

Power Displayed

God's wisdom and power are unfathomable.

JOB 40:1-14

MEMORY VERSE: JOB 40:9

STUDY Job 40:1-14, analyzing the attributes of God that are evident in Job's response to God. Reflect on previous sessions where Job indicated that God was being unfair and he desired an opportunity to present his case. Focus on how the Lord presented Himself and humbled Job to recognize the power of God in the face of people's inadequacies.

CREATE a teaching plan for your group using the ideas on pages 70–72. Focus on how God responded to Job's past charges and humbled him by demonstrating His attributes. Note that God again revealed how only He is the Creator and Controller of the earth.

GATHER the following items:

- Extra Personal Study Guides (PSGs)

Prepare to Display:

- Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Job and Ecclesiastes*)
- Pack Item 5** (*Poster: Job's Statements of Faith*)
- Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*)

CONSULT *QuickSource* for additional questions to use during the group time and review the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* for additional biblical insights (available for purchase from LifeWay.com).

REINFORCE the study by prayerfully remembering how God has been faithful in your life in the past and how this helps you to trust Him with the future. Share one of these ways with your group in a follow-up email.

FIRST THOUGHTS

KEY DOCTRINE

God

God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures (Jer. 32:27).

Things would be different if we were in charge. We may have cried when a sibling got what we thought to be better treatment as we called into question the fairness of mom or dad. They may have let us know that we would be free to make that decision once we were parents, but that for right now, they were the parents and we were not. We may even accuse God of being unfair because of life's situations. Job raised this issue, and God responded by reminding Job of His credentials.

(In PSG, p. 55) **What qualifies a person to be in charge? What credentials might a person need to be in charge of your family?**

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

BIBLE SKILL

Compare similar passages.

Compare the exchanges between God and Job with the exchanges between God and other people. Review Genesis 3:8-19; 1 Kings 19:9-18; and Jonah 4:9-11. How was each conversation God's response to a challenge to His justice or power? How does the response given to Adam, Eve, Elijah, and Jonah compare to the response given to Job? What can we learn about God from these conversations?

JOB 38:1-41:34

Throughout the Book of Job, the three friends argued that Job's only relief from suffering would come after his repentance. As we have seen, they assumed Job was holding onto a sinful reliance on earthly gifts rather than loving the Giver of those gifts. Job maintained that the answer to his questions regarding suffering would come from God. Ultimately, he believed God would vindicate him and prove his claims of innocence to be true. For this reason, he longed for the opportunity to meet with God. In chapter 38, Job was finally granted what he desired. However, their face-to-face meeting did not go the way he anticipated. Ready to confront God for all the suffering he endured, Job found himself being confronted by God.

In God's first speech proceeding from a whirlwind, He confronted Job with questions—questions for which Job had no answer. This should not surprise the reader. After all, what human was there when God created the world and can give an account for how it was made (Job 38:4-7)? How could any human find the source of the sea or explain how to control it (38:8-11)? Has any human being been to the realm of the dead and lived to tell about it (38:16-17)? Is there any human who can command the morning, control precipitation, or intimately know the heavens above (38:12-38)? Even when it comes to the creatures of the earth, what human being can demonstrate complete dominion over the animal kingdom (38:39-39:30)? Absolutely no one. Thus, in the first speech, God put Job in his proper place. The wisdom and power of God towered over Job to bring him to a place of humility.

Now that Job was made aware of his ignorance, he responded by pledging silence (40:3–5). In His second speech, God inquired of Job’s power compared to the other creatures God had made (40:6–41:34). Job responded by humbly submitting to God’s authority and apologetically showing remorse for his earlier wild words (42:1-6). Even while Job had defended himself against his friends’ accusations, he admitted here his insufficiency for the mysterious purposes of God. In this section of the book, the Creator-creature distinction is on full display in God’s monologue and questioning of Job.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

CORRECT ME? (JOB 40:1-5)

Verses 1-2

After His initial barraging Job with questions (chaps. 38–39), illustrating Job’s lack of power and wisdom, God landed a final question to end His first speech. The question was simple yet powerfully profound: **Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who argues with God give an answer.**

God asked Job to justify his heart’s intent in approaching Him the way he did. Whenever the line between Creator and creature is blurred, error and idolatry result. We see this in the actions of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3). Humans are made in God’s image and likeness; He is not made in ours. Many missteps in theology are on account of the implicit idea that God must act as we would act, or that humans can fully understand the ways of God where they have not been revealed. God reveals Himself to us in human terms, but we must not think our limited understanding is the ultimate reference point for God’s actions.

