



THINK IT THROUGH

So how should we respond to those who suffer?
(Rom 12:15 cf. Job 2:11-13)

And when it is appropriate to speak, what lessons can we draw on from Job 1:1-2:10 that might be a comfort to others?

- *Lessons about innocent suffering?*
- *Lessons about the mystery of suffering?*
- *Lessons about God's sovereignty?*
- *Lessons about God's grace?*



PRAY IT THROUGH

Spend time praying through the lessons learnt in this study.

'GRAPPLING WITH GOD IN THE STORMS' (STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JOB)

SMALL GROUPS SHEET WEEK BEGINNING

19 SEPTEMBER 2011

**Study 2: Job and his friends
(What not to say to those who are suffering)
(Job 1:1-2:10)**

Oakhall
CHURCH SERVING GOD'S KINGDOM



FOR STARTERS

How do you feel when you come face to face with someone who is suffering? What do you say? Do you wish you had a tidy, neat answer?

Read: Job 4:1-11; 5:17-27; 6:14-30



BACKGROUND

Job has been plunged into a desperately painful situation - His possessions are destroyed, his children are killed and his health disintegrates. Now his friends arrive on the scene (2:11). Initially they sit and grieve with Job but before long the discussions begin and this is what dominates the rest of the book. There are 3 rounds of discussion (4:1-31:40)

- Round 1: Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar speak; Job replies to each in turn.
- Round 2: The same as round 1.
- Round 3: The same as round 2, but Zophar doesn't speak.
- Finally, a young man called Elihu has his say (32:1-24)

All in all this seems to be a lesson in what NOT to say to someone who is suffering.



INVESTIGATE

A heated dialogue

How do the friends feel towards Job?

- Bildad in 8:2; 18:2a
- Zophar in 11:2-6
- Eliphaz in 15:2-3

How does Job feel towards his so called comforters?

- 6:14-21; 12:2; 16:1-3; 26:2-3 (note the sarcasm!)

The big question is, "Who is speaking what is right?" How does 42:7 help?



INVESTIGATE

A tidy belief system

There is a neat theological system that underlies all that Job's 'friends' say. Try and piece it together from the following verses:

- About God: 4:8-9; 8:20
- About people: 4:17; 8:4
- About the reason for suffering: 5:17-18; 8:11-13; 22:5-11
- About the solution for Job: 8:5-7; 11:13; 22:23

What aspects of their theology would you agree with?



THINK IT THROUGH

Can you identify with what the friends are saying? Have you ever asked yourself, "What have I done to deserve this?" There are times when God in his love does discipline us as his children, but what is the result of this theology when it doesn't apply... during times of 'innocent suffering'?



INVESTIGATE

Where it all went wrong

So, where did Job's friends go wrong...

- *In regard to Job's problem?* (1:1, 8; 2:3)
- *In regard to God?* (Job 1:21; Psalm 115:3)
 - Can our understanding of God ever have no loose ends?
- *In regard to Satan?* (Job 1:12; 2:6)
- *In regard to leaving room for mystery?* (Job 5:27)
- *In regard to good / evil being rewarded / punished NOW?* (2 Thess 1:6-7; 2 Cor 5:7)
- *In regard to innocent suffering?* (Job 4:7)
 - How would you answer their question from the New Testament?

Note: Job's friends would have no room in their system for the cross!

- *In regard to their style of communication with Job?* Were they more concerned for Job... or for their no-loose-ends theological system? Could this ever be a danger for us?