



Dependence Declared

God honors those who humbly profess dependence on Him.

JOB 42:1-11

MEMORY VERSE: JOB 42:5

STUDY Job 42:1-11, consulting a Bible dictionary to gain clear definitions for *confession* and *repentance*. Be prepared to connect Job's role as mediator between God and his friends to Jesus Christ as our Mediator. Read Daniel 4:35 and Hebrews 8:6 and note how these verses connect to the verses in Job 42.

CREATE a teaching plan for your group using the ideas on pages 80–82. Prayerfully complete your own notetaking sheet as described in the teaching plan. Be prepared to share an example from your sheet as needed.

GATHER the following items:

- Extra Personal Study Guides (PSGs)
- A pencil and paper for each person
- A camera
- Pictures of sunsets, places, sporting events, or historical sites

Prepare to Display:

- Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Job and Ecclesiastes*)
- Pack Item 5** (*Job's Statements of Faith*)
- Pack Item 6** (*Key Verses: Job 13:15-16*)

CONSULT the weekly Explore the Bible adult podcast to gain insights on the go about this week's study on Ministry Grid, Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify, LifeWay's Digital Pass, or at goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training.

REINFORCE the study by sending an email to the group inviting them to share ways they are depending on God. Ask them to "reply to all" when they respond.

FIRST THOUGHTS

KEY DOCTRINE

God the Son

Jesus ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5-6).

Reading about something, hearing about it, or watching it on television can never compare to witnessing it in person. Seeing a professional sporting event live gives you a greater appreciation of the skill of the athletes. Visiting a historical location gives you a clearer view of the events that took place there. Observing a sunset over an ocean opens your eyes to the true beauty of God's creation. At the end of the Book of Job, Job said that he had heard about God but now he had seen Him. Job had gained a greater understanding of God.

(In PSG, p. 64) **Think about the first time you saw a professional sporting event live or visited an important historical location. How did visiting or seeing that in person impact your understanding of that sport or place?**

BIBLE SKILL

Review a Bible dictionary article for insight.

Read a Bible dictionary article on the role of a priest. Review some to the passages identified in the article, paying close attention to how the role of priest was fulfilled by Jesus. How does what Job was called upon to do give us insight into what it means for today's believers to be called priests?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

JOB 42:1-17

In this last chapter of the Book of Job, the Lord revealed Himself to Job in a very direct way. In response to this meeting, Job demonstrated complete humility by submitting to God's sovereign power. Job also showed sorrow for his earlier disposition toward God in light of his suffering. Even though Job had defended himself against his friends' charges of hidden sin and rightly ascribed his suffering to the providential purposes of God, here he admitted that his earlier understanding of the situation lacked perspective. Job realized that his earlier assumptions regarding his circumstances were based on insufficient knowledge of God's mysterious will.

While discussing the attributes of God revealed in this Bible passage, it is important to keep in mind that all of God's qualities and actions do not exist in isolation from one another. God is one. From our limited perspective we can know God only through divine revelation. In theological studies, His attributes are often categorized based on His revealed words and divine actions. The incommunicable attributes of God are those that belong to God alone—attributes that humanity does not possess. God is unchanging in His perfections and thus can be trusted to act in accordance with His will at all times. Job learned these truths from hard lessons and direct conversations with God. It also reminds us that we cannot fully understand God's ways, for we do not possess the perspective needed to trace His paths. However, what God reveals to us about His attributes is sufficient for a life of faith and trust in His hand.

In the end, God sovereignly chose not only to vindicate Job before his friends (42:7-9) but also to restore Job to fullness of life and family. Job's trial was unimaginably painful, but his life ended full of blessing (vv. 10-17). These blessings came as a gift from the one true God who can be trusted to work out His will in the lives of His children. This does not mean that God will always vindicate or restore those who suffer greatly in this life. But knowing that God is unchanging does allow us to trust that, in the end, those who put their faith in Him will receive divine vindication through Christ and heavenly blessings beyond imagination. As much as it would have brought Job comfort to finally be vindicated before his friends, it was more important that he found restoration before his God. In the end, the only opinion of us that really matters is God's. God's opinion of us was made clear on the cross of Christ. When people repent of sin and place their faith in Christ, they will be vindicated before God, because God will accept them not as they are, but as Christ is.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

ADMIT (JOB 42:1-6)

