

WISDOM LITERATURE === JOB === **Teacher Mabel**

We must read chapters 1-7 and 34-41.

This book belongs to the wisdom literature which dates back to the time of David and Solomon. Job belongs to the problem type of wisdom Literature. The author was a Jewish poet, he bases his book on a much older story of a man who was a Jew and lived in the land identified as Edom

The book is concerned with the meaning of life as it is experienced by people .god teaches man through suffering and uses distress to open their eyes.

The author also has a good understanding of the law (Deuteronomy 28;9-11,24:16).every man shall bear the consequences of his own sins. Obedience brings blessings e.g long life prosperity while disobedience brings a curse ,calamities and suffering.

Unlike other wisdom literature, the author of Job attacks one problem, the unsolved puzzle of the suffering of an innocent man. How is it possible to have faith in a situation of suffering? There is also a dilemma of how can a just God allow evil to exist in the world?

Before we move into the analysis of the book we need to look at the idea of suffering from the traditional African understanding. In ATS one suffered when;

1. One suffered because the gods were annoyed.
2. One may suffer because he annoyed the ancestors. There was always an effort made to try to appease them.
3. One could suffer because of an inherited sin of the grand parents or parents; there was the idea of corporate guilt.
4. Suffering maybe due to violation of taboos or norms of society.
5. It maybe due to bad luck or omen like meeting a dog as one goes on a journey.
6. Witchcraft may cause suffering for others.
7. Sometimes misfortunes are attributed to a particular person.

CHAPTERS 1:1-5 THE IDEAL AND EXAMPLARY LIFE OF JOB.

The author presents job as a sincere and proper religious man .He even sacrificed on behalf of all his children to maintain his purity within his whole household .Therefore according to the deut.doctrine he should be rewarded accordingly .All his riches and prosperity were in order .Job deserved this good life and wealth because he was obedient to God. He was supposed to be happy and even live a long life.

Verses[ 6-6] the first affliction.

There is a picture of the Heavenly court. Satan here is not to be taken in a physical interpretation but simply means adversary. He is hostile to job's happiness and prosperity. Here Satan is not an enemy to God but just an adversary to man. Satan judges Job before God of having self centered piety (righteousness)Satan is given a chance to torment Job. The cumulative calamities gave no chance to job to adjust and yet he remained unshaken. Job deformed the usual rites of mourning but expressed only gratitude to god that he had long enjoyed good things. He remarked that just naked I was born naked shall I go back job was not a were of the heavenly councils decision.

#### CHAPTER[ 2;1-10] THE SECOND AFFLICTION.

This second affliction is permitted to include anything except death. Satan afflicted Job with a horrible disease. It made him so ill and disgusting to others that he left his houses and went out to the rubbish heap. He took a piece of broken pottery to scrape his sores. The final bitterness is for his wife's failure to understand that life must be of mixed quality. His friends Ehiphaz, Bil dad and Zophar came to console him. They carried out the ritual of mourning. And they sat there for 7 days and nights. Account for job's suffering

#### CHAPTER [ 3-5] JOB AND ELIPHAZ

The author skillfully introduces his theme by starting with a very sick man. Job curses the day he was born .his suffering is persistent and without reason. Job is no longer the patient complaints. According to job, God has become unknowable, unpredictable absolutely my stereotypes in a way he gives life to men and yet allows them to suffer until they ask to die.

#### CHAPTER 4; 17

Eliphaz sounds like he is trying to condemn job. He seems to be stressing that job is not innocent. He thinks that job is guilty of something.

#### ELIPHAZ GOES ON TO IMPLY THAT ANY ORDINARY MAN SHOULD HAVE ALSO KNOWN THAT MAN CAN NOT BE

**Pure by divine standards.** He makes dangerous allegations about God which amounts to innuendo (make a bad reference to a big person).He remarks that ;"even in his servants he puts no trust". He pretends to know the ways of God.

Eliphaz proves to be a disappointing friend to Job.

#### CHAPTER 5:1FF

Eliphaz knocks the nail on the head when he says Job has been guilty of vexation(getting angry with God)

Eliphaz is repeating what he said before the trouble comes to man .

He remarked that;”Happy is The person whom God corrects, do not resent it when he rebukes”.

### CHAPTER 6:1FF

Job admits the charge of vexation but claims there is a reason for it. Job is tormented because he no longer understands God in the way he used to. The God he knew and had offered sacrifices to had disappeared from his life. His life had become meaningless. In such a situation Job could not avoid worrying.

Job confessed that his friend’s kindness is like a desert stream which dries when most needed. Their advice just added more agony to Job.

### CHAPTER 7:1FF.

In this chapter we get an extra –ordinary passage, where Job speaks again directly to God whom he no longer understands but whom he still believes to have power over his life. Like Jeremiah Job cannot escape from God.

There is also a serious problem of admission of sin from Job. Job thinks that if God is so mighty then why man’s misery? Why does God in his mighty afflict a mere creature like Job?

Much as Job has failed to understand God he still feels that he cannot escape from his presence and his power, even after his death God will still look for him.

### CHAPTER 34:1FF

The author introduces Elihu, who happens to be young than the rest. He is not one of the friends of Job but comes in as a man who had become angry with Job because of his insistence that he had not been an evil doer.

Elihu appeals to those present to come to some conclusion about Job’s plight. He is concerned about Job’s stubborn stand.

### VERSES 5-9

Elihu summarizes what Job has been saying and he speaks unfairly about Job. He assumes Job is an evil doer and presenting a false picture of what Job “s life had actually been.

