

INTRODUCTION

Over the holiday weekend, Cindy and I enjoyed watching the History Channel’s series about the American Presidents. As we were watching, she asked me who some of my favorite Presidents were. One of the Presidents I named was Calvin Coolidge. He was a man of few words, and the words he spoke were often blunt. A female journalist once told him, “Mr. President I made a \$100 bet with another journalist that I could get you to say more than three words. Would you care to comment?” Calvin Coolidge smiled and said, “You lose.” That’s how he got the nickname “Silent Cal.”

Some people think of God as “Silent God.” When they are going through painful trials and tribulations, they cry out, “Why, God? Why me? Where are you, God?” And it seems as if heaven is silent. But the Bible teaches God cares and He has spoken—we may just not be listening carefully enough. Sometimes God brings storms into our lives so we will listen more intently.

For centuries, Job has been the poster child for enduring pain and suffering. Since we’ve been in Job for the past three months, let’s quickly review the story using the pictures created by the British Artist William Blake. The story began with Job as a happy, healthy, wealthy man surrounded by his wife and ten children. Then Satan, the accuser of the brothers, accused Job of serving God only because he was so blessed. Satan contended if God allowed trouble and sorrow to come into Job’s life he would curse God to His face. God disagreed with this evaluation, and in order to prove His point, God allowed Satan to afflict Job.

Satan gleefully attacked Job, first taking his wealth, and then his children. In addition, Satan violated Job’s body by covering him from head to foot with painful, oozing sores. Job’s wife said, “Job, give it up. Curse God and die.” But Job said, “The Lord gives, the Lord has taken away. May the Lord’s name be praised!”

Then to add to his suffering, three of Job’s friends, Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad visited Job. They told Job he was being punished by God for some terrible deed. Most of the book is devoted to a cycle of Job’s friends accusing him, and then Job defending himself. Job’s statements revealed that he ping-ponged between faith and doubt. His faith bent but it did not break.

Then in our last message, we met a young man, named Elihu. Eli who? Even though he was young, he spoke by the power of the Holy Spirit and got Job’s attention. As Elihu completed his remarks, a storm was brewing on the horizon. Then suddenly, as the storm broke in all its fury, God spoke to Job out of the storm.

Let’s read God’s thunderous remarks in Job 38:1-3. “Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said: ‘Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.’”

Now when it says God answered Job, it doesn’t mean God gave Job the answers he was seeking. Instead of giving Job an answer, God started asking Job questions. By the time He finished, God had asked Job over 180 questions. Hear God’s voice and notice:

I. POWERFUL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER (JOB 38-39)

We won’t study each of the 187 questions God asked Job, so let’s just notice five:

1. God asks: Where were you when I created the earth?

Job 38:4-7. “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and the angels shouted for joy?”

I don’t have time to address the ongoing debate between whether we came into existence by Divine creation or whether we are the product of blind chance and random evolution. I don’t apologize for stating that I believe God created the heavens and the earth, and I think intelligent design and creation should be taught alongside the theory of evolution. I will address the issue in a future message.

But don’t miss the point. The Bible is not a science textbook that tells us HOW we were created. It is God’s love letter that tells us WHY we were created. Man is arrogant enough to suggest how life began, but everything man says is pure speculation and hypothesis, because as God reminded Job, *nobody* was around to see it!

2. God asks: How many sunrises have you made?

Job 38:12-13. “Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it?”

The Bible teaches that God not only created the universe, but that He also maintains it. As you know, the earth is orbiting around the sun at a speed of 66,000 mph, while at the same time it is spinning around (at about 1,000 mph) so that one part of the globe is facing the sun while the other is in darkness. If this didn’t occur every day, one side of the planet would freeze and the other side would burn up. And every morning the sun rises in a different place, because the planet is also tilting on its axis 23 degrees to create the different seasons. Otherwise each hemisphere would be too cold or too hot to support life. This is a meticulous operation...oh, but it just happens to do that by accident.