Verses 1-2

In many ways, Job 42:1-6 represents the climax of the dialogue between God and Job. Job's initial response to God was unsatisfactory and brought about an onslaught of questions from God to put him in his place (40:3-5). Here the exchange was resolved. The first thing Job confessed was God's absolute and uninhibited sovereignty over all things. The sovereignty of God means that He is the Lord over creation. As sovereign, He exercises His rule with absolute authority. God's control means that everything happens according to His plan and intention. God's authority means that all His word ought to be submitted to, and His commands ought to be obeyed. In the context of the Book of Job, this means that God can do anything He plans, including permitting an innocent person like Job to suffer. Job confessed, ***I know that you can do anything and no plan of yours can be thwarted.*** This is a breathtaking admission from a man who had suffered profoundly. This confession did not come easily but through mental toil and emotional anguish. Many times, the most precious truths we hold about God are strengthened from the places of deepest experience.

Verses 3-4

In light of this confession, Job repeated God's words back to Him in the form of a question, ***Who is this who conceals my counsel with ignorance?*** Job admitted he had done just that. He had spoken of things he did not understand, indeed, things too wondrous for him to know. The things Job spoke of concerning God came from a place of insufficient knowledge. God's will in his circumstances was hidden or obscured. In this sense, Job's questioning of God without full knowledge only made things more difficult.

VERSES 1-2

¹ Then Job replied to the LORD: ² I know that you can do anything and no plan of yours can be thwarted.

VERSES 3-4

³ You asked, "Who is this who conceals my counsel with ignorance?" Surely I spoke about things I did not understand, things too wondrous for me to know. ⁴ You said, "Listen now, and I will speak. When I question you, you will inform me."

It was only through God's counter-questioning that Job realized he was pushing the boundaries and reaching beyond his limits. This was illustrated in chapters 38–41, where Job was shown to have limited knowledge of the natural world. Therefore, how could Job speak as though he possessed sufficient knowledge of God's moral universe? There is a great lesson in humility here, namely, that one cannot assume or prescribe meaning to God's actions without God's clear revealed purposes in those actions.

How does professing our shortcomings open the door for greater understanding of God?

VERSE 5

⁵ I had heard reports about you, but now my eyes have seen you.

Verse 5

Job admitted he was operating from secondhand knowledge about God. Based on hearsay, Job had learned that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. However, God does not always operate in this manner from a human perspective. There are times when the wicked seem to flourish and the righteous face suffering and trial. At this point, Job had gained greater wisdom by seeing God for who He is—the sovereign Lord of the universe and not a divine vending machine of blessings and judgments.

As God revealed Himself to Job, Job's understanding and wisdom was enlarged. Like the psalmist admitted in Psalm 73:16-17, Job could say: "When I tried to understand all this, it seemed hopeless until I entered God's sanctuary." Like Job and the psalmist, as we accept the Lord's control over all things, even suffering, we see Him as God and Lord in a new way.

VERSE 6

⁶ Therefore, I reject my words and am sorry for them; I am dust and ashes.

Verse 6

Finally, Job expressed his remorse: ***I reject my words and am sorry for them; I am dust and ashes.*** At first glance, this seems to coincide with the assertions of Job's friends that he needed to repent and be restored. However, 42:7-8 denies that his friends were correct. One might ask, what then did Job repent of in verse 6? The Book of Job makes it clear that he did not suffer because of a particular sin. However, we do see that he became bitter toward God in his suffering (chap. 3). Job repented of the bitterness that had grown in his heart toward God, which led to his accusation that God was unjust and had treated him unfairly.

God did not allow Job to grow in bitterness but intervened to bring him to a place of humble trust and submission. Thus, Job shifted his focus from demanding answers (that the Lord never provided) to gaining peace by submitting to the Lord, even though he did not have all the answers to his questions. In the same way, believers can admit their dependence on God for all things in life. This shift in the mind of Job was a gift of grace from God. As always, when God reveals sinful attitudes of the heart (like bitterness) it is always with the intent of providing an opportunity to repent.

REPENT (JOB 42:7-9)

Verse 7

Like the opening two chapters of the Book of Job, the conclusion returns to narrative prose. After Job repented of his bitterness and submitted to God, God turned His attention to pronouncing His displeasure with Job's three friends. God addressed **Eliphaz** as the representative leader of the group and expressed His anger at them for incorrectly speaking about Him: ***I am angry with you and your two friends.*** Their assertion that Job was guilty of sin because he suffered (based on the idea that only sinners suffer) was not true, and they needed to repent. The three friends showed no signs of backing down from their assertions, unlike Job, who in the end repented of his bitter heart. Job repented, and now it was time for his three friends to do the same.

