

Job 38:1-18**When God Speaks, It Pays to Listen**

¹ *Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:*

² *“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?*

³ *Dress for action like a man;*

I will question you, and you make it known to me.

⁴ *“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?*

Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵ *Who determined its measurements—surely you know!*

Or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶ *On what were its bases sunk,*

or who laid its cornerstone,

⁷ *when the morning stars sang together*

and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

⁸ *“Or who shut in the sea with doors*

when it burst out from the womb,

⁹ *when I made clouds its garment*

and thick darkness its swaddling band,

¹⁰ *and prescribed limits for it*

and set bars and doors,

¹¹ *and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther,*

and here shall your proud waves be stayed’?

¹² *“Have you commanded the morning since your days began,*

and caused the dawn to know its place,

¹³ *that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth,*

and the wicked be shaken out of it?

¹⁴ *It is changed like clay under the seal,*

and its features stand out like a garment.

¹⁵ *From the wicked their light is withheld,*

and their uplifted arm is broken.

¹⁶ *“Have you entered into the springs of the sea,*

or walked in the recesses of the deep?

¹⁷ *Have the gates of death been revealed to you,*

or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?

¹⁸ *Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth?*

Declare, if you know all this.” – Job 38:1-18 ESV

Job has expressed his desire to stand before God. He has repeatedly begged the Almighty for an audience so that he can receive answers to all his questions, relief from his pain, and the chance to be vindicated.

*“O God, grant me these two things,
and then I will be able to face you.
Remove your heavy hand from me,
and don’t terrify me with your awesome presence.
Now summon me, and I will answer!
Or let me speak to you, and you reply.
Tell me, what have I done wrong?
Show me my rebellion and my sin.” – Job 13:20-23 NLT*

*“If only someone would listen to me!
Look, I will sign my name to my defense.
Let the Almighty answer me.
Let my accuser write out the charges against me.” – Job 31:35 NLT*

Well, Job gets his wish. After a long and indeterminate delay, God breaks His silence. But if Job was expecting to get a chance to defend himself before God, he was in for a surprise. If he was expecting God to provide answers to all of his questions and absolve him of all guilt, he was going to be sorely disappointed.

The reader has been given an explanation for Job’s losses in the opening chapters of the book, but Job was left in the dark as to the cause of his pain and suffering. He had no idea about the conversations that took place between God and Satan. Job was completely unaware that this entire ordeal had been a test of his own faithfulness. God knew Job was “a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil” (Job 1:8 ESV).

Even after Satan had destroyed all of Job’s flocks and herds and caused the deaths of his ten adult children, “Job did not sin or charge God with wrong” (Job 1:22 ESV). Instead, Job had declared his faith in God.

“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” – Job 1:21 ESV

And when Satan appeared before God a second time, God had declared Job to be “a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil” (Job 2:3 ESV). God proudly boasted of Job’s faithfulness in the face of trials, telling Satan, “He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason” (Job 2:3 ESV).

Yet, when God appears before Job, He doesn’t divulge any of this information. Instead, He gives Job a much-needed lesson on His own sovereignty and authority. God has had to listen to all

the arrogant claims and theological ramblings of Job and his four friends, now He is going to set the record straight, and He directs His words to Job.

God appears to Job in the form of a whirlwind. The Hebrew word is סַעַר (*sa'ar*) and it can be translated as “tempest, storm, or hurricane.” This visible manifestation of God’s divine presence is called a theophany, and it is meant to allow human beings to see the invisible God. To Job, God appeared in the form of a storm. Moses and the people of Israel had received a similar glimpse of God when He appeared to them on Mount Sinai.

On the morning of the third day, thunder roared and lightning flashed, and a dense cloud came down on the mountain. There was a long, loud blast from a ram’s horn, and all the people trembled. Moses led them out from the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. All of Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the LORD had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke billowed into the sky like smoke from a brick kiln, and the whole mountain shook violently. As the blast of the ram’s horn grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God thundered his reply. – Exodus 19:16-19 NLT

This description of God’s presence is meant to illustrate His power and glory. From the midst of the storm, “God thundered His reply.” He didn’t speak with a still, small voice, but He boomed out His words with power and authority. The same was probably true in Job’s encounter with the Lord. And the first words out of God’s mouth were in the form of a question.

*“Who is this that questions my wisdom
with such ignorant words?
Brace yourself like a man,
because I have some questions for you,
and you must answer them.” – Job 38:2-3 NLT*

God had heard enough. Everyone had been quick to share their opinions about Him but no one knew what they were talking about. Even Job had made some fairly condemning statements about God, declaring Him to be distant and even unjust. The longer Job had been forced to endure his pain without any sign of a resolution, the more accusatory he had become. He felt abandoned by God and wasn’t afraid to say so.

*“The whole earth is in the hands of the wicked,
and God blinds the eyes of the judges.
If he’s not the one who does it, who is?” – Job 9:24 NLT*

Job’s despondency had grown so deep that he lost all hope. He was convinced that God had already predetermined his guilt and punishment. Nothing was going to change.

*"I know you will not find me innocent, O God.
Whatever happens, I will be found guilty.
So what's the use of trying?" – Job 38:28-29 NLT*

But God had heard enough of Job's whining and was ready to pose a few questions of His own. This entire situation had begun as a test of Job's integrity and faithfulness but it had somehow evolved into a test of God's character. God was on trial and He begins a well-reasoned defense of His greatness and goodness. He does so by asking a series of rhetorical questions that are meant to disqualify anyone from setting themselves up as His judge, including Job.

God goes back to the literal beginning, asking, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much" (Job 38:4 NLT). The answer is obvious. Job was nowhere to be found when God created the heavens and the earth. Neither was Elihu, Eliphaz, Bildad, or Zophar. None of these men were around at the beginning of all things, and yet they were quick to give their opinions about the One who brought all things into existence.

They could debate and speculate but they had no idea how God formed the earth or how He separated the seas from the dry land. These references to the creation account are meant to emphasize God's power and authority. He rules over everything, from the wind and waves to the stars and galaxies. He caused the earth to rotate and revolve around the sun so that men might experience day and night as well as the changing of the seasons.

But God isn't satisfied with stating His divine attributes of power; He wants to know if Job or his friends can replicate any of them.

*"Have you ever commanded the morning to appear
and caused the dawn to rise in the east?
Have you made daylight spread to the ends of the earth,
to bring an end to the night's wickedness?" – Job 38:12-13 NLT*

*"Have you explored the springs from which the seas come?
Have you explored their depths?
Do you know where the gates of death are located?
Have you seen the gates of utter gloom?
Do you realize the extent of the earth?" – Job 38:16-18 NLT*

These questions are meant to expose mankind's desire for self-deification. Ever since Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit in the garden, man has been on a relentless quest to be his own God. Unwilling to worship and obey the one true God, humanity has sought to "be as God." That was the promise Satan made to Adam and Eve in the garden when he offered them the fruit that God had declared off limits.

