

JOB AND THE JUST GOD

DEVOTIONAL READING: [Job 42:1-11](#)

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: [Job 42](#)

JOB 42:1–6, 10–17

¹ Then Job replied to the LORD:

**² “I know that you can do all things;
no purpose of yours can be thwarted.**

**³ You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?’
Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know.**

**⁴ “You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.’**

**⁵ My ears had heard of you
but now my eyes have seen you.**

**⁶ Therefore I despise myself
and repent in dust and ashes.”**

¹⁰ After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. ¹¹ All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

¹² The LORD blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. ¹³ And he also had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. ¹⁵ Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job’s daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.

¹⁶ After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. ¹⁷ And so Job died, an old man and full of years.



KEY TEXT

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.—Job 42:3b–c

JUSTICE, LAW, HISTORY

Unit 3: Justice and Adversity

LESSONS 10–13

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize Job’s response to the Lord.
2. Identify changes in Job’s view of God.
3. Write a respectful letter to God regarding a perceived injustice.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. The Courage to Hope
- B. Lesson Context
- I. God's Plans (Job 42:1–2)
- II. God's Words (Job 42:3–4)
 - A. Question Restated (v. 3)
 - B. Request Replayed (v. 4)
- III. God's Presence (Job 42:5–6)
 - A. Vision of God (v. 5)
 - Conversation Is a Two-Way Street*
 - B. Vision of Self (v. 6)
- IV. God's Blessings (Job 42:10–17)
 - A. Job Restored (v. 10)
 - Something Better*
 - B. Job Rewarded (vv. 11–17)

Conclusion

- A. Give Us an Explanation!
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

HOW TO SAY IT

Abihu	Uh- <i>bye</i> -hew.
Behemoth	<i>Bee</i> -heh-moth or Beh- <i>hee</i> -moth.
Elihu	Ih- <i>lye</i> -hew.
Jehoiada	Jee- <i>hoy</i> -uh-duh.
Leviathan	Luh- <i>vye</i> -uh-thun.
Nadab	<i>Nay</i> -dab.
Sinai	<i>Sigh</i> -nye or <i>Sigh</i> -nay-eye.
theophany	the- <i>ah</i> -fuh-nee.

Introduction

A. The Courage to Hope

A diving accident at the age of 17 left Joni Eareckson Tada paralyzed. Bound to a wheelchair and unable to use her hands, she spent two years in rehabilitation learning how to deal with her new reality. Over the years her ministry has expanded to include a successful writing, speaking, and painting career. Additionally, she launched a ministry centered on helping people impacted by disability.

However, her life has been filled with many trials. She has lived with bouts of intense pain, pneumonia, and breast cancer. As she wrote about the suffering she experienced, she recalled God's promises to Joshua, promises to never leave or forsake (see [Deuteronomy 31:6](#)). God's promises of his presence gave Joni the courage to hope in the midst of dark nights.

Joni's story of suffering, lament, and hope parallels that of Job's life in some ways. In the midst of a dark time of lament and suffering, Job realized he had to cling to the hope that only a just God could provide.

B. Lesson Context

Job's response, described in this week's lesson, follows a lengthy and pointed reprimand from God. Out of a storm ([Job 38:1; 40:6](#)), God appeared to Job and warned him to "brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me" ([38:3](#)). Elsewhere in Scripture, God spoke to humanity through what could only be described as a storm (compare [Exodus 19:16; Ezekiel 1:4](#); contrast [1 Kings 19:11–12](#)). Out of the midst of this storm came the voice of God, demanding full attention as he presented his glory.

From that point, God proceeded to ask questions concerning Job's knowledge and understanding of the world, beginning with, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations? Tell me, if you understand" ([Job 38:4](#)).

