:5).

- **Bildad** (Look at 8; 25:4-6)

- **Zophar** (Look at 11; 20:29)

2. In light of the friends responses, discuss:

- a. Do the friends think they have the whole picture of the situation?
- b. What effect does that have on how they view God's justice, and respond to Job?

At the end of Job, the friends are rebuked by God for what they'd spoken about Him (42:7). They spoke about God, and dealt with Job mechanically, and presumed from their understanding of God's character that they knew how he was dealing with Job in this specific situation. Job calls them worthless physicians (13:4) and miserable comforters (16:2). They thought they knew so much, but their pride was their downfall. A little knowledge in their hands became a dangerous thing.

Read Romans 3:21-26.

3. When we look around at the world, and even in our own lives, and question God's goodness and justice - how does this passage tell us we can be absolutely sure God is just?

4. How might this help us talk to people who are suffering and questioning God's goodness and justice?

5. How might **John 9:1-3** warn us away from joining the dots where God has not?

DISCUSS how we can speak about God confidently, and yet not overstep the mark in speaking about areas where God has not spoken. Give some examples.