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What mere creature would contend with **the Almighty** and instruct Him? The usage of the name *Shaddai* is enlightening for understanding the foundation of this speech. This name is sometimes translated “My God” or “Almighty.” Therefore, Job was speaking to the Almighty God, the One who created the heavens and earth and all creatures that dwell therein. The name *Shaddai* carries with it the meaning, “the overpowerer.” This reminds us that it is impossible for anyone or anything to keep God from accomplishing His sovereign decrees. In this section of Job, God gave Job an intensely clear and awe-inspiring description and display of His power. No one can thwart God’s will, and no creature can fully understand His ways.

VERSES 1-2

¹ The LORD answered Job: ² Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who argues with God give an answer.

VERSES 3-5

³ Then Job answered the LORD: ⁴ I am so insignificant. How can I answer you? I place my hand over my mouth.

⁵ I have spoken once, and I will not reply; twice, but now I can add nothing.

Verses 3-5

Knowing that Job intended to confront Him, God revealed Himself as the Almighty to humble Job and to quiet his *mouth*. In other words, God set Job straight before He began to address the perceived unfairness of his suffering. When God demanded a response, Job did so in proper form. Job really had nothing to say, even though God invited him to do so. Job rightly recognized that these matters were beyond his understanding. In fact, they are beyond the reach of a human's power of knowledge. It is clear that Job realized his ignorance in these matters and his mistake in suggesting that he might reprove God.

Job had previously thought he would put God in His place, but it was God who set Job in his proper place here. In relation to Almighty God, Job rightly described himself as small and *insignificant*. For this reason, Job covered his mouth and remained silent, just as others had once done in His presence (Job 29:9). Job knew better than to fire back at God. While he had spoken in previous chapters, now that he had an audience with God, he regretted his prideful intent. In sum, God challenged Job to explain his credentials to correct Him, leading Job to admit that he could add nothing more to what he already had said. He thus pledged to remain silent.

It is not necessarily wrong to question the Lord as He works out His will in the world, and particularly in our lives. It is not wrong unless we become sinfully adamant that He justify His actions. Human beings may have questions about how God rules His world but have no justification for demanding answers for circumstances they do not deem appropriate. Oftentimes children will ask their parents "why" questions when they are told to do something. There is nothing necessarily wrong with that, unless the child's questions reveal a heart of rebellion or their actions are disobedient. Sometimes the parent's explanation "because I told you so" should be enough.

As Christians, we must remember that God is the Creator and we are the creatures. Furthermore, we do not know enough about creation to understand all of God's ways. Only God knows the beginning from the end, and we must learn to trust His wisdom in working out His purposes. Most times the proper response to God's work is not to question Him but to be silent before Him. How many times have we sat in silence before God? The answer to this question may reveal our disposition before Him.

How does admission of a limited perspective aid us in navigating the difficult waters of suffering?

QUESTION MY JUSTICE? (JOB 40:6-9)

Verses 6-9

Even after Job's admission of insignificance and his decision to quiet his mouth, God continued. In fact, God launched into a second speech directed squarely at Job and intended to search his heart. At this point it is clear that God was not done; Job had not yet fully learned his lesson. Therefore, in verses 6-9, God **answered Job from the whirlwind**.

The Lord called Job to prepare for another set of questions. The call was to stand and provide an answer. In fact, God called to Job to **get ready to answer me like a man**. God asked, Job, are you ready to **challenge my justice**? The irony of this conversation is clear: Job knew how it felt to be questioned and judged by those who had drawn wrong conclusions about his circumstances. Here the tables turned, and God was showing Job that he had overextended his perceived judgments about the hidden purposes of God in his life.

