

WHEN GOD DOESN'T GIVE A REASON

JOB 31:35

Today, we're going to study 42 chapters, but we'll begin by reading just one verse. Turn to Job 31:35!

Though it's found in the middle of the OT, most Bible commentators believe Job was the first book written.

Which doesn't surprise me! The lessons God taught Job are foundational. Until you embrace the message of Job, the rest of the Bible doesn't make sense. This morning, I want us to look at God's dealings with Job...

In 31:35 Job cries out, "Oh, that I had one to hear me! Here is my mark. Oh, that the Almighty would answer me, that my Prosecutor had written a book!"

At a kid's summer camp, a counselor was leading a discussion on creation... He explained why God created the clouds, the trees, the rocks, the rivers, the animals. God had a good reason for all He created.

That's when one little boy asked, "If God has a good purpose for everything; then why did He create poison ivy?" His question was followed by dead silence.

The counselor didn't know how to answer. Finally another child came to the rescue. He explained to the class, "The reason God made poison ivy is because He wants us to know there are certain things we just need to keep our cotton-pick'n hands off of..."

A good explanation indeed!

I believe when we get to heaven we'll discover every story begun in this life does finish with a happy ending!

There is a good reason for everything God does. The problem though is we don't always see His purpose.

There are issues in life, *like poison ivy* - that cause great grief... and for no apparent reason. Some situations appear to have no sane, logical explanation.

And we wonder, *"WHY?" How do you respond when bad things happen and God gives no reason why?*

As Christians we believe God is sovereign!

He does *whatever He likes, whenever He likes, however He likes, to whomever He likes*. He rules the universe - both good and evil - God is *"Da Boss!"*

Read the first chapter of the book of Job, and you'll notice *Satan* can't harm a hair on Job's head without first getting God's permission. Nothing happens in our lives - or in the universe, for that matter - that isn't at the very least permitted by God.

Of course, God's sovereignty is a wonderful doctrine when circumstances are pleasant - when life goes well.

We're delighted God chooses to bless us!

But what's your attitude when life takes a turn for the worse... and for no apparent reason?

In my early years as a Christian I had a friend who was a captivating Bible teacher. Dan had a growing ministry. He was a husband, and a father of five kids.

His teaching and his ministry were influencing thousands of

lives for Jesus (*including my own*).

I'll never forget the day I heard on the radio the prop-plane he had been flying had slammed into the side of a mountain. The news broke my heart.

And I can remember crying out, "*God why? Look at all he's doing for Your Kingdom? Why this...?*"

This is also how I respond when I hear of a hurricane that devastates an island or floods a coastline...

Or a family on vacation killed by a drunk driver...

Or a virtuous woman raped...

Or a school shooter who targets innocent kids...

Or a hard-working husband who gets laid-off and can no longer feed his family...

Or a child born with a severe handicap...

Or a follower of Jesus diagnosed with a cancer...

What happens to *your* faith when you encounter a terrible situation? How do you respond when bad stuff happens to good people - even God's people - and you see nothing good result? Have you ever *asked why...*

Have you ever **SCREAMED** *why?*

How do you deal with the poison ivy in your life?

Well, Job dealt with plenty of poison ivy... In the first two chapters of the book we learn how overnight Job lost everything - *his fortune, family, fitness, and friends.*

And usually, a man in such distress can lean on the comfort of a devoted wife, but not Job. Mrs. Job told him, "*(why don't you just) Curse God and die.*" *That's not exactly what you*

want to hear from the Mrs!

I'm sure you've heard of the *stress factor index*. It's a set of numerical values that try to quantify the amount of stress produced by certain events in life...

For example, "The death of a spouse equals a 100. The death of a close family member a 63. Fired from a job a 47. A pregnancy is a 40 (*that's for the wife - it's a 140 for the husband.*) And on it goes...." The experts say that 79% of those whose stress factor index hits 300-plus, suffer a major illness as a consequence.

When I calculated Job's stress factor index it added up to 650 - that's twice the danger level. Hey, if you think you've got problems check out our man Job!