*"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God,
knowing both good and evil." – Genesis 3:5 NLT*

Satan offered them the power to be their own gods. By disobeying God, they would be free to set their own rules and live according to their own standards. By rejecting God's sovereignty they would establish their own autonomy or self-rule. But while autonomy offers the allure of god-like authority, it comes with none of God's attributes. Men can create but they can't replicate the power of God. Men are endowed with wisdom, but it pales in comparison to the omniscience of God Almighty.

The apostle Paul provided insight into man's delusion about self-deification and the self-glorification of human wisdom.

Stop deceiving yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you need to become a fool to be truly wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say,

*"He traps the wise
in the snare of their own cleverness."*

And again,

*"The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise;
he knows they are worthless." – 1 Corinthians 3:18-20 NLT*

God wanted Job to comprehend the vast gulf that existed between God and humanity. Men are not His equals or peers. Their understanding of Him is limited and Job's right to question His will or ways was not only unjustified but unwise. God ends His opening salvo with the command: "Tell me about it if you know!" (Job 38:18 NLT). He isn't expecting Job to speak up; He's expecting Job to shut up and listen to what He has to say. God is God and Job is not. The Almighty has had to listen to the ramblings of men, not it was time for them to hear the truth about God from the source of all truth.

Job 38:19-41**Give God Glory Rather Than Advice**

- ¹⁹ *"Where is the way to the dwelling of light,
and where is the place of darkness,
²⁰ that you may take it to its territory
and that you may discern the paths to its home?
²¹ You know, for you were born then,
and the number of your days is great!*
- ²² *"Have you entered the storehouses of the snow,
or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,
²³ which I have reserved for the time of trouble,
for the day of battle and war?
²⁴ What is the way to the place where the light is distributed,
or where the east wind is scattered upon the earth?*
- ²⁵ *"Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of rain
and a way for the thunderbolt,
²⁶ to bring rain on a land where no man is,
on the desert in which there is no man,
²⁷ to satisfy the waste and desolate land,
and to make the ground sprout with grass?*
- ²⁸ *"Has the rain a father,
or who has begotten the drops of dew?
²⁹ From whose womb did the ice come forth,
and who has given birth to the frost of heaven?
³⁰ The waters become hard like stone,
and the face of the deep is frozen.*
- ³¹ *"Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades
or loose the cords of Orion?
³² Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season,
or can you guide the Bear with its children?
³³ Do you know the ordinances of the heavens?
Can you establish their rule on the earth?*
- ³⁴ *"Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,
that a flood of waters may cover you?
³⁵ Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go
and say to you, 'Here we are'?
³⁶ Who has put wisdom in the inward parts*

or given understanding to the mind?
³⁷ *Who can number the clouds by wisdom?*
Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens,
³⁸ *when the dust runs into a mass*
and the clods stick fast together?
³⁹ *"Can you hunt the prey for the lion,*
or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,
⁴⁰ *when they crouch in their dens*
or lie in wait in their thicket?
⁴¹ *Who provides for the raven its prey,*
when its young ones cry to God for help,
and wander about for lack of food?" – Job 38:19-41 ESV

God finally speaks. Job has heard from his three friends and Elihu, the young, arrogant upstart. But now he hears from the only one who matters; God Himself. And God's response is full of not-so-subtle sarcasm as He peppers Job with rhetorical questions designed to accentuate His divine nature. He starts out His response to Job by saying, "Brace yourself, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them" (Job 38:3 NLT). God tells Job to brace himself like a man because He has a few questions for him. "Who are you...?" "Where were you when..." "Have you ever...?" "Can you...?" "Do you know...?"

At one point, God's sarcasm becomes painfully clear and pointed. He sardonically states, "But of course you know all this! For you were born before it was all created, and you are so very experienced!" (Job 38:21 NLT).

God is questioning Job's right to question Him. Who is Job, a mere man, to question the intentions and integrity of the holy, righteous, all-powerful, God of the universe? Every one of His questions is a statement of His sovereignty and superiority. He is providing Job and his four friends with a much-needed reminder of His surpassing greatness. God's emphasis on nature is intended to get Job's focus off of himself. His myopic and rather morbid perspective has tainted his view of God, and produced faulty reasoning and a fragile faith.

“The function of the questions needs to be properly understood. As a rhetorical device, a question can be another way of making a pronouncement, much favoured by orators. For Job, the questions in the Lord’s speeches are not such roundabout statements of fact; they are invitations, suggestions about discoveries he will make as he tries to find his own answers. They are not catechetical, as if Job’s knowledge is being tested. They are educative, in the true and original meaning of that term. Job is led out into the world. The questions are rhetorical only in the sense that none of them has any answer ventured by Job. But this is not because the questions have no answers. Their initial effect of driving home to Job his ignorance is not intended to humiliate him. On the contrary the highest nobility of every person is to be thus enrolled by God Himself in His school of Wisdom. And the schoolroom is the world! For Job the exciting discoveries to which God leads him bring a giant advance in knowledge, knowledge of himself and of God, for the two always go together in the Bible.” – Francis I. Andersen, *Job*

By drawing Job’s attention to the wonders of creation, God is showcasing His power and providential care. There are wonders surrounding Job that reveal just how great and good God really is. The presence of light and dark are the handiwork of God. From the human perspective, these elements simply appear in the sky and little thought is given as to their source. But God demands that Job explain where light comes from and where the darkness goes in the morning. Then He sarcastically adds, “But of course you know all this! For you were born before it was all created, and you are so very experienced!” (Job 38:21 NLT).

God is not being mean; He is simply driving home the extents of the vast gulf between His own reality and man’s infallibility. He wants Job to contemplate the inconceivable greatness of the One who controls the entire universe and all it contains, including Job.

Job wants answer from God. He demands to know the source of his own pain and suffering, but God asks him, “Where is the path to the source of light? Where is the home of the east wind?” (Job 38:24 NLT). God is letting Job know that there are greater questions to consider other than the ones he keeps asking. If Job wants to understand the nature of his circumstances, he needs to know his God, and a quick look at the creative order would provide Job a masters-level course in theology.

King David had graduated with honors from God’s divine school of wisdom, having learned the lessons of God’s greatness found in the world around him.

*The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship.
Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known.
They speak without a sound or word;
their voice is never heard.
Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,
and their words to all the world. – Psalm 19:1 NLT*

And it was Jesus who used nature to teach His disciples the wonder of God's providential care so that they might understand His unwavering faithfulness and their need for enduring faith.

"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?"

"And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?" – Matthew 6:25-30 NLT

God turns Job's attention to the clouds that produce rain, ice, hail, thunder, and lightning. These everyday, commonplace meteorological events are not the result of chance but are the handiwork of God. The very presence of rain is a reminder of God's faithfulness. Without it, nothing on earth would survive. Yet, God can turn life-giving rain into crop-destroying hail. He can transform a gentle rain into a torrential, flood-producing downpour that takes away life and livelihood. These kinds of occurrences are an inexplicable yet inescapable part of life on this planet, and so is human suffering.

