

JOB

JOB

THE EYE OF THE STORM



6 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS



INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES

JOB

JOB

THE EYE OF THE STORM

6 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

BRYSON SMITH

 **matthiasmedia**

The Eye of the Storm

Second edition

© Matthias Media 2008

First edition

© Bryson Smith 1998

Matthias Media

(St Matthias Press Ltd ACN 067 558 365)

PO Box 225

Kingsford NSW 2032

Australia

Telephone: (02) 9663 1478; international: +61-2-9663-1478

Facsimile: (02) 9663 3265; international: +61-2-9663-3265

Email: info@matthiasmedia.com.au

Internet: www.matthiasmedia.com.au

Matthias Media (USA)

Telephone: 724 964 8152; international: +1-724-964-8152

Facsimile: 724 964 8166; international: +1-724-964-8166

Email: sales@matthiasmedia.com

Internet: www.matthiasmedia.com

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ISBN 978 1 921441 12 7

All rights reserved. Except as may be permitted by the Copyright Act, no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior permission from the publisher.

Cover design and typesetting by Lankshear Design Pty Ltd.

» CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| How to make the most of these studies | 5 |
| STUDY 1: Good times, bad times <i>[Job 1-2]</i> | 9 |
| STUDY 2: Life is never that simple <i>[Job 3-27]</i> | 15 |
| STUDY 3: Why me, God? <i>[Job 6-27]</i> | 23 |
| STUDY 4: A word about wisdom <i>[Job 28]</i> | 29 |
| STUDY 5: “Dress for action ...” <i>[Job 29-42:6]</i> | 37 |
| STUDY 6: Faith, mystery and the meaning of life <i>[Job 42]</i> | 45 |
| Tips for leaders | 51 |

»» HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE STUDIES

1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

Interactive Bible Studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. They take you through a particular part of the Bible, helping you to know where to start, pointing out things along the way, suggesting avenues for further exploration, and making sure that you know how to get home. Like any good tour, the real purpose is to allow you to go exploring for yourself—to dive in, have a good look around, and discover for yourself the riches that God's word has in store.

In other words, these studies aim to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do plenty of the exploration and discovery yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of 'interaction'—interaction with the Bible, with the things we've written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

2. The format

Each study contains five main components:

- short sections of text that introduce, inform, summarize and challenge
- a set of numbered study questions that help you examine the passage and think through its meaning
- side-bars that provide extra bits of background or optional extra study ideas, especially regarding other relevant parts of the Bible
- an ‘Implications’ section that helps you think about what this passage means for you and your life today
- suggestions for thanksgiving and prayer as you close.

3. How to use these studies on your own

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in the Bible, and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.
- Work through the study, reading the text, answering the questions about the Bible passage, and exploring the side-bars as you have time.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the ‘Implications’ and ‘Give thanks and pray’ sections at the end. It is important that we not only hear and understand God’s word, but respond to it. These closing sections help us do that.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you’ve learnt.

4. How to use these studies in a small group

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and triplets. Get together with a friend or friends and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don’t need the formal structure of a ‘group’ to gain maximum benefit.

- For small groups, it is *very useful* if group members can work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place comfortably in an hour (depending on how sidetracked you get!) if all the members have done some work in advance.
- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. This will mean a little extra preparation—underlining the sections of text to emphasize and read out loud, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will also probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- If your group members usually don't work through the study in advance, it's extra important that the leader prepares which parts to concentrate on, and which parts to glide past more quickly. In particular, the leader will need to select which of the 'Implications' to focus on.
- We haven't included an 'answer guide' to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of the Bible, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

5. Bible translation

Previous studies in our Interactive Bible Study series have assumed that most readers would be using the New International Version of the Bible. However, since the release of the English Standard Version in 2001, many have switched to the ESV for study purposes. For this reason, we have decided to quote from and refer to the ESV text, which we recommend.

» STUDY 1

GOOD TIMES, BAD TIMES

[JOB 1-2]

Workers dropped a crate containing a 75 million-year-old dinosaur skeleton outside a museum in the The Hague, Netherlands, breaking it into 188 pieces. “The two Canadian scientists who had spent two years gluing together the skeleton had tears in their eyes”, a spokesman told *De Telegraph* reporter.

The Bulletin, 7 October 1997

MOST OF US KNOW WHAT IT’S like to have one of *those* days. A day where nothing goes right and everything goes wrong. Sometimes those sorts of days are nothing more than a nuisance, and given time we can think back and laugh. Sometimes those days are far more tragic. The day the biopsy test comes back positive. The day the knock at the door is the police to tell you about a fatal accident. The day you discover a terrible secret within a relationship. These are days which can be the start of unimaginable grieving and **suffering**.

The Old Testament book of Job takes us into the life of a man who virtually loses everything in a single day. Job’s possessions, livelihood, children and health are all

Is Job about suffering?

On one level, the book of Job is all about suffering. It offers insights into why bad things happen. However, it is important to note from the outset that this is *not* its main focus. The book of Job is much more practical than it is theoretical. It’s a bit like a first aid manual. A first aid manual doesn’t really go into great detail about all the different reasons why you might break your arm. It’s more interested in explaining how to act when your arm is broken. That’s like the book of Job. It doesn’t give us an exhaustive catalogue of reasons as to *why* suffering happens. It’s more concerned with how to act towards God *when*

suffering happens.