Every sunrise has God’s signature on it, as He reminds us that He is giving us another day to live. God is maintaining life and order in the universe. Until mankind can control the orbit, spinning, and tilting of the planet, we’d better keep quiet about how smart we are.

3. God asks: Are you older than light?

Job 38:19-21. “What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings? Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!”

I like this question, because it proves God has a sense of humor. Hebrew humor often pictured the absurd—like screening out a gnat and swallowing a camel. God gently poked fun at Job by sarcastically saying he was already born when light was created.

Albert Einstein contended the only constant in the universe was light. He used it as the key factor to demonstrate the relationship between mass and energy ($E=mc^2$). Today, scientists measure light and use light, but they still don’t understand what light really is. And the Bible simply says in I John 1:5 that “God is light.”

4. God asks: Can you control the stars?

Job 38:31-33a. “Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion? Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? Do you know the laws of the heavens?”

People who ascribe to astrology stars control our lives. But I’d rather trust the One who made the stars and controls the constellations. From ancient times until now, people have gazed into the star-filled sky at night to try to find meaning. About 7,000 stars can be seen by the naked eye. By connecting the dots, ancient people saw pictures. For instance, Orion is the figure of the mighty hunter who moved across the sky in the winter. They noticed that in one night, the stars seem to wheel around the sky, but there was one star, the North Star that served as the pivot point for this rotation.

We’re still gazing at the stars—we’re just using telescopes now. With the cheapest Sears telescope you can see a million stars. But even with the Hubble telescope, scientists have no clue about how many stars there are. They estimate there are 100 thousand million stars (100 billion; 10^{11}) in our galaxy, the Milky Way, and there are millions of galaxies. The more we can see in the space, the more mysteries we find. The Psalmist was right when he sang, “When I consider the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:3-4)

5. God asks: Do all the animals depend on you?

Job 39:1-2. “Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you watch when the doe bears her fawn? Do you count the months till they bear? Do you know the time they give birth?”

Job 39:26-27. “Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread his wings toward the south? Does the eagle soar at your command and build his nest on high?”

If you love animals, you should read all of Job 39. This chapter could be subtitled “God’s Animal Planet.” God describes eight different animals. He takes credit for creating and designing all the different species in the animal kingdom. He pointed out that He presides at the birth of every little fawn. Jesus said God notices whenever a tiny sparrow falls to the earth. (Matthew 10:19) God is such a powerful, caring Creator that He presides at the birth and death of all of the

animals.

Have you ever wondered how many animal species there are? About a million different species have been identified (750,000 are insects), but Terry Irwin, of the Smithsonian Institute, estimates there are 30 million different species on the planet! Arrogantly, modern man thinks he understands animals, and sits at the top of the food chain, but don’t tell that to a Great White Shark!

II. PERSONAL LESSONS TO LEARN (JOB 40:1-5)

The Lord continued His quiz in Job 40:1-2. “The Lord said to Job: ‘Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!’”

Notice Job’s reply in Job 40:3-5. “Then Job answered the Lord: ‘I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer—twice, but I will say no more.’”

We don’t have any answers to God’s questions, either. So instead of trying to answer God, let’s consider three personal lessons to learn from this passage.

1. God still speaks to me in my storms

God speaks to his children in many different ways. He spoke to Moses through a burning bush. He used a whale to get Jonah’s attention. He used a donkey to speak to Balaam, and He even used a rooster to speak to Simon Peter. He spoke to Job out of a whirlwind.

According to *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, the word “whirlwind” can be translated “hurricane.” God still speaks to his children during storms. If you are going through a personal storm, or a financial storm, or a relational storm—pause and listen for God’s voice.

Why does God use storms to speak to us? I think it’s because some of us are so hardheaded that we aren’t really paying attention when our emotional climate is sunny and mild. Sometimes God has to use storms to get our attention.

Last Sunday night, our students presented a great concert here. I always love their music, but I was especially blessed by the testimonies of two students. Austin Stevenson talked about how he trained and lifted weights in order to play football, only to be disappointed to find that because of a bulging disc, he didn’t pass his physical this fall. For a while he was angry at God and asked, “Why me?” And the answer God gave him was “Why not you?”