God's point seems to be that there are some things men will never fully comprehend. Despite our modern scientific capabilities and our incessant obsession with solving the riddle of the universe's creation, there are certain aspects of God's creative order that will remain a mystery to us. Job was earth-bound and suffered from a limited understanding of the heavens. He could see the stars and even know some of them by name, but he could not explain their existence or comprehend the magnitude of their number.

In a sense, Job had been trying to give God directions concerning the future of his own life. He wanted to provide the God of the universe with some helpful guidance regarding his future state. But God asks Job if he has any insight into the "the movement of the stars" (Job 38:31 NLT). If Job knows that is best for himself, can he also "direct the constellations through the seasons?" (Job 38:32 NLT). And the answer is clearly, "No!"

Job has no business giving God advice. He is in no place to tell God what to do. And to ensure that Job understands that point, God asks, "Do you know the laws of the universe? Can you use them to regulate the earth?" (Job 38:33 NLT). If the answer is no, then why does Job seem to believe he knows the laws concerning his own universe and how they should be used to regulate the affairs of his life?

Sometimes, a simple upward glance will help take our eyes off of the worries and concerns we face in this world. The prophet Isaiah echoes the words of God and provides a much-needed reminder to reminder to acknowledge the greatness of God rather than attempt to advise Him.

*Who else has held the oceans in his hand?
 Who has measured off the heavens with his fingers?
 Who else knows the weight of the earth
 or has weighed the mountains and hills on a scale?
 Who is able to advise the Spirit of the Lord?
 Who knows enough to give him advice or teach him?
 Has the Lord ever needed anyone's advice?
 Does he need instruction about what is good?
 Did someone teach him what is right
 or show him the path of justice? – Isaiah 40:12-14 NLT*

And Isaiah recommends that we consider a bit of stargazing before we resort to advice-giving. God doesn't need our recommendations, but He is worthy of our veneration.

*Look up into the heavens.
 Who created all the stars?
 He brings them out like an army, one after another,
 calling each by its name.
 Because of his great power and incomparable strength,
 not a single one is missing. – Isaiah 40:33 NLT*

Job 39:1-30**God Can't Always Be Understood, But He Can Always Be Trusted**

¹ *"Do you know when the mountain goats give birth?*

Do you observe the calving of the does?

² *Can you number the months that they fulfill,
and do you know the time when they give birth,*

³ *when they crouch, bring forth their offspring,
and are delivered of their young?*

⁴ *Their young ones become strong; they grow up in the open;
they go out and do not return to them.*

⁵ *"Who has let the wild donkey go free?*

Who has loosed the bonds of the swift donkey,

⁶ *to whom I have given the arid plain for his home
and the salt land for his dwelling place?*

⁷ *He scorns the tumult of the city;
he hears not the shouts of the driver.*

⁸ *He ranges the mountains as his pasture,
and he searches after every green thing.*

⁹ *"Is the wild ox willing to serve you?*

Will he spend the night at your manger?

¹⁰ *Can you bind him in the furrow with ropes,
or will he harrow the valleys after you?*

¹¹ *Will you depend on him because his strength is great,
and will you leave to him your labor?*

¹² *Do you have faith in him that he will return your grain
and gather it to your threshing floor?*

¹³ *"The wings of the ostrich wave proudly,
but are they the pinions and plumage of love?*

¹⁴ *For she leaves her eggs to the earth
and lets them be warmed on the ground,*

¹⁵ *forgetting that a foot may crush them
and that the wild beast may trample them.*

¹⁶ *She deals cruelly with her young, as if they were not hers;
though her labor be in vain, yet she has no fear,*

¹⁷ *because God has made her forget wisdom
and given her no share in understanding.*

¹⁸ *When she rouses herself to flee,
she laughs at the horse and his rider.*

- ¹⁹ *“Do you give the horse his might?
Do you clothe his neck with a mane?*
- ²⁰ *Do you make him leap like the locust?
His majestic snorting is terrifying.*
- ²¹ *He paws in the valley and exults in his strength;
he goes out to meet the weapons.*
- ²² *He laughs at fear and is not dismayed;
he does not turn back from the sword.*
- ²³ *Upon him rattle the quiver,
the flashing spear, and the javelin.*
- ²⁴ *With fierceness and rage he swallows the ground;
he cannot stand still at the sound of the trumpet.*
- ²⁵ *When the trumpet sounds, he says ‘Aha!’
He smells the battle from afar,
the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.*
- ²⁶ *“Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars
and spreads his wings toward the south?*
- ²⁷ *Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up
and makes his nest on high?*
- ²⁸ *On the rock he dwells and makes his home,
on the rocky crag and stronghold.*
- ²⁹ *From there he spies out the prey;
his eyes behold it from far away.*
- ³⁰ *His young ones suck up blood,
and where the slain are, there is he.” – Job 39:1-30 ESV*

In His continuing lecture of Job, God points out that there are things that take place in nature of which humanity is totally oblivious and ignorant. These everyday occurrences escape man’s notice and happen without his knowledge or consent. For instance, the beasts of the field give birth to their young at prescribed times and in places hidden from Job’s view. But God observes and even oversees it all. The point seems to be that there are many things in life of which Job is uninformed and, frankly, disinterested. Job doesn’t have questions about those kinds of things because he doesn’t consider them pertinent or important.

God points out the “freedom” of the wild donkey. These free-range undomesticated animals roamed the wilderness with no need of supervision or sustenance provided by humans. How were they able to survive? How did they manage to eke out an existence far from civilization and without the aid and control of a master? The obvious answer is that God manages their affairs and sees to their daily needs.

*He gives food to the wild animals
and feeds the young ravens when they cry. – Psalm 147:9 NLT*

God wants Job to understand that nothing escapes His notice. God doesn't share Job's lack of vision or understanding. The Almighty knows all things and controls all things, so Job has no need to worry about the affairs of his own life. As the psalmist states, "How great is our Lord! His power is absolute! His understanding is beyond comprehension!" (Psalm 147:5 NLT).

Next, God asks Job to consider the wild ox. Does Job have the ability to domesticate such a powerful beast and bring it under submission to his will? Just because Job desires something doesn't mean he will get his way. The message here seems simple enough. Job is guilty of trying to force his will on God. In a sense, he has been trying to tame God and force Him to "plow his field." But if Job can't control a wild beast of the field, how does he expect to get the all-powerful God to do his bidding?

God asks a pair of probing question designed to expose the absurdity of Job's demands of Him.

"Given its strength, can you trust it?

Can you leave and trust the ox to do your work?" – Job 39:11 NLT

Does Job really think God can be domesticated and coerced to serve the needs of mere men? Is the Creator-God able to be controlled by His own creation? The answer is a resounding, "No!" And yet Job has unwittingly tried to force his will on the Almighty.

With the next animal, God points out that not all things in life make sense. He asks Job to consider the ostrich. This strange-looking, oversized bird with the long neck and equally long legs appears to be the byproduct of a committee. It's bizarre amalgam of seemingly disparate traits make it a walking contradiction. It is a bird with large wings and yet is incapable of flight. It makes no nest but, instead, lays its eggs on the ground where they can be warmed by the sun and exposed to vulnerable to predators. And those young who manage to survive, the ostrich mistreats.