Throughout this book, Job had agreed that sinners should suffer but did not see himself as meriting the suffering he experienced. Therefore, Job probably believed that his suffering had been unjust. Perhaps Job was more concerned with defending his innocence than he was defending God's justice. After all, Job had unfairly questioned God's justice (v. 8). In essence, Job thought that by allowing the wicked to flourish and the innocent (himself) to suffer, God did not render fair judgment. But as we have seen, there are times when things do not seem to be happening according to our perspective of what is just. For Job, these were strong judgments to land against the Almighty.

Even still, God did not explain His purposes in permitting Job's suffering. As He unrelentingly questioned Job, we begin to understand that God's purpose is to demonstrate that He alone has the wisdom and power to sovereignly decree what happens in the lives of His creatures. This becomes clear from God's reference to His **arm**, which is a metaphor for God's power providentially deployed in human history. In the Bible, the "arm of the Lord" is anthropomorphic language—a vivid image of God's power in both salvation and judgment. (See Ex. 6:6; 15:16.)

It is not only God's arm but also His **voice** that reverberates like **thunder**, displaying His unrivaled power. This is evident in Psalm 29:3-4: "The voice of the LORD is above the waters. The God of glory thunders—the LORD, above the vast water, the voice of the LORD in power, the voice of the LORD in splendor." Both of these images of God's arm and voice are utilized to evoke visions of God's majesty and unrivaled power. The purpose was to put Job in his proper place.

Believers must be careful to avoid viewing God as unfair and unjust. It is important to note in this passage that God did not explain the meaning of Job's suffering. In the case of Job, as with many of us, suffering is a mystery. Job came to accept the mystery because he feared and respected God. Because Job came to know who God is in light of what He had revealed, he was able to accept what God ordained even though he didn't understand God's ways. God chose not to reveal these mysteries to Job, and He didn't

VERSES 6-9

⁶ Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind: ⁷ Get ready to answer me like a man; When I question you, you will inform me. ⁸ Would you really challenge my justice? Would you declare me guilty to justify yourself? ⁹ Do you have an arm like God's? Can you thunder with a voice like his?

have to. God is God and does not owe His creatures an explanation for all of His acts. Even if God laid out the blueprint for His purposes in Job's suffering, would Job be able to bear it or to agree with it? Probably not. Like Job, all humans have a limited perspective. This reminds us that our response to God's will, even in suffering, matters. The point is, we must learn to trust God and continue trusting Him when we cannot grasp His plan and purposes.

How does the belief that God is perfectly just settle our hearts in times when we do not understand why God ordains certain circumstances in our lives?

SAVE YOURSELF? (JOB 40:10-14)

Verses 10-14

VERSES 10-14

¹⁰ Adorn yourself with majesty and splendor, and clothe yourself with honor and glory. ¹¹ Pour out your raging anger; look on every proud person and humiliate him. ¹² Look on every proud person and humble him; trample the wicked where they stand. ¹³ Hide them together in the dust; imprison them in the grave. ¹⁴ Then I will confess to you that your own right hand can deliver you.

Once again, it becomes clear that Job could not answer God's questions. When it comes to justice on earth, Job was making claims about things beyond what he was able to comprehend or accomplish. God is unrivaled in power and majesty; in comparison, Job was insignificant. Mankind, the crown of creation, pales in comparison to the Creator.

In Scripture, God alone is declared as being adorned **with majesty and splendor** and clothed **with honor and glory**. (See Pss. 47:4; 93:1; 96:6.) Yet here, God challenged Job to adorn himself with such qualities. If Job could adorn himself like God, then he could act like God and execute justice on the wicked. God continued with His challenge. He told Job to **look on every proud person and humble him, to trample the wicked and to imprison them in the grave**. Underneath this was the reality that Job did not possess the righteous anger necessary to execute justice and bury the wicked. Therefore, he had no right to question God in these things. God and Job were not equals.

The speech ends with God's conclusion. Unless Job was able to do the things listed above, there was no reason for God to treat him as an equal and explain His actions. Job knew all too well that he could not deliver on these challenges, much less deliver himself from what God had permitted to befall him. In the end, God challenged Job to see that if he were truly more knowledgeable and just than God, then he should be able to adorn himself with splendor, put down the wicked, and save himself from calamity. However, Job remained silent.