After asking about Job's understanding of the observed world ([Job 38:5–39:30](#)), God invited Job to provide an answer ([40:2](#)). In a response that mirrored his later reply (see commentary on [42:3b](#), below), Job expressed that he could not provide answers to God's line of questioning and was in no place to accuse God further ([40:4–5](#)). God's response became even more pointed as he asked Job if he would "discredit my justice" and "condemn me to justify yourself" ([40:8](#)). God made it clear that Job, as a mere creature, was in no position to question the justice and judgment of the eternal Creator.

God's response was not an attempt to belittle Job or to provide answers for Job's suffering and lament. Rather, God's intent was to show Job the limit of his understanding of God's purposes and plans. God's just nature will not be thwarted, brought into question, or limited by humanity.

I. God's Plans

(JOB 42:1–2)

1–2. Then Job replied to the LORD: “I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

After hearing God’s blistering reply, *Job* responded. By saying *I know*, Job’s answer mirrored God’s previous line of questioning Job’s knowledge and understanding (see Job 38:5, 18, 21, 33; 39:1, 2). Elsewhere, Job used the same sentiment to speak of his confidence in God’s redemption: “I know that my redeemer lives” (19:25).

The object of Job’s knowledge is the expanse of God’s sovereign power and work. Job notes that *no purpose* takes place outside of the purview of God’s divine wisdom. Throughout Scripture, other individuals have reflected on the extent of God’s wisdom, power, and work in the world (see 2 Chronicles 20:6; Isaiah 14:27; Acts 4:30; 6:8).

As a finite human, Job realized that nothing takes place beyond God’s wisdom and knowledge, even the events that caused Job to experience suffering (see Job 1:13–22; 2:7–10).

II. God’s Words

(JOB 42:3–4)

A. Question Restated (v. 3)

3a. “You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?’

Job restates God’s accusation (see Job 38:2) and, therefore, introduces his own self-judgment (see commentary on 42:3b, below). God’s original question served as an indictment against Job for speaking of things he did not understand.

Job’s friend Elihu also recognized the folly of Job’s words, saying, “Job speaks without knowledge; his words lack insight” (34:35) and “Job opens his mouth with empty talk; *without knowledge* he multiplies words” (35:16).

Because of God’s indictment and Elihu’s sharp rebuke, Job realized that the *plans* and purpose of God would not be thwarted (see Proverbs 19:21).

3b. “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.

Job admitted he spoke in ignorance. Previously, Job showed remorse for his words toward God (see Job 40:3–5). Now, after the Lord’s further challenge (see 40:6–41:34), Job woefully expressed that he misspoke of *things too wonderful ... to know*.

God had shown Job the extent of his power over creation (38:4–39:30), including the creatures Behemoth (40:15–24) and Leviathan (41:1–34). God’s ways, including his justice, would not be called into question (40:8). Job now realized that God’s justice and providence were too wonderful!

What Do You Think?

