

Job 32-37 - Elihu: Speaking for God



Study 4

Personal Preparation 1

This chapter comes out of the blue. In some ways it doesn't seem to fit with what goes on around it. But in the midst of argument and counter-argument between Job and his friends, here is a rare moment of honest reflection. Ultimate wisdom is beyond the grasp of humans.

Read Job 28

1. What are some of the achievements and discoveries of mankind listed in chapter 28? (verses 1-11)
2. Yet what questions are left unanswered even after these discoveries? (verses 12 and 20)
3. How would you describe where wisdom can and where it can't be found from this chapter?
4. So what's the conclusion in verse 28?

THINK: Is there a difference between being smart and being wise? Do you see that distinction in the world around us?

Personal Preparation 2

After Job finishes his final response to his friends (Ch. 29-31), their conversation stops because Job would not admit to wrong-doing (32:1). Enter Elihu. Will he give us something different from Job's long winded friends?

Read Job 32-33

1. Why does Elihu get involved in the conversation? (32:1-5)
2. What is Elihu setting out to do? (32:10-14)
3. How does Elihu answer Job's claim that he is innocent? (33:8-22; 29-30)
4. What does Elihu say one of God's reasons for allowing suffering is? (33:18,22,24,28,30)

THINK: How can suffering turn out for good?

Personal Preparation 3

This is Elihu's final speech.

Now WE know that God's speech comes next... but Elihu doesn't know that. So really Elihu is preparing us for what God is going to say, and how God is going to respond to Job. Let's see how he does.

Read Job 36-37

1. Elihu seems a little cocky in his delivery (36:1-4), but what does he claim about how God deals with mankind? (36:5-12)
2. How does Elihu describe the place of suffering for the good and for the evil? (36:13-21)
3. What is Elihu's final word to Job and his questions about his suffering? (37:14-24)

THINK: Can you see a difference between what Elihu is saying to Job, and what Job's friends were saying to him?

Discussion Questions - Elihu: Speaking for God

It's hard to know what to make of Elihu in the book of Job. Job doesn't respond to his speech as he did to his three other friends and God doesn't rebuke Elihu at the end of the book. But while it may not seem at first glance that Elihu is introducing any revolutionary ideas, he does contribute something more than the friends. Perhaps Elihu is the preparation that Job needed before hearing God?

TO START: Up to this point, do you think Job has gone too far in how he has questioned God?

READ Job 32:1-9

1. In comparison to Job, what impression do you get of the kind of character Elihu is?

THINK: Is it possible to have wisdom without experience? Is it possible to have experience without wisdom?

Elihu is an interesting character in that what he says echoes so much of what God says in Chapters 38-41. But it's important to see what he contributes to the story of Job.

2. In chapter 33 (verses 18, 22, 24, 28 and 30), Elihu mentions being "saved from the pit". What does you think he means by this?

3. How do these sections talk about the way in which God sometimes uses suffering?

Read Job 36:13-22

4. What can you draw out from this passage about how the "godly" and the "godless" respond to suffering?

5. What might this have to say about Job's suffering, situation and response?

One thing to note about Elihu is that he doesn't (in such an obvious way) attempt to draw a connection between Job's suffering and his presumed past sin (as the friends did). He does speak about evil as a cause of suffering, but he doesn't attempt to draw a line from supposed sin, to Job's suffering.

6. Based on what we've looked at above, do you think Elihu is any different to Job's friends?

Whatever you think of Elihu, he does seem to bring something different to the discussion, and you can't just lump him in with the three friends, because the book of Job doesn't. Perhaps his contribution is that he understands that God can use suffering as a means of growing character and removing pride (Job 36:16).

Read Hebrews 12:1-12

7. How does the writer in Hebrews tell us Christians should view suffering?

8. What does our response to suffering say about our standing as Christians? Do you find this an encouragement or a discouragement?

DISCUSS:

- What stops (or hinders) you viewing your struggles as an opportunity to grow more like Jesus?
- How can we encourage each other as we go through suffering?