And here's the kicker... Job did nothing to deserve what had happened to him! Job gets vindicated from the outset... 1:1 tells us Job was **"blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil."**

In 2:3 the Lord Himself says, all that happened to Job came upon him **"without a cause..."** Yes, Job was human, and like all humans he was a sinner, but he did nothing specific to warrant his calamity.

If you doubt Job's devotion to God, look at his initial reaction to his loss in 1:21. He utters, **"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD..."**

To me, that's one of the strongest statements of faith in all

the Scripture! Job 1:22 sums up Job's part in his many afflictions... **"In all this Job did not sin..."**

In Job 1-2, *WE* are told why all this devastation occurred in Job's life... Job got in the middle of a cosmic showdown between God and Satan...

One day the Devil appeared before God, and the heavenly host, and like a proud papa, God mentioned the piety of his servant Job. Satan scoffed, *"God, You've blessed Job so abundantly, why wouldn't he serve You? You've spoiled him. Allow a little hardship in his life, and Job will turn on you in a heartbeat."*

Ironically, rather than being punished for some evil deed, Job's agony was caused by just the opposite.

God was so proud of Job's devotion He staked His honor on Job's reaction. Without knowing it, Job was serving as *the appointed protector of God's glory!*

Whenever I read the book of Job I'm struck by an often overlooked fact - Realize, **Job never read the first two chapters of the book of Job!** *He never did!*

We're told why he suffered, *but not Job*. Until the day he died Job never got an explanation for his calamity.'

God never told Job why... but that sure didn't stop his friends from trying to answer the question.

And for the bulk of the book - chapters 3 through 31 - three pals (*if you want to call them that*): **Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar** - each take turns offering their explanation for the cause of Job's suffering.

I figure they were golfing buddies - a foursome that met every Saturday morning, and when Job didn't show up one week they came to check on their friend.

When they arrived they find Job sitting in the middle of the ash heap. He's scratching his oozing sores with a clay shard - a broken piece of pottery.

For seven days they just sit in silence, mourning for the friend. As it turns out just sitting there *with* Job - being there *for* Job - was the only benefit they offered.

When they open their mouths they torture Job with erroneous counsel. In 16:2, he tells them how much help they were... **“miserable comforters are you all!”**

Job's golfing buddies are like many people today, who are trapped in a restrictive, defective theology.

I like to call it **“a kindergarten theology.”**

It's the simplistic view - it's the belief, that in this life, sin is always punished, and good is always rewarded.

Thus, when bad things happen it means the victim must've committed some sin.

As kids our experiences with mommy and daddy seem to confirm this belief. Parents see to it our good deeds are prized and our disobedience is punished.

But then we move out into the real world, and discover that's not always how life pans out.

Bad things do happen to good people. Bad people often get away with their crimes. Circumstances are not always just. Life isn't always fair.

Being a bit of a golfer myself, I've noticed how golfing buddies particularly like to hold to this simplistic, kindergarten theology... When a golfer hits an errant shot into the woods, and it caroms off a tree trunk back into the center of the fairway, he'll laugh, and say to his partner, "[Well, it looks like I'm living right](#)"...

As if holy living entitles you to favorable breaks, while unholy living leaves you in the rough. I wish life were always that straightforward... but it's not.

This is what *Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar* refuse to admit.

They're adamant. For 29 chapters they scrutinize Job to uncover the slightest chink in his armor on which they can blame his demise. At points in the dialogue they even make up accusations. Job's three friends try every tactic imaginable to *pin a sin* on Job.

Tragically, there're also Christians today who hold to this same faulty theology. Listen to most TV preachers, and you'll hear them teach [a kindergarten theology](#).

Do right, and you'll be rich - you'll be healthy and happy - you'll be driving that Lexus in no time. Trust me, TBN would've never invited Job to host a show!

I have a friend who suffers from chronic asthma.

She's a godly lady - a woman of prayer - yet her Christian friends insisted her suffering had to be the result of some sin in her life. Her friends - like Job's friends - went to great efforts to *pin a sin* on her.

