

# Understanding and Living with Suffering

by

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# CONTENTS

1. The Beginning .....	1
2. Glorifying .....	2
3. How? .....	3
4. Comfort .....	4
5. The And Others Club .....	7

# 1

## THE BEGINNING

The first time I read Job I began to learn about *suffering*. Through no sin or fault of his own Job was tested with ultimate suffering.

The story opens by revealing that Job is a righteous man blessed with earthly riches and ten children which he loves very much (Job 1:1–6). Then the story shifts to the heavenly realm where the Lord, a group of angels, and Satan are having a meeting. Because Job is righteous and blameless, God points him out to Satan. However, Satan does not focus on Job’s righteousness but on his earthly blessings. Satan claims that if God stops Job’s earthly blessings, then Job will not be obedient to God—he will curse Him to His face (1:7–11). To test this accusation God turns Job over to Satan and permits him to do anything he wants to Job. The only thing he is not allowed to do is to kill Job.

**Observation:** *Even when I am in fellowship with God and living a righteous life trials and suffering can come upon me from heaven.*

## 2 GLORIFYING

*Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made. (Isaiah 43:7)*

Was God glorified when Job suffered?

Was God glorified when Job's enemies captured all his donkeys, when all seven thousand of his sheep were killed, all three thousand of his camels were stolen, all ten of his beloved children were killed, and all but four of his servants were either killed or taken into slavery? (The number of humans killed could easily have been in the hundreds.) Was God glorified when Satan destroyed Job's health and covered him with boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet? Was God glorified when Job's friends wrongly accused him of sin in every area of his life—repeatedly (Job chapters 4–37)? And the biggest question of all: Was God glorified when not one single human knew or understood what was going on—*not even Job!* Even at the end of the book when God appears on the scene, He does not reveal the reason for Job's trial.

Really now, was God glorified?

YES! God was glorified *in* the heavenly realms among the angels (Job 1:6). They were the only ones who knew what was going on. This means that hundreds of people and thousands of animals were killed and many were taken into a life of slavery so that *God would be glorified in the heavenly realms.*

***Observation: Because it glorifies God in the heavenly realms, my daily life of obedience to God is important.***

### 3 HOW?

Exactly *how* was God glorified in the heavenly realms? *God was glorified by proving He was right and Satan was wrong.*

There is a bigger picture in the Bible than just being saved, blessed, and happy. God and Satan have disagreements and when those disagreements need resolution by examples of active proof, *God's chosen people can provide those examples.* We are God's active agents in resolving disputes between God and Satan.

**Observation:** *All the trials and unjust sufferings in my life look very important when I understand the heavenly situation.*

## COMFORT

Job was a man pushed to his breaking point; he *said* he wanted to die (Job 3:1–19). BUT, in spite of that, God never *said* anything ill of Job, not ever, nowhere, nohow. God even *said* that throughout the trial Job had *spoken what was right* (42:7)! At that point many realizations came flooding into my mind.

### THE REALIZATIONS

#### Foundational

1. God, Satan, and their angels are involved in my life (Job 1:1–8).
2. My trials can originate in the heavenly realms rather than from any sin in my life (Job 1:8–12).
3. Points of dispute between God and Satan can be resolved in the physical realm among humanity (Job and the entire Bible).
4. If God had blessed Job for enduring the trial, God’s word would have been proven inconsistent and therefore His rulership would be fallible (Job 42:10).
5. Through my obedient life to God, His rulership and character are being validated to the rebellious angels (Job 2:3; Ephesians 3:10).
6. In the big picture, revealing God’s glory and perfect rulership to the heavenly realms is more important than my comfort or life here in the physical realm (Job 1:1—2:13).

#### Personal Reality Checks

7. During Job’s life his trial was not understood by any human (Job 1:6–12).
8. I will not always know the reasons for the trials in my life “A test is not a test if I know the answer” (Job 38:1—42:6).
9. Job’s trial was brought upon him because he was blameless, upright, feared God, and turned away from evil (Job 1:8).
10. My righteous life might bring unexpected suffering (Job 1:7).

11. My obedience to God may not always be understood on this earth, but it will always be understood and bring glory to God in the heavenly realms (Job 1:1—38:1).
12. My present physical state of being is temporary but impacts eternal heavenly beings (Job 1:1—2:13).
13. Never curse, blame, or speak poorly of God (Job 1:11; James 1:13).
14. For God’s glory it is important that I handle all the trials in my life in a godly manner (Job; James 1:2–4).
15. God is still in complete control over both realms and all beings (Job 2:3).
16. In some trials my friends will be of no help to me (Job 4—37).
17. I don’t always have to explain myself or give a verbal witness to other humans (Job 4—37).
18. Sometimes all I have to do to glorify God is to keep my mouth shut (Job 1:11).
19. Some trials and suffering can come from other Christians who do not understand my situation (Job 4—37).
20. God does not have to explain Himself to me (Job 38:1—42:6).

### Comfort Aids

21. It’s okay for me to hurt emotionally, physically, and spiritually and ask “why” and receive no answer from God (Job 4—37).
22. It’s okay for me to not know why an *undeserved trial* came upon me (Job).
23. It’s okay for me to feel bad and want to die during a trial (Job 3:1–26).
24. Even when I’m hurt, questioning why, and wanting to die, it is still possible to be in the center of God’s will (Job 1:21–22; 3:1–26).
25. All trials can strengthen my faith (Job 42:1–6; James 1:2–4).
26. All *unjust suffering* I endure on this earth pays huge benefits in heaven for all eternity (1 Corinthians 3:8–15; 2 Corinthians 4:16–18).

## Conclusions

27. I am God's creation and He has the legal right to do anything to me or allow anything to happen to me (Job 38—42).
28. I must have a heavenly view of life and eternal goals before my earthly life will make any sense (Job; Colossians 3:1–2).
29. The logic of cause and effect that only considers the physical realm and physical information is incomplete and inaccurate because it does not consider the spiritual, heavenly, realm (Job 3—37).
30. I am here to serve God and carry out His eternal plan, not to have God serve me and carry out my temporary earthly plans (Job 38; Isaiah 43:7).

***My life has its greatest witness to the heavenly realms. They understand what's going on, even when all humanity – including myself – does not understand.***



## THE AND OTHERS CLUB

At one time in his life, Job could have applied for membership in an exclusive club, the AOC. This club is found in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11 contains a record of some of the people from the Old Testament who exhibited godly faith. In the first part of the chapter, they received miraculous blessings. They conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped death many times, and even though they were weak they were made strong. They became mighty in war and put foreign armies to flight. Many women even received back their dead by resurrection (Hebrews 11:32–35). But halfway through verse 35 things change. We are told of “others:”

*and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (people of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised (Hebrews 11:35–40).*

This group of people I refer to as the AOCs, the “**And Others Club.**”

The AOCs are not pointed out as having less faith, they actually “gained approval through their faith” (Heb. 11:40). They are mentioned as a group because they did not receive earthly blessings for their faith, and yet they held fast to their faith. They held fast to their faith even when it cost them all their daily comforts and eventually their lives.

If you are suffering and perplexed at God's silence, then welcome to the AOC.

The times are dark and getting darker. All the evil forces are turning on God's chosen. Remember Job and the AOCs and let that knowledge help to comfort you through your dark and hard times.

When we keep our minds on, and in, the heavenly realms we will not be disillusioned by earthly hardships, sufferings, what we think are our failures, and even death. Our Comforter is still here, in His written Word, the Bible. Learn it and live it no matter the earthly cost because:

***YOUR life has its greatest witness to the heavenly realms. They understand what's going on, and even if YOU don't – it's Okay!***

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