Verses 8-9

God chose to show the friends grace in allowing Job to intercede on their behalf by offering sacrifices as a sign of their repentance. The text tells us they brought **seven bulls and seven rams** to Job as God commanded. The offering of seven bulls and seven rams is a complete number, thus representing their complete repentance. (See Num. 23:1; Ezek. 45:23-25.)

Job acted as their mediator before God, just as he did for his children in Job 1:5. Moreover, by commanding that the friends go to Job and seek prayer indicates that they must seek his forgiveness as well as God's. By using their exact names, **Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite**, God focused on the details necessary for repentance. This is a call for three specific people to repent of specific sins by following specific commands. Sin should never be seen as an abstract principle but as specific attitudes and actions that call for active repentance. In the end, the text indicates that they were restored in their relationship to Job as well as God because they responded as God had directed them.

There is a lesson that can be learned from the actions of Job's friends throughout the book. There are times when God allows inexplicable suffering in the lives of His saints. Like Job's friends, we must be careful in our help (even with the best intentions) to not increase their pain. The Book of Job teaches us that God is gentle even with misguided counselors. As we have seen before, we must be careful not to ascribe reasons or meaning for all suffering. Our first posture must be to weep with those who weep. God cares for our relationships with other Christians and calls us to intervene and even pray for them in times of struggle. Prayer for suffering saints, rather than philosophical pontifications or theological constructs, is the best response to their suffering.

In the case of Job, God's command for him to intercede for his oppressors displays grace in full. Although God was angry with Job's friends for their treatment of Job, it was God Himself who took the initiative to restore them. Furthermore, by making them depend on Job for their restoration, God dispelled their theology of earning God's favor through their own righteous acts. They could not come to God through their own power but

VERSE 7

⁷ After the LORD had finished speaking to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has.

VERSES 8-9

⁸ Now take seven bulls and seven rams, go to my servant Job, and offer a burnt offering for yourselves. Then my servant Job will pray for you. I will surely accept his prayer and not deal with you as your folly deserves. For you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has." ⁹ Then Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD had told them, and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

only through the prayers of another. In all of this, it becomes clear that Job prefigures a greater Intercessor who pleaded on behalf of His torturers. All of these things point to the grace of God in restoring sinners to Himself despite their unworthiness. Job points us to Jesus, who on the cross prayed for the forgiveness of those who would torture and execute Him (Luke 23:34). Just as God accepted Job's prayer and reconciled the men to Himself and to Job, God accepts Christ's work on our behalf to reconcile us to Himself and one another.

In a very real sense, the questions that arise from the Book of Job are answered in Jesus Christ. Why do the innocent suffer? That has only happened once. Jesus is the only truly innocent sufferer. And the reason for His suffering is made clear in the New Testament. Jesus suffered so that all who believe in Him could repent of their sin and be restored to God. Therefore, when someone suffers, they cannot properly ask if God loves them. Certainly He does. Suffering is no respecter of persons. If anyone ever doubts the love of God, they should look at the cross. Greater is no love than this, that a man would lay down his life for his friends.

VERSES 10-11

¹⁰ After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and doubled his previous possessions. ¹¹ All his brothers, sisters, and former acquaintances came to him and dined with him in his house. They sympathized with him and comforted him concerning all the adversity the LORD had brought on him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold earring.

How does God's grace toward Job's friends give us hope as imperfect friends? How does Job's intercession for his friends point us forward to Jesus, the greatest friend we could ever know?

RESTORED (JOB 42:10-11)

Verses 10-11

At the close of the book, we are told how God **restored** Job's life and **fortunes**. It is important to state that the end of the book does not confirm the friends' theology of retribution. As we have seen, the innocent can suffer according to the will of God. The wicked can experience relative peace and blessings in this life. In the same way, we must remember that God did not necessarily restore Job's life because he repented but because it was God's good pleasure to do so.

Again, God is sovereign and will do what He wills. Job was never told why he suffered. He simply submitted to the wisdom of God and learned humility under His powerful hand. Assuming that God will always restore fortune to those who repent leads to the mistake that Job's friends made for the entirety of the book. While there are general observable patterns for how the righteous and wicked fare in this life, we must be careful to not put God in a box.

In the case of Job in particular, his life was restored and his possessions **doubled**. It was in God's good pleasure to tie Job's restoration to his intercession on behalf of the friends who treated him so wrongly.