It reminds me of a Peanuts cartoon strip...

Snoopy is standing next to his doghouse - it's been burned to the ground by a fire. He's sobbing, "I've lost my pool, my Van Gogh, all my keepsakes."

Lucy approaches him and snaps at him, "I can tell you why your house burned down... YOU SINNED!"

And Snoopy responds with one of the best theological answers ever uttered - Snoopy sounds like Job - he answers, "Pssssssppppppp!"

Here's the problem with this kind of defective theology... it backs you into a corner. When bad stuff happens in your life you only have two options - *either* **God failed** or **you sinned**.

And that's why Job's friends insist the problem is Job... If it isn't, in their minds, it means God has failed - and they're not about to entertain that possibility.

In reality though, neither assertion was true. The real cause of his sufferings was hidden in the heavens.

Job knows there's a reason, there's got to be another option, he just doesn't see it... **And learning WHY becomes the burning issue in Job's life!**

Once, two Americans traveled to Mexico to open up a bungee-jumping operation. As they erected the tower a curious crowd of locals gathered around to watch.

Finally, it came time for a test jump. One of the guys dove off the platform, but when he bounced back up his partner noticed he was a little scraped up. He gasped, "Oh no, the cord is too long." He tried to grab his friend, but missed him.

The second time the guy bounced back up to the platform he was in worse condition. He had bruises and broken ribs. Again his buddy missed him...

The third time he rose to the platform he was so badly beaten he was nearly unconscious... This time his sidekick lunged and grabbed him, and pulled him in. He asked him, **“Was the cord too long?”** His partner replied, **“No, the cord was fine, *but what’s a piñata?*”**

Sometimes life gets rough. It'll beat you up - *and you don't know why*. Or worse, it treats your partner - your spouse, or your coworker, or your child - like a piñata...

And you get no explanation! **“He loves You Lord, why did this happen to him?”** **“She’s such a good person, why her Lord?”** We’ve all asked these questions.

Job too was a good and godly person, but virtue didn't insulate him from pain in his life.

And remember, it wasn't Job's sin that made him a target for hardships - it was his goodness!

Don't be deceived, just because a person is hurting doesn't mean their sinning - and just because they're thriving doesn't mean God is pleased.

Hey, it does pay to be good and godly, but payday doesn't always come in this life. In the here and now calamity can strike even the godliest among us. Difficulties can hit without explanation.

Faith doesn't always get a reason!

Don't let life back you into a corner.

When things go wrong we think there're only two conclusions - *either God failed... or I'm a failure.*

And since none of us are going to blame God, it's got to be me...and so we beat ourselves up...

But remember the story of Job, when bad stuff happens it doesn't mean God failed - nor does it mean that you're a failure. There could be a reason hidden from view. Only heaven knows the whole story... and God is expecting you and I to trust in Him.

And this is why our responses on Earth matter!

For in a mysterious way, unknown to you and me, God's reputation may be hanging on the way we handle a hassle, or a hardship, or a hindrance.

God's honor in heaven - *His glory* - may be riding on your reaction to the twists and turns life throws at you.

To me, the message of Job is the most practical in all the Bible. It ups the ante on everything that happens in my life. My every reaction becomes strategic.

Every eye in heaven may be fixed on you to see how you handle the illness... or lie told about you... or the law suit filed against you... Will you *fold* or be *faithful*?

This book teaches us a vital lesson - which is this, **the stress in my life may just be a test of my faith.**

Listen, Satan has accused the Almighty of stacking the deck - *of buying our devotion with His blessing.* He assumes God is nothing more to us than a meal ticket.

And he's thrown down the gauntlet. He's told God, **"Nix Your**

blessing, and they'll stop their devotion.”

Do you realize, God may've chosen you to prove otherwise? God's character may be on the line in heaven, and your response to difficulty wins the day.

The stakes may be a lot higher than you realize! The one certainty is that our reactions really do matter!

I have no doubt Job would've gladly suffered for God if he'd just been told the effect his faithfulness was having in heaven. But Job never even got a hint.