Kendall Hines shared about the physical pain and emotional agony she has endured over the past several years from an ankle injury that developed into an insidious infection. It was when she began to praise God as her Healer that she began to see a change—and now God has healed her. As I listened to those two students, I was proud of the way they have heard God’s voice in the middle of their personal storms. They aren’t unique; life is full of storms.

Annie Johnson Flint has written a poem capturing this idea: God has not promised skies always blue; Flower strewn pathways all our lives through; God has not promised sun without rain, Joy without sorrow, peace without pain. But God has promised STRENGTH for the day, REST for the labor, LIGHT for the way, GRACE for the trials, HELP from above, Unfailing sympathy, undying love.

An old seaman once said, "During the fiercest storms the only thing way a ship can survive is to keep its nose pointed straight into the wind. If you try to turn to the left or the right, the ship may capsize. If you try to run from the wind, the waves can surge over the stern." That's good advice for us. Whenever you're in a storm, don't turn away from God. Don't run from Him. Instead, turn straight toward Him and seek His face. When you're in the sunshine, you MAY have faith, but when you're in the storm you MUST have faith.

2. I am speechless before God's power and wisdom

Earlier Job boasted that if he could face God he would cross-examine him. In Job 23:3-4 he said, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments." He reminds me of the Lion in the Wizard of Oz who said, "Let me at him! I'll show him a thing or two!" Then when he finally faced the wizard, he crouched in terror. Job was the same. Before God appeared, he boasted that if he could get an audience with God he would tell him a thing or two. But when God finally showed up, he found himself speechless.

Have you noticed how many talk shows there are on television? Job presumed he was going to play Larry King Live with God. "Okay, God you sit there and I'm going to ask you a lot of tough questions. I want to know WHY I lost my fortune, my family, and my health. I'm going to ask the questions, and you're going to give me some answers." Wrong.

When God showed up, Job said, "I am unworthy." The King James Version says, "I am vile." The Hebrew word *qalal* means "lightweight." Compared to God, Job realized he was an intellectual lightweight. After these questions, Job was overwhelmed by God's greatness and he was underwhelmed by his own ignorance. When you truly see God for who He is, you get smaller and smaller and God gets bigger and bigger.

When you find yourself in the awesome presence of God, you will discover all your questions and your arguments vanish. With every question, God was communicating this powerful truth: "JOB, I'M GOD, AND YOU'RE NOT. Until you know a little bit more about running the physical universe, don't tell me how to run the moral universe."

I've heard people say, "When I get to heaven I'm going to have a lot of questions to ask God!" I used to say it myself. But I stopped saying it years ago. Why? Because I have come to realize that when we enter the presence of a Holy God, we aren't going to be on the level with God where we can demand a bunch of answers.

One of my favorite songs is "I Can Only Imagine" by Mercy Me. Amazingly, that song about seeing Jesus has been played on a lot of secular radio stations. The chorus asks several questions:

“Surrounded by Your Glory, what will my heart feel? Will I dance for you, Jesus, or in awe of You, be still? Will I stand in your presence, or to my knees will I fall? Will I sing Hallelujah, or will I be able to speak at all?” What do you think? I don’t really think we’ll be dancing—I think we’ll be in such awe that we will fall on our faces, totally speechless in God’s presence.

3. I can have peace when I surrender to God’s absolute sovereignty

We often speak of the “sovereignty of God,” but many people are clueless about what the word really means. If I asked you to write a definition of “sovereignty” in less than ten words, could you do it? Here’s my definition in seven words: God’s right to do whatever He pleases. The root of the word is *reign*. The prefix *sov* means “over,” so it means to “rule and reign over.” God rules and reigns over all.

God didn’t owe Job an explanation, and He doesn’t owe us one. But we must believe that God is not some malignant, capricious deity who wants people to squirm like a worm in hot ashes. No, God is a loving Father who grieves when His children are hurting.