The way God engaged Job in this passage reminds all of us that there are times when our mouths should stop before the great Creator and righteous Judge over all the earth. Job began to find true wisdom in bowing down before the Lord in reverent fear. There is nothing or no

one who can thwart God's sovereign will, which is providentially worked out in human history. As Christians, we should find comfort in this truth, knowing that God is at work even when we do not understand our situation or see how it will be used for His purposes. Only God has the wisdom and power to rule His creation. If God is the Creator of all things, then He has the right to govern creation according to His will. If God is the sustainer of creation, we must learn to trust that He will do what is good and right according to His purposes. As Creator and Judge, God always has the last word. Therefore, all of our judgments must proceed from Him, because in the end every knee will bow and agree that what God has done is right and just.

God is at work even when we do not understand our situation or see how it will be used for His purposes.

This distinction between God and humanity was first blurred at the fall in Genesis 3 and is diminished anytime we assume God's intent, question His actions, or rebel against His will. While He denies us the ability to draw near to Him and cross the Creator-creature divide, God sent His Son as a man to draw near to us. While Job met God face to face with the intent of accusing God, God accused Job. However, Jesus took upon Himself our sin so that we can stand in the presence of our Creator as creatures without accusation. The good news of the gospel is the ultimate example of God's good and perfect will being worked out in the world through suffering. Job may not have been given a reason for his suffering. But we have been given the reason for Jesus' suffering, namely, that we would escape the eternal suffering that is just for all of us. There is no place to question the justice of God in the cross. Jesus died for us, in our place, as the just sacrifice for our sin so that we could be vindicated in Him.

God's speech to Job here may seem a little unsettling; however, in what ways is it a sign of mercy compared to how God could have justly responded?

LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION

ENGAGE: As the group arrives, direct attention to the following words displayed on a white board or chart paper: *Academic Diplomas, Professional License, Badge, Certification, Password, and Security Clearance*. Direct the group to discuss what the words might have in common.

EXPLAIN: *All of these words represent a type of credential. Usually credentials provide evidence that a person is qualified for certain privileges or positions. Credentials provide confidence and trust.*

ASK: *What credentials might a person need to be in charge of your family?* (PSG, p. 55) *How would you describe God's credentials?*

TRANSITION: *In previous weeks, we have seen how Job continuously questioned why God was allowing his dire circumstances. His fourth friend to speak, Elihu, accused Job of inflated pride and self-righteousness. In today's study, God responded directly to Job, reminding him of His credentials.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

CONTEXTUALIZE: Utilizing Understand the Context (PSG, p. 56) and **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Job and Ecclesiastes*) provide an overview of Job 38:1–41:34. Indicate that this is the first time God responded directly to Job. Read aloud Job 38:2 to summarize God's first response to Job. Explain: *Previously Job claimed that God ignored him and would not answer; here, God's response demonstrated that Job was wrong about God.*

ASK: *What are some ways in which people might subtly question or underestimate God's ability or character?* (PSG, p. 58)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Job 40:1-5**, as the group listens for the Lord's question to Job.

DISCUSS: In teams of two to four people address the following question: **Why are people prone to question God's justice and fairness?** (PSG, p. 58)

EXPLAIN: *God got Job's attention and helped Job admit he was insignificant before an Almighty God. Job's perspective needed adjusting.*

READ: Direct the group to silently read **Job 40:6-9**, looking for questions God asked.

DISCUSS: *God responded by demanding answers from Job. How does God confront people today who question Him? How does that compare to the way God confronted Job?* (PSG, p. 60)

HIGHLIGHT: *Throughout the Bible we find God communicating with people in a variety of ways. Moses encountered a burning bush (Ex. 3:1-4), while Gideon received a message through a fleece (Judg. 6:37-40). God spoke to Job through a whirlwind or tornadic storm (Job 38:1-18). Job needed to recognize God's power over all things, particularly creation.*

ANALYZE: Lead the group to identify how God chooses to communicate with people today.