Understand, Job's greatest grief was not caused by his material losses, or even the boils on his body. *Job's most excruciating pain was not knowing why!*

I've found that the best pain reliever by far is not Advil, or Tylenol 3, or Demerol - *it's an explanation.*

If there's a good reason behind our suffering then we tend to rise to the occasion, *but how do you respond when God refuses to give you a reason?*

It's like going to the doctor to get a shot... I don't like shots - but if I'm told the reason for the shot I can accept it, and endure it, and even be thankful for it!

But what if I'm given a series of shots without being told their reason? Trust me, I won't be as tolerant! In fact, I'll get downright ugly and upset. I'll pound my fist down on the counter and demand to know why.

And that's what Job begins to do! He pounds his fist.

Over the course of his dialogue with his three friends Job demands more and more to know why?

In 7:11, Job even grows bitter. He moans, "I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul."

It's interesting the word "*complain*" occurs more times in Job than any other book in the Bible. Did you know that nearly half of the complaints recorded in all the Scripture fall from the lips of this one man, Job.

We speak of *the patience of Job*, but the person with the real patience in this story was God! God was the One who put up with Job's spewing bitterness.

Here's what happens... Job loses perspective. *And it's easy for a sufferer to do! Job* forgets who God is - His holiness and rightness. Job grows *bold and brash*.

As he questions God - in Job's mind - in his own estimation - *Job becomes bigger and bigger and bigger*, while *God becomes smaller and smaller...*

It's been said, "*In asking why, Job loses his way.*"

And by the time we get to our text, 31:35, Job believes God owes him an answer. In fact, he demands it in writing, "*Oh, that the Almighty would answer me, that my prosecutor had written a book!*"

Hey God, I need a reason and I want it in print!

Arrogance has replaced Job's *innocence*. Job has become so sure of himself he starts to doubt God.

At one point in the dialogue Job says to his friends, "*If my only options are I've sinned, or God failed - then God has failed; for I certainly haven't sinned.*" *Job, who do you think*

you are? Job borders on blasphemy!

In his commentary on Job, author Don Baker, makes this point about pain... "Pain speaks a strange language - it plays funny tricks on us. It makes us think things, say things, even believe things that are not true.

When pain bores its way through human flesh and into the human spirit and then just sits there and hurts and hurts... the mind becomes clouded and the brain begins to think strange thoughts like God is dead, He's gone fishing, and He just doesn't care."

Pain was having this kind of effect on Job...

And toward the end of Job's discourses he starts challenging God to speak. He charges God with giving him a raw deal, and accuses God of being unfair.

In his attempts to vindicate himself, Job accuses God. Job is more into proving his own innocence than upholding God's justice. In short, *Job cops an attitude*.

Always remember, there are chapters in your story God has yet to write. *Zophar can only speak so far*.

God had a glorious outcome for Job. In the end he got double the blessings he had before, but until the day he died he never learned *the why* behind his trials.

Some situations have reasons that will only make sense in heaven. Today, we live a temporal, earthbound existence - and that's why it's wrong for us, from our limited perspective, to question or criticize an eternal God. We're told in

Deuteronomy 29:29, "the secret things belong unto the LORD our God..."

Never forget one of the first rules in theology, "Where God has placed a period, don't you change it to a question mark!" If God doesn't offer you an explanation, learn to live without one. Don't push it.

Ultimatums don't work on God. Trust in His wisdom!

Here's the big question for you and me this morning: **can we trust God even when we can't trace Him?**

It's easy to praise God when we see His hand at work! When His blessings, *even lessons*, are tangible.

But is our faith alive enough to survive in the dark?

Did you hear about the four passengers traveling on a train from Atlanta Georgia to Boston Massachusetts?

All four riders were in the same compartment... a *Atlanta Falcons fan, a haughty New England Patriots fan, a gorgeous young woman, and an elderly lady.*

Everyone was being very cordial, until the train passed through a long, dark tunnel... Suddenly there was a *loud kiss...* followed by an equally *loud slap!*

When the train exited the tunnel each passenger sat quietly... trying to interpret what the noises meant...

