

Big Lessons on Life

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Learning to Trust God, Job

This inductive Bible study is designed for individual, small group, or classroom use. A leader's guide with full lesson plans and the answers to the Bible study questions is available from Regular Baptist Press. Order RBP0076 online at www.regularbaptistpress.org, e-mail orders@rbpstore.org, call toll-free 1-800-727-4440, or contact your distributor.

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The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked

Alex Bauman, Editor

BIG LESSONS ON LIFE: LEARNING TO TRUST GOD, JOB

Adult Bible Study Book

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Preface

Staying on top of everything seems to be the default goal of our lives. At times that can be challenging, especially when we take on too many responsibilities. But at other times staying on top of everything is impossible. In fact, we might feel like everything is on top of us! At those times we want to know and remember, in a deep and substantial way, the “why” or “why not” of something.

Big Lessons on Life presents an opportunity for you to think about profound truths regarding God and His ways. This study on the book of Job will engage you in lessons on the “Who” that controls the “why” and the “why not” times of your life.

God used big creatures like the sea monster leviathan to help Job understand that He is worthy of Job’s trust. *Learning to Trust God* replaced Job’s goal of staying on top of everything, and Job’s life was never the same. The same can happen for you as you watch God work in Job’s life in profound ways.

Big Lessons on Life—a practical, relevant study—is written for adults of any age. But it is especially helpful for the adult who is presently suffering to any degree. It can also serve to forewarn the believer who has not yet faced a deep and extended time of trial. And it can serve to advise—after the fact—those believers who need a better understanding of past suffering.

Big Lessons on Life gives you the opportunity to gain insight into the very mind of God. And *that* is practical learning that will help you handle trouble with insight, faithfulness, and maturity.

Lesson 1

Written with Feeling

The book of Job touches every believer's heart.

Overview of Job

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance” (Psalm 42:5).

All of us have difficulties in life, and we see troubles and heartache in those around us. Sometimes we even watch others go through trials that we hope and pray never happen to us! We would all certainly say that about the trials that came upon Job!

Perhaps you are going through a hard trial right now and have a long list of why questions for God. The book of Job will help you focus on the “Who” behind the “whys” and “why nots” of your life. For it is hard, if not impossible, to study the book of Job without it creating in us a deeper trust in God—a trust that shows itself in both our respect and love for God.

Getting Started

1. What would you consider to be the biggest lesson you have learned about God?

2. What difference has that lesson made in your life since?

Searching the Scriptures

Let the big lessons in Job, a book written with deep feeling, minister to your heart and help you learn to trust God more.

The Purpose of Job

The book of Job, using a literary style rarely matched even in fine literature, provides the thoughtful reader with a depth of understanding concerning the profound issues of human suffering. The book of Job is not a theological trinket, tidbit, or token. It is a treasure, a gift from a loving God to those who love Him enough to seek deep and substantial wisdom that speaks to life's most perplexing questions regarding affliction.

In general, the book of Job addresses the problem of human suffering; more particularly, the problem of suffering by the righteous person. The purpose of Job is to teach deep and profound lessons about God to those who trust in Him. In so doing, Job also teaches important lessons on how believers are to view and respond to their own suffering and to that of others.

Job is not a book for the faint of faith. It is not a "how to" on hard times in daily life. It does not present a series of "steps to take" to overcome life's down turns. Job is a book for the strong of faith (or those who desire to be). It is a majestic presentation of God Almighty and the wonder of Who He is. To some extent, Job does not seek to answer the "why" questions of human suffering. It does, however, answer the "Who" question of human suffering for the careful reader and seeking believer.

3. What are some "why" questions of human suffering?

The Literary Style of Job

Poetry is the language of the soul. It communicates feeling along with its message. Like a work of art that blends colors on a painter's canvas, a poet creatively arranges his words in verse form to present a vivid picture.

Many poems and poetic songs grace the Old Testament. These include Jacob's Blessing of His Sons (Gen. 49:2–27), Moses' Song of Deliverance (Exod. 15:1–18), the Song of Deborah (Judg. 5), David's Lament over Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:17–27), the Oracles of Isaiah (Isa. 1:2—35:10; 40:1—66:16), the Prayer of Jonah (Jonah 2:2–9), and the Praise of Habakkuk (Hab. 3). However, some Old Testament books are either exclusively poetic or nearly so. These are known as the Old Testament Poetic Books.

4. Read two or three of the passage listed in the commentary above. What evidence do you find that the poems are the “language of the soul”?

The Old Testament Poetic Books include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations. Although all these books display powerfully emotional language, each bears its own distinct style and purpose. Job is a poetic narrative drama.

All Hebrew poetry in the Old Testament possesses three basic characteristics: meter, parallelism, and a rich use of figurative language. The writers incorporated these language tools under the Holy Spirit's superintending ministry to present truth with emotion. Meter is easier to detect in the Hebrew language than it is in our English translations of these poems. We can, however, still observe the special structure that is unique to poetry and poetic form.

Actually, “meter” is “a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables, establishing a line of poetry.” Perhaps the key word here is “pattern.” Some English editions of the Bible have attempted to display the structure of poetic verse in these sections. Such rendering is done fairly eas-

ily, because the structure of poetry is related to meaning.

Meter creates a general “feeling,” or “atmosphere,” ranging from joy to the adventuresome note of epic discovery. The book of Job appears to include a wide variety of meter, thereby expressing an entire spectrum of human emotion.