Job is a book about whether God is worth following even when we are suffering. It's about whether God is worth trusting even when he seems to be making our life a misery.

ripped away in tragic circumstances. And Job is crippled by mind-numbing anguish.

So let's meet the man Job and discover a bit about his life before this tragedy struck.

Read Job 1:1-5.

1. What are Job's physical circumstances like?

2. What is Job's character like?

3. Read Proverbs 3:1-8. According to the proverbs, how are Job's wealth and blamelessness linked?

Job the man

IN THESE OPENING VERSES, WE ARE left in no doubt that Job is a godly man. We especially see it in the way that Job is concerned not just for his own relationship with God, but also for his family. He even makes sacrifices just in case his children have done something silly (Job 1:5). This man is a model of loving concern. He is presented as the perfect example of a godly, wise man.

Job is also astronomically wealthy. He owns 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 donkeys. Job is the Bill Gates of ancient Edom.

All of this is exactly what we would expect from the Proverbs. As we've discovered in the above questions, Proverbs predicts that if you "fear the LORD, and turn away from evil", you will be healthy, wealthy and wise. Job feared the Lord and turned away from evil, and he was healthy, wealthy and wise. So far everything fits perfectly. Everything is as it should be. Everything is as we would want it. A good man enjoying a good life.

But all that is about to change. Some bad things are about to happen to this good man.

Read Job 1:6-22.

4. What is Satan's accusation against Job?

5. How does God respond?

6. What do we learn about God and Satan in these verses?

7. What does Satan cause to happen to Job? What different types of events does Satan use to bring suffering to Job?

8. How does Job respond?

Job's first test

IN THE SPACE OF A FEW MINUTES, Job loses everything. His wealth, his cattle, his sheep, his camels, his servants, his precious children whom he worried over so much; they are all gone. Ripped away from him by both natural disasters and human violence.

The reason for Job's suffering is revealed to us, the readers, if not to Job. Satan has come before God and questioned Job's righteousness. Satan argues that Job only follows God for what Job can get out of it. According to Satan, Job is not really interested in God at all. Job just likes the gifts that God gives, and so if the gifts suddenly disappear he

will curse God.

In one sense, it is a slur against Job's character, but it is also a slur against God. Satan is suggesting that God can only win friends for himself by giving them things. He is suggesting that God has to buy followers with bribes and prizes.

The story progresses with God accepting Satan's challenge, and it would seem by the end of chapter 1 that Satan has been proved wrong. After losing his prosperity and family, Job does not do what Satan predicted. Just the opposite—rather than curse God, Job praises him.

Satan, however, remains unconvinced.

Read Job 2.

9. In this chapter what further things do we discover about God, Satan and Job?

- God

- Satan

- Job

10. To what extent does Job understand why he is suffering?

Job's second test

BY THE END OF CHAPTER 2, JOB HAS gone from prosperity to poverty, from great comfort to crippling pain, from being the greatest man among all the people of the East to sitting on a rubbish tip scratching his scabs with a broken piece of pottery.

In all this, it is crucial to notice that Job has not been privy to the discussion between Satan and God. Job knows nothing about what has happened in heaven. Job only knows suffering. Indeed, much of the remainder of the book is taken up with Job arguing with his friends and struggling with God over why these terrible things have happened to him.

For the readers, though, the issue is slightly different. Unlike Job, we do know why he is suffering. We are told in the first eleven verses! Job is suffering as a test of his righteousness. For us, the readers, the real tension of the book is whether or not Job will remain faithful. Will Job's despair cause him to curse God? Will Satan be proved right?

In the studies that follow we will discover how Job handles his sufferings. As we do so, the question that will pop up time and time again is: How should we respond to God when bad things happen to us and we don't understand why?

» Implications

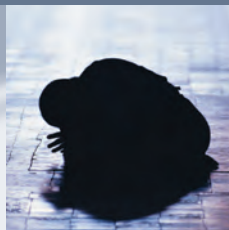
(Choose one or more of the following to think about further or to discuss in your group.)

- When we suffer, do you think it is usually for the same reasons as Job?
- Satan accuses Job of being more interested in God's gifts than God himself. To what extent could this be true for you? What are some ways that we could ensure we don't fall into that trap?
- In what ways is God's sovereignty revealed in these opening chapters?
- When is it hard to believe that God is in control?
- When we are suffering, how can it be comforting to remember that God is in control?

» Give thanks and pray

- Thank God that he is the ruler of everything; there is nothing beyond his control.
- Pray that he would keep helping us come to terms with suffering in this world.

THE EYE OF THE STORM



The story of how Job loses everything and then struggles with his pain, his ignorance and the dubious comfort of his friends, is one of the classics of world literature. But it is much more than a literary masterpiece. It is a book about life as it really is—where good things happen, bad things happen, and just plain confusing things happen; where there is grief and agonizing and asking why; and where there is God, whom we know is Lord of all, yet whose ways we don't always understand.

In these six masterful studies, Bryson Smith takes us to the heart of the book of Job, and to the valuable lessons it teaches us about life and suffering and the true wisdom of God.

An ideal study book for individuals or small groups.