The beautiful woman thought, "That's odd, a Patriots fan tries to kiss an elderly woman, and not me."

The elderly lady thought, "My, that young woman, she is a good girl with some fine morals."

The New England fan thought, "That Falcons' fan is a smart guy; he steals a kiss and I get slapped." While the Atlanta fan gloated, "Perfect, I kiss the back of my hand, slap a Patriots fan, and nobody ever knows!"

Sometimes things happen in the dark. God chooses not to reveal His specific reasons - and if we're not careful we can draw the wrong conclusions...

It reminds me of the little boy who was scared of the dark. Late one night his mother asked him to fetch the broom off the back porch. He balked, "But mom, it's dark out there." The mother told him, "Honey, don't worry Jesus is always with you. He's with you wherever you go - even when you're in the dark."

The little guy walked to the back door, cracked it open a fraction of an inch, then called out, "Hey Jesus, if you're out there, how about handing me that broom?"

Realize, God wants all of us to learn that Jesus is with us even in the dark places!

How do you react when circumstances occur you don't deserve? Have you grown bitter, even angry?

Have you been demanding an explanation?

Is your name Job?

Let me show you how God finally responds to Job.

In chapter 38 God appears to Job, but not to answer his questions. No, God takes a most unusual tact. He comes to Job *asking questions not answering them.*

For five chapters God asks Job a series of questions he

can't possibly answer - a total of 70 unanswerable questions. The Almighty is about to show His servant, Job, he doesn't know much as he thinks he does.

It's time for God to put Job back in his place!

God appears to Job in the whirlwind, and says in verses 2-3, "who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? (or who is this who doesn't know what he's talking about.) "Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you will answer me."

It's time for some humble pie. God is about to remind Job that you spell the word God... G-O-D not J-O-B.

In verse 4 God begins His quiz, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Job has been instructing God how to run the universe - but here God makes it clear He doesn't need Job's help. God was doing fine, long before Job came along.

God asks Job, "Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know!"

God even becomes sarcastic. He's saying, *Ok Job, was it you holding the other end of the tape measure when I measured out the universe? I don't think so!*

Throughout the book Job's incessant questioning of God's wisdom implied he could do a better job of running the universe than God... *but could he?*

Can you?

On and on these questions continue... God keeps firing

queries at Job that he has no way to answer.

It's interesting, as Job questioned God in Job's estimation *he grew larger and larger, while God grew smaller and smaller*. But here when the roles are reversed, and God questions Job, suddenly in Job's thinking, *it's God who becomes larger and larger, and it's Job that becomes smaller and smaller and smaller*.

Job gets taken down a notch or two - whittled down to size. Up against God's infinite wisdom, a finite Job knows very little! *What right does he have to question or criticize the Almighty? Who does Job think he is?*

What if I were playing golf with Phil Mickelson - *one of the greatest golfers to ever swing a stick* - what right would I have to start giving Phil pointers?

"Hey, Phil, let ole Sandy help you with your swing!" Who's kidding who? But Job is being just as arrogant.

He's been trying to coach God on how to run the universe. *Who in the world does Job think he is?*

Job has gotten way out of line!

Here's a quote, *"If there's anything a sufferer needs, it is not an explanation, but a fresh, new look at God."*

We think we need an answer - that we'll never be satisfied until we know why - but what we really need is a vision of God... For when God appears, the reason for the trial no longer matters... All that matters is God!

Job thinks he's learned his lesson.

Listen to his reply to God in 40:4, **"Behold, I am vile; what**

shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further." At first it may seem as if Job has gotten the message, but I don't think so...

Job simply goes from **pounding** to **pouting** – from *beating his fist* to *sticking out his lip*. In essence, he's saying, "Okay, God You win. You've made Your point. I'll just shut up and serve you." Job agrees to serve the Lord, but you can bet he'll serve God with a grudge.