*"She is harsh toward her young,
as if they were not her own.*

She doesn't care if they die." – Job 39:16 NLT

According to God, this was all part of His design for the ostrich. None of these character traits are flaws or mistakes. In fact, God indicates that the odd behavior of the ostrich is due to a lack of wisdom, which He factored into its design.

"For God has deprived her of wisdom.

He has given her no understanding." – Job 39:17 NLT

And yet, this gangly and ungainly animal is equipped with a built-in survival skill that allows it to outrun "the swiftest horse with its rider" (Job 39:18 NLT). The ostrich makes no sense but it is a byproduct of God's creative imagination. And there are things about Job's life that seem nonsensical and inexplicable but they are all part of God's sovereign plan for his life. At this

point, it's as if Job has noticed that he has large flightless wings and he expresses his frustration with God's design. But he fails to recognize that he has also been given powerful legs that provide him with a capacity to escape danger. Like the ostrich, Job lacks wisdom, but he hasn't been left defenseless. If God can care for the seemingly hapless ostrich, He can handle the needs of the seemingly hopeless Job.

Now God turns Job's attention to the horse. First, he sarcastically asks whether Job is responsible for the creation of this magnificent animal.

*"Have you given the horse its strength
or clothed its neck with a flowing mane?" – Job 39:19 NLT*

Job can admire the horse but he can't take credit for it. This majestic animal is powerful, bold, and fearless. It has been divinely equipped with great strength that produces both speed and agility, a perfect combination for use in battle. It is as if God designed the horse for warfare. Unlike the ostrich, the horse uses its speed to run into danger, not away from it.

*"It paws the earth and rejoices in its strength
when it charges out to battle.
It laughs at fear and is unafraid.
It does not run from the sword." – Job 39:21-22 NLT*

The same God who made the ostrich also made the horse. Each is equipped with different physical and mental characteristics that reflect the wisdom of God. There are no mistakes. There is nothing about either animal that lies outside God's sovereign will and intended purpose for them. And the same is true of Job. Nothing about his life is a mistake. There is a divine purpose behind every detail. In a way, God is letting Job know that he has been wonderfully made and designed with a purpose in mind. King David understood the remarkable nature of his own design and expressed his awe for God's gracious gift of life.

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body
and knit me together in my mother's womb.
Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!
Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.
You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion,
as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.
You saw me before I was born.
Every day of my life was recorded in your book.
Every moment was laid out
before a single day had passed. – Psalm 139:13-16 NLT*

Finally, God directs Job's eyes to the sky, where he can view the ways of the eagle and the hawk. Unlike the ostrich, these two birds of prey are designed for flight. Their wings enable them to soar among the clouds and make their nests in hidden places far from the threat of

predators. These majestic birds are the hunters not the hunted. God has designed them for flight but there is far more to their aerial capabilities than meets the eye. It is this unique capacity that allows them to protect and provide for their young. Their powerful wings and keen sight are divine design features that set them apart from all the other birds of the air.

God wants Job to take notice of His attention to detail. There is nothing that God has left to chance and there are no mistakes or anomalies in His design. And as much as Job would like to debate that fact, God is conceding no ground and accepting no blame. There is so much Job does not know or understand. He and his four friends had been quick to spout their opinions and expose their ignorance. They thought they knew and understood God but they had a lot to learn. The God who made the beasts of the field and the birds of the air had also made them. His ways are not always understandable but His divine plan is flawless. While things may not always make sense, God can always be trusted.

*No human wisdom or understanding or plan
can stand against the Lord.*

*The horse is prepared for the day of battle,
but the victory belongs to the Lord. – Proverbs 21:30-31 NLT*

Job 40:1-24**Safe in the Hands of God**

¹ *And the Lord said to Job:*

² *"Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?
He who argues with God, let him answer it."*

³ *Then Job answered the Lord and said:*

⁴ *"Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you?
I lay my hand on my mouth.*

⁵ *I have spoken once, and I will not answer;
twice, but I will proceed no further."*

⁶ *Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:*

⁷ *"Dress for action like a man;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.*

⁸ *Will you even put me in the wrong?
Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?*

⁹ *Have you an arm like God,
and can you thunder with a voice like his?*

¹⁰ *"Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity;
clothe yourself with glory and splendor.*

¹¹ *Pour out the overflowings of your anger,
and look on everyone who is proud and abase him.*

¹² *Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low
and tread down the wicked where they stand.*

¹³ *Hide them all in the dust together;
bind their faces in the world below.*

¹⁴ *Then will I also acknowledge to you
that your own right hand can save you.*

¹⁵ *"Behold, Behemoth,
which I made as I made you;
he eats grass like an ox.*

¹⁶ *Behold, his strength in his loins,
and his power in the muscles of his belly.*

¹⁷ *He makes his tail stiff like a cedar;
the sinews of his thighs are knit together.*

- ¹⁸ *His bones are tubes of bronze,
his limbs like bars of iron.*
- ¹⁹ *“He is the first of the works of God;
let him who made him bring near his sword!*
- ²⁰ *For the mountains yield food for him
where all the wild beasts play.*
- ²¹ *Under the lotus plants he lies,
in the shelter of the reeds and in the marsh.*
- ²² *For his shade the lotus trees cover him;
the willows of the brook surround him.*
- ²³ *Behold, if the river is turbulent he is not frightened;
he is confident though Jordan rushes against his mouth.*
- ²⁴ *Can one take him by his eyes,
or pierce his nose with a snare?” – Job 40:1-24 ESV*

God takes a brief pause in His rhetorical interrogation to give Job a chance to respond. God demands that this “contender” or “complainer” explain himself. Since Job seems to enjoy arguing with God and questioning His ways, then he must have a lot to say. This is the moment for which Job has been waiting. He has an audience with the Almighty and the opportunity to defend himself but Job finds himself at a loss for words. Suddenly, when faced with the overwhelming sense of God’s presence and power, Job is speechless.

*“I am nothing—how could I ever find the answers?
I will cover my mouth with my hand.
I have said too much already.
I have nothing more to say.” – Job 40:4-5 NLT*

Wiser words have never been spoken. Job didn’t say much and yet, he spoke volumes. He acknowledges his own ignorance and inadequacy when standing before the God of the universe. He recognizes that he has spoken too freely and flippantly. In his pain and despair, Job allowed himself to vent his frustration to God but in doing so, he had spoken out of turn and failed to show God the reverence and honor He deserved.

But while Job’s reticence to speak was a wise decision, it did not defuse God’s anger or absolve Job from a further tongue-lashing. In fact, God informs Job that silence is not an option. The one who was so quick to criticize the ways of God must answer the questions of God.