5. Why would approaching Job from a purely intellectual viewpoint, instead of as poetry, not be prudent?

The basic linear unit in Hebrew poetry is the couplet, which is two lines of poetry, usually of similar length and style and with parallel or related ideas. There are six major kinds of parallelism.

Synonymous Parallelism

In synonymous parallelism, line two states essentially the same thought as line one. It may even use the same words and terms or similar words and terms.

“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:
the Lord shall have them in derision” (Ps. 2:4).

6. Read Job 3:11 and 5:18. How does the repetition of thought in each couplet impact the reader?

Synthetic Parallelism

In a synthetically parallel couplet, line two further develops the idea of line one. That is, it either defines it, proves it, applies it, or adds further information. Synthetic parallelism gives further explanation or information in a striking way.

“For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods” (Ps. 95:3).

7. Read Job 5:17 and 39:19. How does line two in each case further

develop the idea of line one?

Antithetic Parallelism

In antithetic parallelism, line two of a couplet contrasts the idea of line one, or gives the opposite perspective. Just as the whiteness of a pearl stands out sharply against a black velvet background, so an idea in a couplet like this stands out sharply against the background of its contrasting idea.

“For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
but the way of the ungodly shall perish” (Ps. 1:6).

Job 32:7 and 8 is an example of antithetic parallelism. Elihu contrasts the wisdom of man with the wisdom that is from God.

8. Read Job 36:11, 12. How does antithetic parallelism in these verses help the reader?

Emblematic Parallelism

In emblematic parallelism, the writer states a truth in one line and gives a figure of speech that conveys that same truth in the other line. Psalm 23:1 is a good example of this type of parallelism.

“The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want” (Ps. 23:1).

In this case, the symbol comes first (the Lord is not a literal shepherd); then the truth follows: “I shall not want [lack].” The truth in line two conveys the idea inherent in line one. By saying, “The LORD is my shepherd,” David was essentially testifying, “The Lord meets all my needs.”

9. Read Job 8:2, 14. How does the emblematic parallelism help you understand what the speaker wants to communicate in these verses?

Formal Parallelism

Formal parallelism does not bear any particular semantic relationship, but simply uses poetic structure (meter) to emphasize the point.

“Yet have I set my king
upon my holy hill of Zion” (Ps. 2:6).

Even in the English language, we can hear the poetic structure, or meter, in this couplet. But this couplet does not bear any of the other semantic features common to parallelism. While this couplet may appear to have synthetic parallelism, it is the simple completion of one thought. Job 38:3 and 40:1 and 2 are good examples of formal parallelism.

Climactic Parallelism

The final type of parallelism is called climactic. It normally requires at least a three-line stanza of poetry (known as a tricolon) or a four-lined poem (known as a quatrain). In climactic parallelism, all the lines of the stanza begin the same way except for the last line, which gives the climactic statement or grand conclusion.

“Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name;
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Ps. 29:1, 2).

God effectively uses climatic parallelism when He questions Job in 38:36–38. The poetic device helps Job understand his smallness in comparison to God.

10. Read Job 13:7–9. Job uses climactic parallelism in his answer to his friends. How does the method enhance your reading of these verses?

As we study the book of Job, we will come to understand better that the message of Job is greatly enhanced through the use of poetry. Job, his wife, his friends, and even God braided their words together with strong emotions. The resulting poetry fits the message of Job.

Job's Figures of Speech

Old Testament poetry uses not only metric structure and parallelism but also figures of speech. Just what is a figure of speech? It is a word or phrase used in a way different from its ordinary and normal usage for the sake of intensity, feeling, or emphasis. Every day everyone uses figurative language.

The book of Job uses many types of figures of speech. Let's consider just four of them.

11. Some Bible versions replace figures of speech with what the translators' believe was the author's intended meaning. Why is it important to use a Bible version that retains the figures of speech found in the original language?

A **simile** is a comparison, stating that something is like something else. You can usually identify a simile by the use of the word "like" or "as."

12. Read Job 23:10. What do you learn about Job by the comparison of him to refined gold?

A **metaphor** is a comparison, stating that one thing represents another. You can usually identify a metaphor by such words as "are/is"; "were/was"; "shall be/will be."

13. Read Job 7:7. What did Job mean by this metaphor?

A **merism** communicates one basic truth or idea by expressing two opposites or extremes. For example, someone might say, "I worried about you day and night." "Day and night" is a merism for "all the time."

14. Read Job 38:19. What merism is found in this verse?

Personification attributes the characteristics of personality to an inanimate object or to an idea.

15. Read Job 38:8. What is personified in this verse?

That God used poetry in His inspired Word serves as a reminder that emotion is a gift from Him. When God made man, He created male and female in His image—bearing the characteristics of intellect, emotion, and will. Certainly, humans are not to be driven or controlled by their emotions. We are to make decisions and choices with a will that is obedient to God’s truth, despite our feelings. But humans are emotional beings, and appropriate feelings will follow appropriate decisions.

We will experience many feelings throughout life. A committed believer will certainly recognize those feelings. He or she will harness them in his or her devotion to God. The committed believer will work through them in a God-honoring way and will find resolve as he or she trusts God’s Word and obeys Him.

Making It Personal

16. Treasure this study of Job. The truths of the book are fit for a lifetime. How could you treasure Job?

17. What could you do to help you focus on studying Job as poetry?

Linger over Job as you would a fine meal, and be nourished by the knowledge in the book.

18. How can you linger over Job?

19. Consider how you might finish the following prayer: “God, teach me profound lessons about You and important lessons on how to view human suffering. I need these lessons because . . . ”

20. Memorize Psalm 42:5.