Interestingly enough, Job's restoration began with the very ones who had been so hard on him and had distanced themselves from him when he needed them most (Job 6:14-23; 19:13-22). With reconciliation comes restoration of relationships, and now they ate together and comforted one another, which is a reversal of what had happened before. Before, his friends had multiplied Job's suffering, now they multiplied his wealth by presenting him with money and gold rings. What a wonderful ending to a painful and troubled life. In the end, Job died an old and happy man, leaving behind a large, prosperous family and beloved friends.

Once again, we must point out that God does not promise to restore all losses or to fully reward His people in this life. Job's love for God was not dependent on the gifts and rewards that came from His hand. Now that God had revealed Himself to Job and Job had met Him face to face, he had a proper attitude toward God, knowing that God does not always reward everyone with a pain-free life. This teaches us that any good things we experience in this life are not deserved but are expressions of divine grace. There is nothing we can do to merit or earn God's grace.

While these truths are evident in this life, there is a reward beyond our imagination for every righteous person in the age to come. Regardless if we suffer little or suffer deeply, prosperity and pleasantness await those who are found righteous in Christ. As Christians, we can be reminded that what God has in store for His redeemed people, will far outweigh any losses experienced in this life. In the new heavens and new earth, God's people will receive an eternal reward that is unimaginable. Isn't this the good news of the gospel for all who trust in God?

Job's final speech shows his unstoppable God who is at work to heal and save and restore in ways too profound for human understanding. In the end, Job was treated by God better than he deserved. This greater-than-we-could-imagine treatment is available to all people in Jesus Christ. It really is breathtaking to consider the lengths God has gone to offer us the riches of eternity. In Jesus Christ we are treated better than we deserve. Christ took upon Himself what we deserve so that we could experience the eternal joy that only He deserves.

How do the eternal rewards of heaven allow us to accept the fact that God may not vindicate us now or restore certain things we have lost in his life?

LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION

DISPLAY: Prior to the session, display a camera and several pictures, such as a sunset, a sporting event, or a historical site.

INTRODUCE: As people arrive, call attention to the camera and the pictures. Indicate that all of the pictures depict something special that you wanted to remember after the experience, but that all of the pictures fail to capture the way it felt to see the actual sunset (or view in person the sporting event or historical site).

ASK: *Think about the first time you saw a professional sporting event live or visited an important historical location. How did visiting or seeing that in person impact your understanding of that sport or place?* (PSG, p. 64)

TRANSITION: *Job thought he understood God. He listened to his first three friends accuse him of sinning against God, defended his innocence to them, and asked to plead his case before God. In today's Scripture passage, Job revealed that he had seen God with his own eyes.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

REVIEW: Summarize Job 40:1-2, reminding the group that Job pridefully had requested a chance to plead his case before God. Utilizing Understand the Context (PSG, p. 65), **Pack Item 2** (*Outlines of Job and Ecclesiastes*) and **Pack Item 5** (*Job's Statements of Faith*), briefly recap Job's change in circumstances, the reaction and words from his friends, as well as God's response to Job.

STATE: *In today's study Job replied to the Lord, revealing all that he had learned about God.*

DISTRIBUTE: Provide each person with a sheet of paper and a pencil. Direct them to fold the paper in thirds. Label one section of the paper *Admit*, the next section *Repent*, and the third section *Restored*.

READ: **Invite a volunteer to read Job 42:1-6**, instructing the group to listen for Job's response to the Lord.

EXPLAIN: *God's words to Job in Job 41-42 demanded a response. Job's words revealed what he had learned from God.*

IDENTIFY: Lead the group to turn to a neighbor and together describe at least two things Job learned from his encounter with God.

ASK: *How does professing our shortcomings open the door for greater understanding into God?* (PSG, p. 67)

EXAMINE: Read aloud Daniel 4:35, directing the group to compare this verse with Job 42:2-3.

REREAD: Read again Job 42:6, noting Job's confession of his sin. Highlight that Job saw God with a clarity he did not have until now.

ASK: *How are confession and repentance an expression of dependence on God?*

WRITE: Direct the group to summarize or draw an illustration of Job 42:1-6 under the heading *Admit*.