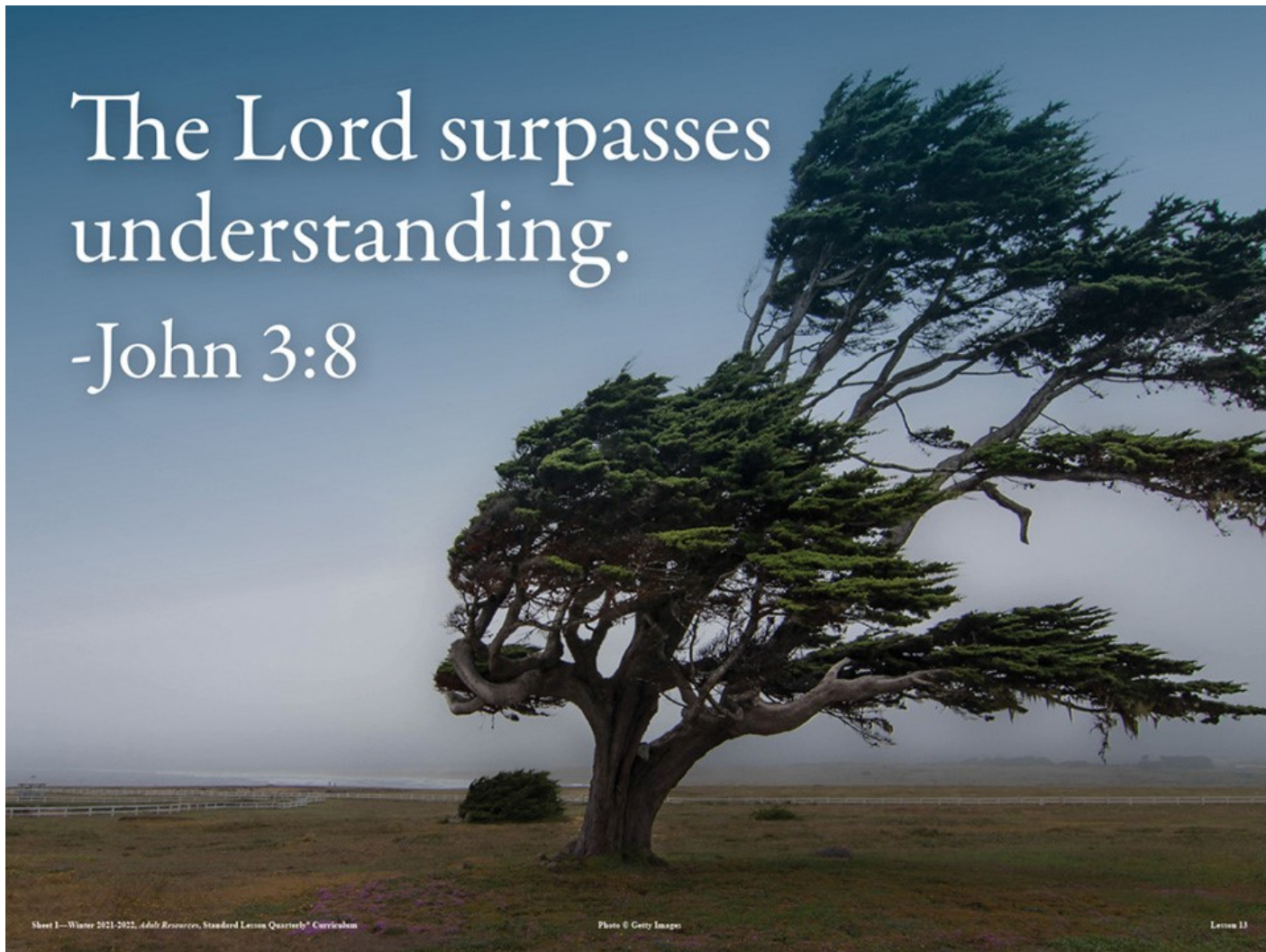
What are some situations in which we can do no better than to say exactly what Job says here?

Digging Deeper

What consequences could be in store for failure to do so?

The Lord surpasses
understanding.

-John 3:8



Visual for [Lesson 13](#). Point to this visual as an introduction to the discussion questions associated with verse 3.

B. Request Replayed (v. 4)

4. “You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.’

God’s previous imperatives to Job are repeated (see [Job 38:3](#); [40:7](#)). Job was to *listen* as God would *speak* to and demand an *answer* of Job. Initially, Job declined to respond to the demands of God. However, Job’s repetition of these imperatives signals Job’s coming confession, repentance, and new perspective.

III. God's Presence

(JOB 42:5–6)

A. Vision of God (v. 5)

5. “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.

One’s faith in God grows by encountering him, often in peculiar ways. Whether in times of hardship or celebration, hearing the message and seeing the work of God can bolster our faith (see [Acts 4:13–20](#); [Romans 10:17](#)).

Job’s description of his experience with God can be understood as a theophany, a specific appearance or manifestation of God to humanity. Such instances are temporary and often accompanied by great physical indication, such as a fire, cloud, or earthquake.