*“Brace yourself like a man,
because I have some questions for you,
and you must answer them.” – Job 40:7 NLT*

God seems to be accusing Job of doing the same thing his friends had done to him. In his effort to defend his innocence, Job had overextended his understanding of what his suffering was all

about. He was convinced that it wasn't the result of some sin he had committed, so that led him to make false assumptions about the justice of God. He questioned God's goodness and righteousness. Job's perception was limited, and his understanding was incomplete. He was unaware of all that was going on behind the scenes so that left him with no other option than to base his conclusions on circumstantial evidence, just as his friends had done.

In his zeal to defend himself and prove his own innocence, Job had falsely accused God. He was so determined to prove himself right that he was willing to accuse God of doing wrong, and God was not happy.

*"Will you discredit my justice
and condemn me just to prove you are right?" – Job 40:8 NLT*

This led God to sarcastically suggest that Job reveal his own glory. After all, if he was righteous and morally blameless, then he must be nothing less than a god.

*"All right, put on your glory and splendor,
your honor and majesty.
Give vent to your anger.
Let it overflow against the proud.
Humiliate the proud with a glance;
walk on the wicked where they stand.
Bury them in the dust.
Imprison them in the world of the dead.
Then even I would praise you,
for your own strength would save you." – Job 40:10-14 NLT*

God demands that Job display his glory and power by pouring out his judgment on the wicked and prideful. He challenges Job to demonstrate his wisdom and righteousness by judging justly and rightly. In a sense, God is demanding that Job prove that he knows what is best and can effectively determine the fate of all those who live on this planet.

But Job is not a god; he is just a man, and that seems to be God's main point. In all of God's verbal reprimands of Job, He never specifies a single sin that Job has committed. God never questions Job's assertion of innocence. The Lord's primary complaint with Job is his suggestion that God was somehow unfair or unjust. Job didn't like the state of affairs surrounding his life and he had demanded that God explain Himself. Job knew that God was sovereign over all things so God was somehow responsible for his losses. And since Job had done nothing wrong, God must be the one who was at fault. Job never said those words directly but he inferred them, and God found them offensive and worthy of a stern response.

At the heart of Job's complaint was his suggestion that God was somehow failing to do His job properly. Job had certain expectations of God that he felt had not been met. In his estimation, the most recent history of his life was out of step with his understanding of God's character. So,

God must course correct and fix the problem. But God found Job's assertion that He was somehow in the wrong or guilty of mismanagement offensive. There was no basis for that conclusion. That's why God launched into yet another illustration from nature that proved His impeccable credentials as the overseer of all creation.

God draws Job's attention to the "Behemoth," a creature of almost mythical proportions that is the byproduct of God's imagination and creative power.

*"Take a look at Behemoth,
which I made, just as I made you.
It eats grass like an ox.
See its powerful loins
and the muscles of its belly.
Its tail is as strong as a cedar.
The sinews of its thighs are knit tightly together.
Its bones are tubes of bronze.
Its limbs are bars of iron."* – Job 40:15-18 NLT

We have no idea what animal God is talking about. Some believe this to be a reference to a mythical creature that never existed, but God seems to contradict that conclusion when He states, "It is a prime example of God's handiwork, and only its Creator can threaten it" (Job 40:19 NLT). No, this is no make-believe creature formulated in the minds of men; it is an actual flesh-and-blood animal that God brought to life and over which He holds complete control. This beast was so large that it had no equal and faced no threat from predators. Its only adversary was God Himself.

God asserts that "No one can catch it off guard or put a ring in its nose and lead it away" (Job 40:24 NLT). The point? This animal was completely cared for by God. It owed its existence and ongoing sustenance to God. Only God could protect it or threaten it. Its life was in the hands of the Almighty and so was Job's. No one could harm Job unless God allowed it. No one could threaten his life without God's permission. Which brings us back to the opening chapters of this book.

They describe an interaction between God and Satan, man's primary and powerful adversary. In response to God's declaration of Job's righteousness, Satan replied:

"Yes, but Job has good reason to fear God. You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!" – Job 1:9-11 NLT

Satan admits that God cared for and protected Job but he argues that Job would respond differently to God if that protection was removed. God had a different opinion of Job and provided Satan with limited access to test his theory.

“All right, you may test him,” the Lord said to Satan. “Do whatever you want with everything he possesses, but don’t harm him physically.” – Job 1:12 NLT

God gave Satan permission, but he didn’t give him carte blanche. Satan was not free to do whatever he wanted to do. His actions were limited. God was still in control.

When Satan’s plan failed and Job refused to curse God, he came up with a second challenge. He asked God for permission to attack Job’s physical well-being. He believed that was the source of Job’s faithfulness and so he sought to take away Job’s health and cause him to curse God. And, once again, God permitted Satan to take his best shot.

“All right, do with him as you please,” the Lord said to Satan. “But spare his life.” – Job 2:6 NLT

God never relinquished control. At no point was He impotent or incapable of protecting Job’s life. And at no time, was God’s assessment of Job’s righteousness threatened or in question. He knew how Job would respond. He knew that Job would survive. God stated that Behemoth is “not disturbed by the raging river, not concerned when the swelling Jordan rushes around it” (Job 40:23 NLT), and that was what he expected from Job. The great beast that God created was capable of enjoying the peaceful respite provided by the shade of the Lotus plant, but it also accepted the storms that occasionally accompanied life. How much more so should Job trust in the goodness and graciousness of God? He had enjoyed great blessings for the vast majority of his life and now, when trials had come, he had lost his faith in God. But now was the time when he needed to know and understand that he too was “a prime example of God’s handiwork, and only its Creator can threaten it” (Job 40:19 NLT).

Job 41:1-34**Fear That Produces Faith**

- ¹ *"Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook
or press down his tongue with a cord?*
- ² *Can you put a rope in his nose
or pierce his jaw with a hook?*
- ³ *Will he make many pleas to you?
Will he speak to you soft words?*
- ⁴ *Will he make a covenant with you
to take him for your servant forever?*
- ⁵ *Will you play with him as with a bird,
or will you put him on a leash for your girls?*
- ⁶ *Will traders bargain over him?
Will they divide him up among the merchants?*
- ⁷ *Can you fill his skin with harpoons
or his head with fishing spears?*
- ⁸ *Lay your hands on him;
remember the battle—you will not do it again!*
- ⁹ *Behold, the hope of a man is false;
he is laid low even at the sight of him.*
- ¹⁰ *No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up.
Who then is he who can stand before me?*
- ¹¹ *Who has first given to me, that I should repay him?
Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.*
- ¹² *"I will not keep silence concerning his limbs,
or his mighty strength, or his goodly frame.*
- ¹³ *Who can strip off his outer garment?
Who would come near him with a bridle?*
- ¹⁴ *Who can open the doors of his face?
Around his teeth is terror.*
- ¹⁵ *His back is made of rows of shields,
shut up closely as with a seal.*
- ¹⁶ *One is so near to another
that no air can come between them.*
- ¹⁷ *They are joined one to another;
they clasp each other and cannot be separated.*
- ¹⁸ *His sneezings flash forth light,
and his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn.*
- ¹⁹ *Out of his mouth go flaming torches;
sparks of fire leap forth.*
- ²⁰ *Out of his nostrils comes forth smoke,*

as from a boiling pot and burning rushes.
²¹ *His breath kindles coals,*
and a flame comes forth from his mouth.
²² *In his neck abides strength,*
and terror dances before him.
²³ *The folds of his flesh stick together,*
firmly cast on him and immovable.
²⁴ *His heart is hard as a stone,*
hard as the lower millstone.
²⁵ *When he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid;*
at the crashing they are beside themselves.
²⁶ *Though the sword reaches him, it does not avail,*
nor the spear, the dart, or the javelin.
²⁷ *He counts iron as straw,*
and bronze as rotten wood.
²⁸ *The arrow cannot make him flee;*
for him, sling stones are turned to stubble.
²⁹ *Clubs are counted as stubble;*
he laughs at the rattle of javelins.
³⁰ *His underparts are like sharp potsherds;*
he spreads himself like a threshing sledge on the mire.
³¹ *He makes the deep boil like a pot;*
he makes the sea like a pot of ointment.
³² *Behind him he leaves a shining wake;*
one would think the deep to be white-haired.
³³ *On earth there is not his like,*
a creature without fear.
³⁴ *He sees everything that is high;*
he is king over all the sons of pride.” – Job 41:1-34 ESV

In His concluding statement to Job, God brings up yet another “beast.” This time, He mentions Leviathan, a large and ferocious sea creature that was well-known to Job and his companions. The exact identification of this large sea-dwelling animal has been hotly debated over the centuries, but remains a mystery. Because of its unique and almost mythic-like characteristics, some have concluded that it was not an actual flesh-and-blood creature at all, but a figment of man’s imagination. Rumors of a great, fire-breathing dragon had been passed down from one generation to another and the very thought of its actual existence struck fear into mankind. So, those who believe God that was referencing a creature of legend and myth argue that He did so to play off the irrational fears of enlightened men. Even if such a creature did exist, it would have to be the handiwork of God and, therefore, just another example of His omnipotence.

There is another camp that suggests God is describing some species of long-extinct dinosaur. Since the book of Job is considered to chronicle one of the earliest times in human history,

possibly before the flood, the argument is that this fantastical creature might have actually been real.

This is not the only mention of Leviathan in the Scriptures. The Psalms also contain a reference to this creature and clearly describe it as having been made by God.

*O Lord, what a variety of things you have made!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your creatures.
Here is the ocean, vast and wide,
teeming with life of every kind,
both large and small.
See the ships sailing along,
and Leviathan, which you made to play in the sea. – Psalm 104:24-26 NLT*

The point the psalmist is making is that God has created a wide array of sea and land animals that all depend upon Him for their existence and sustenance.

*They all depend on you
to give them food as they need it.
When you supply it, they gather it.
You open your hand to feed them,
and they are richly satisfied.
But if you turn away from them, they panic.
When you take away their breath,
they die and turn again to dust.
When you give them your breath, life is created,
and you renew the face of the earth. – Psalm 104:27-30 NLT*

Whatever Leviathan was, it was a created being that existed because God had deemed it so. He alone gave this powerful beast life and breath. It's power and fierceness were legendary and, over time, had almost reached epic, out-of-the-ordinary proportions. God seems to use these mythological rumors to accentuate the fear-inducing nature of this creature. He describes it as having scale-like skin that was virtually impenetrable. Its teeth were large and numerous. And as if to play off the irrational fears of superstitious men, God uses their own rumors to accentuate Leviathan's legendary and mythological characteristics.

*"When it sneezes, it flashes light!
Its eyes are like the red of dawn.
Lightning leaps from its mouth;
flames of fire flash out.
Smoke streams from its nostrils
like steam from a pot heated over burning rushes.*

*Its breath would kindle coals,
for flames shoot from its mouth.” – Job 41:18-21 NLT*

This sounds like a fire-breathing dragon. In fact, the Hebrew word for Leviathan is לִיָּאָן (*livyātān*) and it means “sea monster” or “dragon.” The Blue Letter Bible’s Outline of Biblical Usage contains this interesting note:

“Some think this to be a crocodile but from the description in Job 41:1-34 this is patently absurd. It appears to be a large fire breathing animal of some sort. Just as the bombardier beetle has an explosion producing mechanism, so the great sea dragon may have an explosive producing mechanism to enable it to be a real fire breathing dragon.”

But is God really describing a fire-breathing dragon that inhabited the seas and oceans of Job’s day, or is this a case of God using man’s superstitious and hyperbolic descriptions of an ordinary sea creature to drive home a point? While God is fully capable of creating an animal of epic proportions and equipping it with the capacity to kindle coals with its breath, it makes more sense to see His description of this creature as an exaggerated and over-the-top conclusion to His ongoing argument.

Even this wake-producing, fire-breathing, smoke-belching, fear-inducing animal would be the byproduct of God’s power and imagination. And just as Job would have no chance before a creature of such ferocity, he was powerless before the God who created all things.

If Job were dumb enough to take on Leviathan, he would find himself ill-equipped for the challenge.

*“No sword can stop it,
no spear, dart, or javelin.
Iron is nothing but straw to that creature,
and bronze is like rotten wood.
Arrows cannot make it flee.
Stones shot from a sling are like bits of grass.
Clubs are like a blade of grass,
and it laughs at the swish of javelins.” – Job 41:26-29 NLT*

And yet, Job had shown no qualms about going to the mat with God. He exhibited no fear in taking on the Almighty. Job had more fear of a semi-mythological sea beast than he did of the God who gave life to every living creature. He had a greater respect and awe for this monster of the sea he had never seen with his own two eyes than He did for the God who gave him sight.

In describing Leviathan, God seems to echo the common views of the day.

*“Nothing on earth is its equal,
no other creature so fearless.*

*Of all the creatures, it is the proudest.
It is the king of beasts.” – Job 41:33-34 NLT*

But this creature was nothing when compared with God. It was the Almighty who was without equal. He alone was King and the ruler over all the universe. And yet, Job had dared to question God’s integrity and justice. He had more fear of a fire-breathing dragon that was more fiction than fact than he did of God. If Job lived near the sea, he probably avoided it like the plague just in case Leviathan happened to live there. He would have never have stood on the sea shore demanding that Leviathan give him an opportunity to do battle. And yet, Job had repeatedly demanded a chance to defend himself before the God who was fully capable of raining down judgment in the form of fire.

It’s important to remember that God was addressing Job “out of the whirlwind” (Job 40:6). The Hebrew word for whirlwind is סַעַר (*sa’ar*) and it can refer to “a tempest” or “storm.” We are not told how this meteorological manifestation of God appeared, but it got Job’s attention. It most likely consisted of powerful winds and, possibly, thunder and lightning. It was a theophany, a physical representation of God’s glory and power. This attention-getting display was intended to make the invisible God visible and drive home His supernatural and all-powerful nature to the all-too-human and far-too-confident Job.

It wasn’t Leviathan that Job needed to fear; it was God. And Job’s God was not some mythological byproduct of man’s fertile imagination. He was real and very powerful. He was just and righteous. He possessed power beyond man’s capacity to comprehend and yet, as Jesus so aptly pointed out, He cared for all His creation.

“Don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell. What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.” – Matthew 10:28-30 NLT

Job had nothing to fear but God. But God wanted that fear to produce faith. Job’s great God had great plans for him. He was not yet done. But unless Job learned to fear God, he would never know what it means to have faith in God. The author of Hebrews would remind Job that all his claims of righteousness were nothing without faith. When all is said and one, only faith brings God pleasure and it’s only faith that God rewards.

...it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him. – Hebrews 11:6 NLT

Job 42:1-9**The Greatest Gift of All**

¹ *Then Job answered the Lord and said:*

² *"I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.*

³ *'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.*

⁴ *'Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you make it known to me.'*

⁵ *I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;*

⁶ *therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes."*

⁷ *After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. ⁸ Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." ⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer. – Job 42:1-9 ESV*

Job had been in search of answers from God but, instead, he had ended up discovering God himself. His quest for justice, vindication, and explanations for his suffering had forced him to seek God and, in the end, what he found eclipsed his any of his expectations. Job's unexpected and unwanted sufferings actually brought him closer to God. Ever since his trials had begun, Job had been in a constant search for relief and redemption, and while he received those things in full, they were nothing when compared to his restored relationship with God.

Job has suffered much at the hands of Satan, but also as a result of the critical words of his friends. But as the book comes to an end, God has stepped into the scene and administered a profound theological lesson that has left Job virtually speechless. The only words that come out of his mouth are statements of praise and contrition.

*"I know that you can do anything,
and no one can stop you." – Job 42:2 NLT*

*"I was talking about things I knew nothing about,
things far too wonderful for me." – Job 42:3 NLT*

*"I take back everything I said,
and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."* – Job 42:6 NLT

Job's encounter with God left him a changed man, and while the restoration of his health and wealth would have an impact on his life, it was the change within his heart that produced the greatest transformation. Job confessed that his relationship with God had been dramatically altered because his understanding of the Almighty had been greatly expanded. His suffering and subsequent face-off with God had opened his eyes to things he had never considered before. His knowledge of God had moved from the head to the heart. Rather than having to rely on purely theoretical concepts, Job had moved to an experiential understanding of God.

*"I had only heard about you before,
but now I have seen you with my own eyes."* – Job 42:5 NLT

God had become real and relatable. He was no longer distant and disconnected from Job's daily life but was an up-close and personal God who had chosen to meet with Job face to face.

He has spoken and condemned Eliphaz and his friends as having spoken out of turn. In fact, God tells them, "you have not been right in what you said about me" (Job 42:7 NLT). He commands them to offer burnt offerings for their sin and to have Job pray for them. If they don't, God would be forced to deal with them according to their folly.

After 42 chapters of dialogue, the most important part of the story of Job seems to be the lessons he learns about his God. Up until this point, Job's understanding of God was based on what he had heard about God. His was an academic, intellectual understanding of God, and it showed up in his diatribes against God. But now he realized that he was wrong. He had spoken out of turn and out of ignorance. But now, Job's view of God had changed because he had experienced and heard from Him.

And isn't that what God is always trying to do – reveal Himself to men? He wants us to know Him, not just know about Him. He wants us to experience Him – in all His power, mercy, grace, and love. That is why He sent His Son – as a living revelation of God on earth in the form of a man. In Jesus, we see the character of God come alive. He gave us an up-close and personal glimpse of God.

For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body. – Colossians 2:9 NLT

For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ. – Colossians 1:19 NLT

It was the apostle Peter who encouraged followers of Christ to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18 NLT). Yet, for too many of us, our knowledge of God is what we have heard, read, or assumed. Our understanding of God is limited to what we have been taught or told. It lacks the personal, experiential touch.

Our God ends up being distant and, at times, a little difficult to know. But God wants us to know Him. He wants us to see and experience Him in our everyday lives. He challenges us get to know Him better.

*"Stop your striving and **recognize** that I am God!" – Psalm 46:10 NET*

In Hebrew, that word "recognize" means "to know, realize, see, find out, discern, or to know by experience." God wants us to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that He truly is who He says He is. He wants us to know **by experience** that He is God.

It is in the daily experiences of life that God wants to reveal Himself, including our trials and difficulties. He wants to display His glory and goodness in those impossible situations that come our way, in our relationships, finances, health, homes, workplaces, and those moments of doubt and fear.

Job didn't come to know God because God blessed him. The restoration of Job's health and wealth were not the impetus for his improved understanding of God; it was he because actually *heard* from God. God spoke to Job and the truth about Himself. He gave Job a glimpse of His power and majesty by comparing Himself to His own creation.

The interesting thing is, He never gave Job an explanation for what had happened. He never defended Himself to Job because He didn't have to. He was God. He simply reminded Job who it was he was complaining to. He reminded Job of His power and sovereign will. God didn't owe Job an explanation. He also didn't owe Job reparations or compensation of any kind. But Job learned that he owed God reverence and respect.

With Job on his knees in repentance, God turns attention to Eliphaz and his friends, and He shows them no mercy.

"I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken accurately about me, as my servant Job has." – Job 42:7 NLT

What happens next appears to be a test of the validity of Job's heart transformation. God commands Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar to offer an atoning sacrifice for having misrepresented themselves as His spokesmen and for having misspoken about His character. They had neither heard from God nor fully understood the nature of God, but they had not let that stop them from speaking on behalf of God. So, God required them to make atonement for their sins, and then he commanded Job to pray for them.

"My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer on your behalf. I will not treat you as you deserve, for you have not spoken accurately about me, as my servant Job has." – Job 42:8 NLT

One can only imagine how difficult this assignment would have been for Job. These three men had caused him untold amounts of grief and suffering. They had berated and belittled him. They had falsely accused him. And now, God was asking Job to act as their intercessor. If Job would pray for them, God would withhold His judgment of them. That means that Job held their lives in his hands. He could have refused to petition the Lord on their behalf. In his anger and resentment, He could have chosen to get even and give them over the God's judgment. But he didn't. His heart had been changed and his desire to please God was greater than his need for vengeance or vindictiveness.

We know Job prayed because the text tells us "the Lord accepted Job's prayer" (Job 42:9 NLT). The sacrifices were made, Job's supplication was offered up to God, and Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were forgiven.

Four separate times in these verses, God refers to Job as his servant. He wants Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar to understand that their estimation and subsequent condemnation of Job had been totally wrong. They had declared Job to be wicked and immoral. They had accused him of committing acts of injustice and unrighteousness. And yet, God repeatedly refers to him as "my servant Job" (Job 42:7, 8). Job's sufferings had not been a sign of sin. His losses had not been evidence of wrongdoing. Throughout it all, Job had remained a servant of God. He was a suffering saint who endured tremendous pain and loss in this life but whose relationship with God had remained unchanged.

In the 11th chapter of Hebrews, the author chronicles the lives of Old Testament saints who, like Job, exhibited faith in the midst of sorrow and loss. These men and women were willing to endure great pain while still holding onto to their belief in the goodness and greatness of God.

...others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection. Some were jeered at, and their backs were cut open with whips. Others were chained in prisons. Some died by stoning, some were sawed in half, and others were killed with the sword. Some went about wearing skins of sheep and goats, destitute and oppressed and mistreated. They were too good for this world, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in caves and holes in the ground.

All these people earned a good reputation because of their faith, yet none of them received all that God had promised. For God had something better in mind for us, so that they would not reach perfection without us. – Hebrews 11:35-40 NLT

Job's reputation was restored. His integrity and good name were vindicated. But God was not done. In a demonstration of divine mercy and grace, God will prove Job's innocence by putting everything back to the way it was before Satan entered the scene. God will graciously and abundantly bless His servant Job and allow him to once again experience the joys of his former life. But the greatest gift Job received was his restored relationship with God.

Job 42:10-17**The Light-Giving, Life-Restoring Love of God**

¹⁰ And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. ¹¹ Then came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him. And each of them gave him a piece of money and a ring of gold.

¹² And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. ¹³ He had also seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ And he called the name of the first daughter Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. ¹⁵ And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. ¹⁶ And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations. ¹⁷ And Job died, an old man, and full of days. – Job 42:10-17 ESV

Rather than seeking vengeance against his accusers, Job graciously interceded for them and God forgave them. He did for these men what they should have done for him. Yet, in 42 chapters of recorded history, not once did Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, or Elihu lift up a single prayer on Job's behalf. Their words were directed *at* him, but never *for* him in intercession to God. Whatever sin they believed Job to have committed, they could have called on God to provide forgiveness and restoration, but they refused to do so. And now, when given the opportunity to get even, Job revealed his true character and prayed for his tormentors.

Without knowing it, Job was keeping the command that Jesus would give centuries later.

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” – Matthew 5:44-46 ESV

Luke records a slightly different version of this same command.

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.” – Luke 6:27-30 ESV

And Jesus went on to provide a strong source of incentive for demonstrating this gracious and unexpected kind of love.

“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” – Luke 6:35-36 ESV

Because of his willingness to love his enemies, Job ended up experiencing the truth behind Jesus’ words. He became the recipient of God’s mercy and magnitude. The text states, “the Lord restored his fortunes. In fact, the Lord gave him twice as much as before!” (Job 42:10 NLT), and it was all because Job demonstrated undeserved love and grace to those who had caused him much pain and suffering. Job did so, not because he was expecting a great reward but because he had survived his encounter with God and had lived to tell about it.

Job knew that he had experienced the mercy and kindness of God. His demand for an audience with God had been out of line and his assertions that God was somehow unjust had been undeserved and worthy of God’s wrath. But instead of judgment, Job had received nothing more than a stern reprimand. Now, much to his surprise, he would receive a double blessing from God.

So the Lord blessed Job in the second half of his life even more than in the beginning. For now he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 teams of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. He also gave Job seven more sons and three more daughters. – Job 42:12-13 NLT

This list is meant to take the reader back to the opening chapter of Job’s story.

He had seven sons and three daughters. He owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 teams of oxen, and 500 female donkeys. He also had many servants. He was, in fact, the richest person in that entire area. – Job 1:2-3 NLT

God effectively doubled Job’s material wealth and graciously replaced the ten children he had lost. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, states that Job was 70 when his suffering began and that he lived another 140 years after his fortunes were restored by God. This doubling of his life span would have been another sign of God’s gracious reward.

This man who had lost everything, including his reputation and former status as a well-respected leader in the community of Uz, was welcomed back with open arms by all those who had abandoned him in his darkest hour.

...all his brothers, sisters, and former friends came and feasted with him in his home. And they consoled him and comforted him because of all the trials the Lord had brought against him. And each of them brought him a gift of money and a gold ring. – Job 42:11 NLT

Notice that his friends “consoled him and comforted him” after his fortunes were restored and he graciously hosted them in his own home. Job was the one who took the initiative. There is

no indication that they reached out to Job or offered to provide him a costly feast in their own homes. But Job held no grudges and refused to be bitter about their former treatment of him. He opened up his heart and home and showered them with undeserved love, and this gracious act prompted them to respond with money and gifts intended to forestall any act of revenge and assuage their own guilt. They knew Job had every right to be angry and the resources to seek retribution.

But Job was content to live out his life with an attitude of gratitude to God. He lived an additional 140 years, enjoying the pleasure of watching four generations of his offspring grow up right before his eyes. He would have attended weddings and celebrated births. He would have reveled in the daily blessings of God and vividly recalled those dark days when his life had been turned upside down by unexpected and inexplicable events. And there is no indication that Job ever received an explanation for what had happened.

It's interesting to note that the text seems to place the responsibility for Job's losses on God. It clearly describes Job's sufferings as "the trials the Lord had brought against him" (Job 42:11 NLT). But this phrase is in the context of Job's friends offering him consolation and comfort. It may be that they still held the mistaken view that Job's suffering had been the judgment of God for sins he had committed. Yet, the opening chapters reveal that it was Satan who was behind the disasters that devastated Job's life. Yes, God was aware and provided Satan with permission to implement his diabolical plan to test Job's faithfulness, but God was not the author of Job's misery and pain. In fact, God is displayed as the restrainer and restorer throughout the story. He is the one who put a limit on Satan's aspirations. The enemy could test Job's allegiance to God but he was prevented from taking Job's life. Everything that Satan took from Job was eventually restored – twofold. God plays the part of redeemer and restorer. He came to Job's defense, not because he deserved it but because God is gracious and loving and cares for His own.

King David provides a timely reminder for all those who express belief in God and place their faith in His unwavering love and mercy.

*The Lord is like a father to his children,
tender and compassionate to those who fear him.
For he knows how weak we are;
he remembers we are only dust.
Our days on earth are like grass;
like wildflowers, we bloom and die.
The wind blows, and we are gone—
as though we had never been here.
But the love of the Lord remains forever
with those who fear him.
His salvation extends to the children's children
of those who are faithful to his covenant,
of those who obey his commandments!*

*The Lord has made the heavens his throne;
from there he rules over everything. – Psalm 103:13-19 NLT*

Job would live an additional 140 years and throughout all that time, he would experience the unconditional and unmerited love of God. Not only that, but he would also grow in his understanding of God's sovereignty and providential care. Had Job not experienced his season of pain and loss, it is likely his grasp of God's sovereignty and gratitude for God's love would never have deepened as it did. His appreciation for God's love, mercy, grace, power, and provision had been deepened by the darkness as well as the light.

The apostle Paul provides an apt summary of the events of Job's life and he does so out of his own experience. He knew what it was like to suffer for the sake of his faith. He understood the pain that comes with living in a fallen world, and while he prayed for God to remove the source of his pain, he clearly heard God say, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9 NLT). Which led Paul to say:

"So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong." – 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NLT

Job's darkness had been dispelled by the light of God's righteousness and his life had been restored by the undeserved outpouring of God's love. He had come to know that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:17 ESV).