EXAMINE: Read Hebrews 1:1-3 to confirm that God speaks today through the work of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in people's lives.

EXPLAIN: *The arm of God referenced in verse 9 was an idiom people used to speak of strength. It was essential that Job came to recognize that only God's strong arm offers guidance, hope, and restoration.*

ASK: *How is questioning God's justice the same as placing one's self as equal to or greater than God? Why is questioning God's omnipotence evidence of a limited or diminished perspective of God?*
(PSG, p. 61)

READ: **Direct a volunteer to read aloud Job 40:10-14**, instructing the group to listen for God's commands to Job if he was assuming he was as powerful as God.

STATE: *God challenged Job to act as if he were God. If Job could successfully meet the commands set forth by God, then Job could save himself. However, Job recognized that he did not have the power of the sovereign God.*

ASK: *How did Job's actions display his lack of trust in God? How does a season of difficulty reveal our weaknesses and ultimately strengthen our faith?*

REREAD: As a group read chorally Job 40:9. Distribute **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*) to each person to assist in memorizing the verse reflecting hope in God regardless of our circumstances. Ask the group to consider who they might share this verse with this week.

TRANSITION: *As Job discovered, people are seriously lacking compared to the powerful attributes of our God; it's unfathomable for humans to understand God's wisdom and power.*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

REFLECT: Lead the group to examine their lives for areas where they may have tried to rely on themselves rather than on God's instruction.

SUMMARIZE: Point out **Pack Item 5** (*Poster: Job's Statements of Faith*) displayed in the room. Guide the group to read the verses on the poster and then turn to a neighbor to share one insight that Job learned as he listened to God.

ASK: *How does the lesson Job learned relate to your life today?*

EVALUATE: Challenge the group to reflect on the first question set from page 63 of the PSG throughout the week: ***Share with the group ways God has demonstrated to you His faithfulness and wisdom in the past. How does knowing God has been trustworthy in the past assure you about your circumstances today?***

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking the Lord that He knows the challenges each person faces. Ask for His help to consistently trust Him in all situations. Thank Him for the salvation He provided through Jesus Christ. Pray that He will lead the group to praise and honor His name in all that they do.

OPTIONS

Use these options to supplement and enhance the group plans on the previous pages.

MUSIC

Prior to the session, acquire a recording of “The Lion and the Lamb,” by Leeland Mooring, Brian Mark Johnson, and Benton Brown. Have the song playing in the background as the group arrives. At the conclusion of the group time, return to the song to explain how it illustrates God’s power. Choose to read the lyrics of the chorus or have someone prepared to lead the group in singing the chorus.

DRAMA

Enlist one person to read the words spoken to Job by the Lord in Job 40:2,7-14. Prepare a recording of the reading or have the person standing where they aren’t visible to the group but can be heard. Enlist another person to portray Job’s words and physical response to the Lord as recorded in Job 40:3-5. Insert the reading or recording and role play of Job as each passage is studied.

NATURE/RESEARCH

Gather Bible dictionaries, pencils, and paper.

Divide the group into two teams. To enhance the study Job 40–41, research the two creatures, the Behemoth and the Leviathan, described in the chapters by directing each team to discover more about one of the creatures. Encourage them to read Job 40:15–41:34 as well as use the Bible dictionaries. Allow time for each team to report their findings. Be prepared to highlight how the creatures demonstrate God’s power as Creator and also His power to control all of creation.

COMPARE

Lead the group to complete the Bible Skill (PSG, p. 62) to study other biblical interactions between God and people: *Compare the exchanges between God and Job with the exchanges between God and other people. Review Genesis 3:8-19; 1 Kings 19:9-18; and Jonah 4:9-11. How was each conversation God’s response to a challenge to His justice or power? How does the response given to Adam, Eve, Elijah, and Jonah compare to the response given to Job? What can we learn about God from these conversations?*

VISUAL/OBJECT LESSON

Gather two small weights used for exercising.

Display the weights, relating that many athletes lift weights to build up their strength to have more power and endurance in their sport. In a similar fashion, God demonstrates His power over all creation in Job 38:1–41:34. Guide a discussion about the nature of God’s power when compared to people’s.