When Moses asked to see the glory of the Lord, God replied, “You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live” ([Exodus 33:20](#); compare [19:20–21](#); [Judges 6:22–23](#); [13:20–22](#)). However, others testified to seeing what seemed to be a direct appearance of God in human form. Jacob stated that he “saw God face to face” ([Genesis 32:30](#)). Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the elders of Israel “saw the God of Israel” ([Exodus 24:10](#)). Additionally, Moses conversed directly with God: “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend” ([33:11](#)).

Scripture describes other instances of God’s disclosure to humanity. The Lord appeared to Abraham to confirm the promise of offspring ([Genesis 12:7](#)). Moses experienced the direct voice of God in the desert in the form of a fire in the midst of a bush ([Exodus 3:2–4](#)) and on Mt. Sinai in the midst of thunder, lightning, and smoke ([19:18](#); [24:15–18](#)). God appeared to King Solomon in a dream ([1 Kings 3:5](#)). The prophet Elijah heard the voice of God after intense winds, an earthquake, and fire ([19:11–13](#)). These disclosures of God provided confidence of God’s work in the lives of his people.

How might Job have *heard* and *seen* the Lord and his deeds? As a “blameless and upright” man who “feared God and “shunned evil” ([Job 1:1](#)), Job might have attended religious ceremonies or heard the teachings of God from elders. In his holiness, Job longed to see God with his own eyes ([19:26–27](#)). Now Job’s longing came to fruition as he heard directly from the voice of God.

CONVERSATION IS A TWO-WAY STREET

I’m not sure how your conversations with God sound, but mine tend to be one-sided. Either I’m rambling about something menial or I’m venting about some perceived injustice. Sometimes my frustration grows when it seems like I’m not “hearing” from him.

Recently, I committed time to be silent and listen to God. There would be no distractions

or no ramblings; I would sit in silence. During this time, I heard God’s voice! He spoke to me, quietly and lovingly. In my excitement, I asked why it had taken so long to hear from him. He asked why it had taken so long for me to listen. Of course, this experience did not overrule Scripture itself as the primary voice from God. Rather, I used Scripture as the means of measuring and interpreting this experience.

In our conversations with God, we sometimes get in our own way. We miss hearing his voice because we’re not giving space to listen. It’s called a conversation because it involves two speakers; otherwise, it’s just a monologue. When God convicted me of this, I committed to listening better to him.

If you think God isn’t speaking, are you really listening? What distractions do you need to quiet so you can hear? Sometimes all it takes to hear is to look up (see [Psalm 19:1–4](#)).

—K. D.

B. Vision of Self (v. 6)

6a. “Therefore I despise myself

Job’s vision of God was both overwhelming and humbling. The Hebrew word translated *despise* is used elsewhere to speak of God’s judgment ([Jeremiah 6:30](#)) and an individual’s rejection of the word of the Lord ([1 Samuel 15:23](#)). Though a sense of rejection is implied in this word, the underlying Hebrew text is unclear as to what Job rejects.

As the personal pronoun *myself* is not explicit in the Hebrew text, an assumption must be made as to the object of Job’s despisement. The first possibility is that Job despises his improper and accusatory words directed to God. These were words that he “spoke” but “did not understand” ([Job 42:3b](#), see commentary above).

The second possibility proposes a verbal construction with the verb “repent” (see [Job 42:6b](#), next). In this construction, both verbs refer to the same object: himself. Both possibilities are consistent with the text and the nature of Job. Upon hearing the pointed words of God, Job rejected his previous thoughts, actions, and words.

6b. “and repent

Both modern and Hebrew usage of the word *repent* indicates the notion of feeling remorse and contrition (see [Jeremiah 31:19](#)). It is important to note that Job is not repenting as his friends had prescribed (see [Job 34:33](#)); he was not repenting for any unknown wrongdoing that was supposed to have prompted his suffering and misfortune. Instead, Job repented of and grieved over the ways he had misconstrued and misrepresented the just and all-powerful God.

6c. “in dust and ashes.”