Do you know anyone else who's been serving God with a grudge? Job has accepted God's sovereignty - for he has no other choice - but he doesn't really like it!

Realize, God doesn't want us to **pound** or **pout!**

There is a third option... We can **praise** God for who He is, *come what may!* God wants us to embrace His sovereignty with a loving, trusting wholeheartedness.

You can say lovingly... "Lord, Thy will be done." Or you can say begrudgingly, "All right, then God, have it your way..." And here Job is doing the latter.

He's giving in only because he has no other option. And *God is not through correcting his attitude...*

Again God comes to Job in a whirlwind. In 40:7 He says, "Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me." God didn't like the first answers he got from Job so He has more questions...

In Chapter 40 God points to two enormous, powerful animals - *Behemoth* and *Leviathan*. He asks Job if he can contain them, let alone create them! Job seems *pretty puny*

when pitted up against these mighty forces.

God is relentless in His humbling of Job.

He's after in Job what he wants in us - not *reluctance* but *repentance*. God wants Job - and us - to rejoice in His sovereignty - to worship Him, despite our situation.

God wants us to acknowledge that He not only runs the universe, but He runs our lives - and He's better at it than we are! *God does all things well, all of the time!*

Today when a church builds a sanctuary the architect is careful to optimize the sight-lines. It doesn't matter where you're sitting in the room, you can see all that's going on upfront. There's not a bad view in the house.

But the Reformation architects of the great cathedrals in Europe had the opposite idea. They deliberately created worship venues where your view was blocked by a pillar, or rail, or awkward angle - where you couldn't see everything going on up front.

It was a reminder that some truths about God are hidden. No one knows all there is to know about God.

We all worship God from a limited vantage point.

Job finally realizes this truth in 42:1-6. This time when Job answers God, he humbly gets it right. He says, "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?'

Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, 'I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Obviously, Job has a change of attitude.

Job never did learn *WHY*, but he learned something far more valuable. He learned *WHO*. And when you really know *Who...* you don't need to know *why!*

There are people I've met whose chief ambition in getting to heaven is to get answers to their questions - and I'm certain, they'll get their answers.

But I'm just as certain that in heaven their answers won't be nearly as important as they thought. For when we see the beauties and glories of our Lord Jesus, all the perplexities and questions will be overshadowed.

In the end, *the Who will swallow up all the whys!*

Following the difficult days of World War 2, King George VI of England made a statement to his countrymen about the uncertainties of the coming New Year... "*I said to the man at the Gate of the Year, 'Give me a light that I may walk safely into the unknown.'*..."

He said to me, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand in the hand of God, and it shall be to you better than the light, and safer than the known.'"

Imagine that, *the hand of God... better than the light, and safer than the known!*

Some of you are walking into uncertain futures, and you've been questioning God... Don't you think a better approach is

to grip His hand a little tighter?

Once an old man was taking a walk with his young grandson when he asked the boy, "Son, do you know where you are?" "No Grandpa, I don't." "Son, do you know how far you are from home?" "No sir."...

"Well son, its sounds to me like you're lost." The little boy grinned, "Nope grandpa, I can't be lost." Grandpa asked him, "Why, are you so sure?" The little guy replied, "I can't be lost, because I'm with you!"

That's what God wants us to learn. Even when we don't understand - even with no explanation – you are never lost when you're with God. He can be trusted!

How do you cope with the poison ivy in your life?

Here's what Job would tell us... God is sovereign! He's a big God. He takes orders from no one. He does as He pleases without *getting our permission* or *giving us an explanation*. That's why we need to *turn off* our complaints, and our doubts, and our questions... and *turn on* your praise! God is worthy to be worshipped!

Love God... don't fight Him!

Trust God... don't question Him!

Real faith doesn't need to know *why*, when it is certain of *Who!* Always remember this statement, "What's over my head is still under God's feet!"

Let me say it again, but this time you say it with me, "What's over my head is still under God's feet!" (repeat)

God loves you. He's so proud of you He's staked His honor

on your reactions. *Imagine this... God believes that your response to difficulty will bring Him glory!*