When you think of the sovereignty of God, the inevitable question arises: “Does man have a free will to choose, or is God, in His sovereignty, controlling everything?” The answer is yes to both questions. How do you balance the freedom and will of man with the absolute sovereignty of God? Perhaps this crude illustration will help you understand.

Let’s imagine you board American Airlines flight 777 at DFW to fly to London. The first step is placing your trust in the law of aerodynamics, you’re putting your trust in the pilots, and you’re putting your trust in the engineers and workmen at Boeing who designed and built the jet. Once you choose to board the jet, the destination has already been determined by the authorities. This is a faint picture of the Sovereignty of God. He has already determined the ultimate destination of your life—that’s why it’s called Pre-destination. But as a passenger on that jet, you aren’t kept in chains that bind you to your seat, just a seat belt that can be unfastened when the captain has determined it is safe to move around the cabin. Once that light goes off, you’re free to move around the cabin. You have some choices: You can choose to enjoy some delicious airline food or you’re free to decline. You have a choice. The flight attendant isn’t going to force-feed you. You can choose to sleep or to watch a movie, or to walk around the cabin. As you move toward your destination, there are choices you can make. But all the while you are making these choices, the jet is moving steadily toward London. There is both freedom and sovereignty in play, and they do not contradict each other. I think this can be applied to God’s sovereignty and man’s freedom to choose. Like that jumbo jet, God is moving His creation steadily toward the goal He purposed in Christ before the world began (see Ephesians 1:4-5), and within that Divine design He has given us the freedom to make moral and spiritual choices. Job chose to surrender to God’s sovereignty, and you can, too.

One of my favorite scenes from the movie “Forrest Gump” is when Lieutenant Dan and Forrest are out on his shrimp boat. Lieutenant Dan lost both his legs in Vietnam and he was angry and bitter because he hadn’t died on the battlefield. Forrest and Lieutenant Dan weren’t catching any shrimp, so Lieutenant Dan sarcastically told Forrest he ought to go to church and pray that God would give them some shrimp. So Forrest did. On their next trip, they still didn’t catch any

shrimp so Lieutenant Dan asked, “Where is this God of yours?” At that moment a hurricane blew in and Forrest said, “It’s funny that Lieutenant Dan would ask that because right then, God showed up.”

During the storm Forrest was scared, but Lieutenant Dan was angry. At the height of the storm, he was swinging at the top of the mast, screaming out to God, “It’s time you and me had a showdown! You call this a storm?”

After the storm passed, Lieutenant Dan was a changed man. Not long afterwards, he said to Forrest, “I never thanked you for saving my life.” And as he swam away to a new life, Forrest said, “He never actually said so, but I think he made his peace with God.”

CONCLUSION

Have you truly made your peace with God? You’ll never experience His peace until you hear His voice in the storm and simply surrender to the truth that He is God and you aren’t.

You may be going through a crisis right now. If you aren’t; don’t worry, the next crisis is just around the corner. But you don’t have to be afraid. Just trust Him. Remember, God still speaks to us in our storms. He doesn’t speak to answer your questions of “Why?” or “Why me?” He speaks to demonstrate He is far greater than we can ever understand. God never intended for us to understand Him, instead He just wants us to TRUST HIM. It’s not a blind trust—it’s a trust that is borne when we open our eyes and look around. When you see the greatness of God, all you can do is shut your mouth, reach out to Him and say, “Abba. Father, I don’t understand You or your ways, but I will trust you with today and I will trust you with all my tomorrows.”

OUTLINE

I. POWERFUL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER (JOB 38-39)

God asks:

1. Where were you when I created the earth? (38:4-7)
2. How many sunrises have you made? (38:12-13)
3. God asks: Are you older than light? (38:19-21)
4. God asks: Can you control the stars? (38:31-32)
5. God asks: Do all the animals depend on you? (39:1-2; 26-27)

II. PERSONAL LESSONS TO LEARN (JOB 40:1-5)

1. God still speaks to me in my storms
2. I am speechless before God's power and wisdom
3. I can have peace when I surrender to God's absolute sovereignty



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes