

# Journey INTO THE Bible

## Leader's Guide

### Job: Lesson Six

### Chapter 42:7-17

#### Introduction

**Suggestion:** While people are gathering, invite them to take a seat and introduce themselves to people they might not know. When you are ready to begin the Bible study, open with a prayer, either the one below or one of your own choosing.

#### Opening Prayer

*Good and gracious God, I place myself in your hands, realizing that there is so much about life that I do not understand. I may be tossed around by unknown currents, battered by the cruelty of others, and in terror of the darkness that surrounds me. At such times, help me to cling to you in confidence, knowing that your love for me will prevail and in the end I will once again experience that love.*

**Suggestion:** Welcome all participants and make any announcements. Remind everyone to turn off cell phones and pagers, and then read aloud "Setting the Stage."

#### Setting the Stage

Unexpected and unexplained suffering comes into every life. It is only natural that we want to know why this is happening to us. The Book of Job offers several possible explanations for suffering. The first and prominent one is the explanation given by the men who came to visit Job. They insisted that his suffering was punishment for some sin he had committed. Job himself states that sometimes people are the innocent victims of the sinfulness of others. The first two chapters of the book describe how Job's suffering is a test to discover the character of his devotion to God. Elihu suggests that suffering is a form of discipline, a way of being strengthened for the difficulties of life.

Each one of these explanations has some merit. However, no one of them is completely satisfying. Suffering that is understood as punishment or victimization points accusing fingers at human beings. Suffering that is char-

acterized as a test from God or an opportunity to improve oneself cast God in poor light. Many of these explanations suggest that if dealt with appropriately, the person might derive immeasurable benefit from the suffering. An explanation that at one time might offer some consolation and direction, in another situation, could merely add to one's distress. Since the Book of Job focuses on various dimensions of the human struggle with suffering but does not really resolve the matter, one might venture yet another explanation: Innocent suffering is a mystery that cannot be solved, but that must be endured with courage and commitment to God.

However we try to explain suffering, our explanations will not eliminate it from our lives. If the Book of Job teaches anything, it is that there is much that we will never understand or control. Therefore, all we can do is place ourselves in God's hands and trust in him.

#### Text One: Job 42:7-9

**Suggestion:** Read the passage aloud or have a member of the group read it aloud. Then invite the group to discuss the passage.

#### Think/Talk Questions for Text One

1. What do you think about God's anger with the men who had come to visit and counsel Job?
2. Job interceded for the men who harshly accused him of sin and ridiculed his claim of innocence. How does this behavior fit the picture of Job found in the poetic dialogues?

#### Additional Questions for Text One

1. Think of times when you have judged someone else without even trying to understand the circumstances of the situation. Did any good come from that judgment?
2. What do you think Job had to do before he could intercede for the visitors who had treated him so unfairly?

### Text Two: Job 42:10-12

**Suggestion:** Read the passage aloud or have a member of the group read it aloud. Then invite the group to discuss the passage.

#### Think/Talk Questions for Text Two

1. Job's pathetic situation seemed to have pointed to his guilt. What do you think is the logic behind double portion as evidence of his innocence?
2. Is the respect for Job offered by his family and friends authentic?

#### Additional Questions for Text Two

1. How willing are you to take someone's word on a claim of innocence, even when it looks like that person may be guilty? Or do you need concrete evidence of innocence?

### Text Three: Job 42:13-15

**Suggestion:** Read the passage aloud or have a member of the group read it aloud. Then invite the group to discuss the passage.

#### Think/Talk Questions for Text Three

1. Without passing judgment on the way God is portrayed in this book, what role does this apparent lack of concern for the value of Job's children play in the story of Job's testing?
2. How might having beautiful daughters enhance Job's standing in his community?

#### Additional Question for Text Three

1. Have you ever used people for your own purposes? Have you ever felt used by others? Is there anything wrong with this? If so, what?

### Text Four: Job 42:16-17

**Suggestion:** Read the passage aloud or have a member of the group read it aloud. Then invite the group to discuss the passage.

#### Think/Talk Questions for Text Four

1. Do you find the ending of the Book of Job satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. What do you think is the primary lesson to be learned from this book? Explain what you mean.

#### Additional Questions for Text Four

1. How might you resolve the apparent discrepancies in the Book of Job?
2. God never told Job why he had to suffer. What do you think about that?

### Wrapping Up

**Suggestion:** With about twenty minutes remaining, bring the discussion of Job 42:7-17 to a close. Ask if anyone wants to share with the group something he or she has learned in the course of doing this Bible study. Instruct the participants to be brief, and be sure to stop the sharing when the time is up.

#### Closing Prayer: Psalm 116:7-16

*Return, O my soul, to your rest,  
for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.*

*For you have delivered my soul from death,  
my eyes from tears,  
my feet from stumbling.*

*I walk before the Lord  
in the land of the living.  
I kept my faith, even when I said,  
"I am greatly afflicted";  
I said in my consternation,  
"Everyone is a liar."*

*What shall I return to the Lord  
for all his bounty to me?  
I will lift up the cup of salvation  
and call on the name of the Lord,  
I will pay my vows to the Lord  
in the presence of all his people.  
Precious in the sight of the Lord  
is the death of his faithful ones.  
O Lord, I am your servant;  
I am your servant, the child of your serving-maid.  
You have loosed my bonds.*

**Suggestion:** If there is going to be another Bible study session, this is the appropriate time to remind everyone about the next meeting time and place.