### VERSES 10-30

Elihu rightly emphasizes the belief that God is totally righteous, omnipresent, and omnipotent. Therefore, Because of his moral character he punishes sinners who cannot hide from him. There is no darkness that can hide them.

### CHAPTER 35:1FF

In this chapter, Elihu emphasizes that he understands the transcendence of God. God is far above men, nothing that man does can harm God .It is difficult to see how anything Elihu here could help Job.

### CHAPTER 36:1-16

Elihu keeps firmly to his theme, that God is totally just and that Job's suffering is just a punishment from God for what he has done wrong.

### VERSE 22-33

In this section, Elihu begins to move away from his rigid assessment of Job's suffering. He pictures the wonderful power of God as it is revealed in the world around

### CHAPTER 38:1FF(THE FIRST SPEECH OF YAHWEH).

God then asks unique questions about the animals he has created and whose life he sustains the wild animals are no concern of man. They are concerns of God who cares for them and sustains them.

Still Job cannot understand why innocent people suffer. Job had to accept his position as a creature .He could not fully comprehend the ways of Yahweh. Therefore, he just surrendered.

### CHAPTER 40:1FF

Job cannot answer any of God's questions and he admits humbly to God that he had spoken foolishly in his earlier criticisms of God.

God shows Job his total inability to control even two of the creatures which God created .All the animals in the universe are a mystery to man.

### CHAPTER 42; 17.JOB'S CONFESSION AND RESTORATION.

The end of God's word to job brought a great change to job. Job understood his real relationship to God as of creature to his creator.

He understood that his creator cared for him and knew him in a personal relationship.

Job confessed to God that he talked about things that he did not understand

Job repented ( his former ignorance of God and his foolish talk). His repentance for his sins opens the way for God's forgiveness.

The lord blessed the last part of job's life even more than he had sheep, 6,000 camels, 2,000 cattle 1,000 donkeys , he was father of seven sons and three daughters.

Lastly, God's reply the question was not answered directly from the above text we can draw out the following conclusions for Job. These conclusions may also apply to us as human beings and specifically Christians.

1. Job realized that he had never understood the God he had been serving and worshipping .He had known him by "hear say "but now there is a personal relationship with his God
2. God's wisdom and moral goodness are affirmed and there should be adequate answer to his complaints.
3. The mystery of suffering is not solved but because of the new relationship to God the suffering does no longer matter.
4. Job as a human being can not fully comprehend the ways of God, they are beyond man's ability to understand.
5. Because man cannot fully comprehend the ways of God, he should surrender himself to God through faith .It is faith that should make him believe and accept that God cares about man if he can care about animals.
6. The relationship between Job and God is similar to that of a creature and a creator Job should accept himself as a creature who must depend on God whole heartedly.N.B (this is the relationship Adam rejected he wanted to be equal to his own creator)
7. Job's repentance for his sins opens the way for God's forgiveness.
8. Life itself is a mystery
9. Man can only know God when God takes the initiative to reveal himself. NOTE

The friends of Job are condemned they pretended to know the ways of God. They were the self righteous similar to the Pharisees in the New Testament.

The three friends had even made dangerous statements about God's nature e.g. that God does not even trust his angels.

**THE BOOK OF JOB HAS A LOT OF UNIVERSALITY IN THE SENSE THAT:**

1. Worldwide we have the problem of suffering .there is suffering everywhere for everyone but the degree might differ.
2. Worldwide there is the question of what is God like? How do find him? These are questions Job wanted to know.
3. If God is good, why does he allow evil to exist? Why should an evil man successfully carry out his plan? Or why should the wicked prosper?
4. Naturally when we do well we expect good results as Job was initially. He was righteous and therefore rich. This was fair play. But we get shocked if we start suffering without a reason.
5. University people are more prepared to see the wrong in others than seeing it in themselves as the three friends were doing to Job.
6. The idea of satanic powers is a universal issue.
7. The universe and earthly creatures are marvels of God's creation.
8. Death which Job talks about is a reality of life Job rightly observes that it puts people to the same level i.e. the rich ,nobles, poor, young etc when they die they are all equal down there.
9. Disappointment from a friend is more painful. This is what Job experienced.
10. The book exposes the universal reality of riches being perishable.
11. It a universal reality that we are born naked and we go back naked.
12. Man must live by trust either to God or fellow man. It is this that makes life meaningful.
13. Universally God is imagined to be in Heaven.

**QUESTIONS**

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- 1(a) Account for Job's suffering.  
(b)If Job was a Christian in Uganda how would his friends account for his suffering?
- 2 To what extent is the author of Job successful in solving the problem he sets for himself?
- 3(a) the book of Job is a challenge to the Deuteronomy doctrine. Justify.

(b) Assess suffering from a Christian point of view.

4 To what extent is the book of Job relevant to Christians today?

5(a) What justification is there for God to commend Job? (b) Why were the friends of Job condemned?

### **LESSONS FROM THE BOOK.**

1. Christians should appreciate good and bad moments just as Job accepted the misfortunes in his life.
2. Christian wives should be supportive to their husbands when they are facing challenging situations. Job's wife failed to understand his situation and was encouraging him to curse God.
3. Christian friends should try to console them when they are facing challenging situations; Job's friends were making him believe that he had offended God which was not true.
4. Christians should glorify God during challenging situations other than getting annoyed with him.
5. Christians should always try to keep the devil out of their lives by trusting in God. The devil is always targeting righteous people.
6. Christians should continue to search for God because God is mysterious.
7. Christians should be assured that there is nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God.
8. Christians should depend on God.
9. Christians should be ready to accept their sins and be ready to seek for forgiveness.
10. Christians should welcome God when he reveals himself to them.

**END:**