GUIDE: Using **Pack Item 6** (*Key Verses: Job 13:15-16*), note that Job had determined to follow God despite not knowing the future. Ask: *How can professing our faith and hope in God help us face the unknown or impossible realities of life?*

READ: *Invite a volunteer to read Job 42:7-9, guiding the group to listen for God's words to Job's friends.*

STATE: *God addressed Job's friends, bringing charges against them for the words they spoke to Job. His friends consistently accused Job of sinning against God. Their message to Job was repent and God will hear your pleas. God directed the three friends to offer a sacrifice and to ask Job to pray on their behalf.*

ASK: *Why is it such a serious matter when apparently pious people misrepresent God? How should believers think about this in light of their calling to be ambassadors for Christ?* (PSG, p. 70)

EXPLAIN: *While Job served as a mediator between God and his friends, today we find our Mediator through a relationship with Jesus Christ.*

COMPARE: Lead the group to compare Job's actions for his friends with Hebrews 8:6. Highlight that a step of obedience was required of Job's friends. They had to repent of their actions, offer a sacrifice, and seek forgiveness from both Job and God. Today a step of faith and obedience is required as we are offered the opportunity to trust Jesus as Savior and Lord.

RECORD: Direct the group to summarize or illustrate Job 42:7-9 under the heading *Repent*.

READ: *Read aloud Job 42:10-11, while the group listens for what occurred next for Job.*

ASK: *How does what was restored to Job compare to what God will provide His redeemed people in heaven?* (PSG, p. 71)

WRITE: Complete the notetaking sheet by directing the group to summarize or illustrate Job 42:10-11 under the heading *Restored*.

TRANSITION: *Job illustrated for us his greater understanding of God and modeled a deeper faith in God.*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

DISCUSS: In teams of two to four people discuss the following questions: **How do you see a sovereign God in control of the circumstances of your life? How does a relationship with Jesus Christ impact the way you handle life's difficulties?**

EVALUATE: Lead the group to utilize their notetaking sheet to evaluate their own lives as they consider areas that need to be addressed by admitting and repenting of sins. Guide the group to reflect on relationships that might need to be restored.

REVIEW: Call for a volunteer to read aloud the Summary Statements under Apply the Text (PSG, p. 72). Invite the group to contemplate living out these statements as believers. Ask: **Which of these challenges you the most today? Explain.**

CHALLENGE: *The study of Job challenges us to remember God is in control. Even through life's ups and downs, we are promised God's presence and a future hope of full restoration in heaven. Discuss from the PSG (p. 72): **Share with the rest of the group times God used suffering to reveal Himself to you, resulting in your having a deeper knowledge of who He is. What did God reveal about Himself to you through the difficulty and how does that encourage you today?***

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking the Lord to help the group acknowledge that He is in control of all of their circumstances. Pray that He will lead them to offer praise to Him regardless of their situations.

OPTIONS

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

MUSIC

Secure a copy of “I Repent,” by Steve Green, Phil Naish, and Dave Noel. Use the song to discuss the importance of confession and repentance in the life of the believer. Emphasize that through a relationship with Jesus Christ we have access to God.

DRAMATIC PRESENTATION

Prior to the session, enlist one person to reenact Job 42:2-6. Direct the person to both verbally and physically portray Job as he responded to God through confession and repentance. Encourage the person to be certain that they illustrate that Job declared total dependence on God. After the reenactment, highlight the continuing need for believers to examine their own lives for unconfessed sin.

RESEARCH

Gather Bible dictionaries.

Lead the group to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 69 of the PSG. Consulting a Bible dictionary for insight, research the role of the priest. Review some of the passages identified in the article, paying close attention to how the role of the priest was fulfilled by Jesus. Ask: ***How does what Job was called upon to do give us insight into what it means for today’s believers to be called priests?*** (PSG, p. 69)

PRAY

Lead the group to list the needs of those currently undergoing difficult situations and circumstances. Spend intentional time in prayer on behalf of others.

CREATIVE WRITING

Gather markers and paper for each team.

Divide into teams of two to four people, providing each team with paper and markers. As the study of Job concludes, direct the teams to write a headline that might have appeared in a newspaper regarding Job’s experiences. Next, follow the headline with a two- to three-sentence explanation. After each team presents their headline, discuss how Job’s experience with life’s struggles should influence our lives today.

WORD STUDY

Gather Bible dictionaries.

Using Bible dictionaries, lead the group to examine the words *confess* and *repent*. Discuss the following questions: ***How are confession and repentance alike and different? What good is confession without repentance?***

TESTIMONY

Pre-enlist a volunteer to share about his or her specific experience of God’s faithfulness during difficult circumstances. Interview the person, highlighting actions and attitudes that strengthened his or her faith. Emphasize God’s sovereignty and how God honors those who humbly profess dependence on Him.