

300.1: Suffering, Loss, and Meaning (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 32, Updated)

[“I Know That My Redeemer Liveth”](#)

I think Job is one of the most important books of scripture, and one of the most misused. It wrestles with the deepest questions of human existence—suffering, loss, and what it all means. To use this complex book as a faith promoting feel good story is to skip over the poignant experience of being human.

Productive Sunday School

- I. Reading Review
- II. Lesson
 - a. Check in with loss, grief, suffering. Let it be personal.
 - b. Others: How to “comfort those that stand in need of comfort and mourn with those that mourn” lessons from Job (be quiet and present. “I’m sorry. That’s a lot. I’m here.”
 - c. Yourself: How do we respond to suffering and loss?
 - i. Character over context
 - ii. What we feel we can heal
 - iii. Changing our relationship to suffering and loss
 - iv. Whatever our relationships and contexts, possessions etc we have ourselves, what our life experiences have made of us (book of life is us)
 - d. What do we make of the book of Job? (Satan, Job’s existence)
 - e. Conclusion: Whatever the nature of Job, its lessons are real

Productive Sunday School

Reading Review

Class Members:

Job 1 Remember the purpose of Job... to challenge the “traditional wisdom” (called the “act-consequence correlation”) that if you are righteous, good things will happen to you, if you are wicked, bad things will happen to you (in our day also called “prosperity gospel”). Job is the best person with the best things. “Sons of God” is a Divine Council. Satan is also there and proposes a test. Job loses all his property and all his children (which were considered property in his time). Note the escalation of tragedy: livestock and servants, more livestock and servants, and finally his children. Job blesses God.

2 Job has painful, terrible health problems. His wife urges him to “curse God and die”. Job’s friends make the right choice and do nothing but quietly sit and support him in his suffering for seven days and nights.

13 Job takes God to court! “I will argue my case before God...” Recommendation to others “keeping silent would be wisdom”

19 Job describes God as his enemy, lamenting all his suffering and trials (note the reference to children, which provides a “literary seam”, contradictions between the middle and bookend chapters)

23:10 “When he has tried me, I shall come out as gold”

27 Powerful “even though I suffer and die, I will maintain my integrity” (Hebrew “Toom”, the word used to describe him in chapter 1. Blameless, complete, like “single” in Matt. 6:22 Same as “Urim and Thummim”)

42 God rebukes Job’s friends and blesses him with more than he had in the beginning.

James 5:11 Persevere, references what Job went through and his blessings. “hupomeno” endure, remain

3 Nephi 15:9 Endure to the end, receive eternal life.

Additional Reading:

D&C 121:1-10 Joseph pours out his heart to God, a heart broken by the suffering of the saints. “God, where are you?” God responds “you are not yet as Job...” (parallels between Joseph and Job, both call on God, get personal relationship as an answer, worth bringing up wither it matters if Job existed as a human)

look through the rest of Job

Lesson

Check in with loss, grief, suffering. Let it be personal.

Suffering, loss, and Others: How to “comfort those that stand in need of comfort and mourn with those that mourn” lessons from Job (be quiet and present. “I’m sorry. That’s a lot. I’m here.”)

Suffering, loss, and Yourself: How do we respond to suffering and loss?

Character over context (the sobering insight is that we are inevitably shaped by our contexts.... Most of how we are is a result of our genetics and the lives we have lived... the remainder, though small, is where I think agency and the gospel do their work)

What we feel we can heal: the first thing to do in the face of loss and suffering. FEEL it.

Changing our relationship to suffering and loss: Tasks of grieving (and this applies to all loss, not just death)

- Accept the reality of the loss
- Process the pain of grief
- Adjust to a world without the deceased

- Find an enduring connection with the deceased while embarking on a new life
 - (From J. William Worden's Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy)

Whatever our relationships and contexts, possessions etc we have ourselves, what our life experiences have made of us (book of life is us)

Allowing loss to change us. Job "getting back everything and more" is a terrible summary. What Job came away with is a relationship with God and a different version of himself (took God to court)

Pain: inevitable, our human alarm system, something isn't right and we should pay attention

Suffering: Resistance, has to do with meaning and agency, whether we choose something

Loss: inevitable. A key task of life is to develop mature relationship to loss. Our hearts break because we care. We feel pain because we feel. "Impassioned Zen" and "flexible fervency"

vs. Suffering vs. Loss vs. Grief.... (when he has tried me I shall be refined like gold)

What do we make of the book of Job? (Satan, Job's existence)

Conclusion: Whatever the nature of Job, its lessons are real. What we have is ourselves, and our relationships, including our relationship to ourselves and to God.

Don't turn loss and tragedy into a faith promoting feel good story

Could it be... Satan? (What is Satan doing hanging out with God?)

Once upon a time there was a man named Job... what kind of story is Job? (Jonah is my favorite intro to genre, but Job is close)

Satan's question: This is a profound test for all of us... are we what we are, are we good, because we are fortunate, or because we are good? Does our character go deeper than context?

What is our breaking/transforming point? (I'm deeply grateful for my life experience that has broken and transformed me)

300.2: Suffering, Loss, and Meaning (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 32, Sunday School)

"I Know That My Redeemer Liveth"

We all know the story of Job, but the book itself proves more challenging and complex than you remember. That said, it provides one of the most powerful wrestles with questions of loss and meaning in scripture.

This portion of the episode includes:

- Initial reflections/comments on Job (including the discrepancy between the ends and middle and the oddness of God and Satan gambling with Job's suffering)
- Review of the reading
- Dealing with suffering, loss, and death
- Meaning and blame
- How we support each other in tragedy
- A personal relationship with God

300.3: Suffering, Loss, and Meaning (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 32, Study Notes)

"I Know That My Redeemer Liveth"

This portion of the episode includes:

- Literary issues in the book of Job
- Did Job exist?
- Translation issues in Job 19:25
- A return to theodicy