There is a play on words to describe the location of Job’s act of remorse and contrition. Sit-

ting in or covering one's self with *ashes* was a common occurrence for situations of lament and sorrow (see [2 Samuel 13:19](#); [Esther 4:1, 3](#); [Job 2:8](#); [Jeremiah 6:26](#)).

Additionally, the mention of *dust* alludes to the creation of humans and the tenuous nature of life (see [Genesis 2:7; 3:14](#); [Job 10:9](#)). Job may very well have been lamenting *in* dust and ashes. However, he may also have been describing his human status before God as, eventually, he would return to dust and ashes (compare [Job 30:19](#)).

Abraham echoed a similar sentiment. Upon hearing of the Lord's impending destruction of the city of Sodom, Abraham advocated to the Lord for the city on behalf of the righteous ([Genesis 18:23–25](#)). In doing so, Abraham acknowledged his human finitude, saying that he was “nothing but dust and ashes” ([18:27](#)). When confronted with the plans of the all-powerful God of the universe, Abraham and Job recognized their finitude.

What Do You Think?

Instead of using dust and ashes, what physical acts or substances best accompany repentance today? Why?

Digging Deeper

What Scripture texts guide your response?

IV. God's Blessings

([JOB 42:10–17](#))

A. Job Restored (v. 10)

10. After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before.

Before God restored *Job*, he addressed *Job's friends* (see [lesson 12](#)) and ordered them to sacrifice burnt offerings (see [Job 42:7–9](#), not in today's text). *Job's friends* followed God's directives, after which *Job prayed* for them. The Lord then began the process of restoring *Job*.

Older English translations of this passage state that the *Lord* “turned the captivity” of *Job*. This idea alludes to Scripture texts where a captive people returned to their homeland and experienced a new, restored life (see [Jeremiah 30:3, 18](#)). In a similar manner, in his time of suffering, *Job* experienced a form of captivity. However, God freed *Job* from this captivity and blessed him with *twice as much as he had before*.

SOMETHING BETTER

Pam had a job she completely loved. She found the work fulfilling and enjoyed working

with supportive and trustworthy people. The job presented challenges but was better than any other job she held. However, that bliss was short-lived; the day after her work anniversary, Pam was abruptly fired.

She felt utterly blindsided! She called me in tears, questioning how this could have happened. She couldn't make sense of why God would take away this job. I was unable to provide an answer, but I reminded her that God was still in control.

Over time, Pam learned to release her anger and confusion. She learned to find joy and fulfillment outside her job. Eventually, a new employment opportunity arrived with another company. Soon Pam came to love her new workplace just as much as the previous one.

Pam's abrupt firing still doesn't make sense, but I know God is in control during confusing and maddening situations. When these situations occur, you can believe that he will continue to work in your life. Will you let him?

—K. D.

B. Job Rewarded (vv. 11–17)

11a. All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought on him,

The Lord's blessing ([Job 42:10](#)) is given further detail, this time through the renewed and restored relationships of Job. Previously, Job lamented that *his brothers and sisters* had been "alienated" from him, and *everyone who had known him before* was "estranged" ([19:13](#); compare [19:19](#)). Those closest to Job had turned against him, believing that Job had sinned greatly against God. But in light of Job's vindication and reward, they returned and *ate with him in his house* to signify a renewed fellowship.

11b. and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

Their gifts of *silver* and *gold* could have been seen as an act of honor and respect toward a restored Job. Additionally, these gifts could have been the means through which God chose to restore Job's economic fortunes.

What Do You Think?

What guardrails can you erect to keep yourself from being a fair-weather friend?

Digging Deeper

Which of the following passages speak to you most directly in this regard: [Proverbs 14:20](#); [17:17](#); [18:24](#); [19:4, 6](#); [25:20](#)? Why?

12. The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part. He had

fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys.

The Lord doubled the amount of livestock owned by Job (see [Job 1:3](#)). God's act highlights the generous nature of his grace and blessing (see [Genesis 12:3](#); [Exodus 34:6–7](#); [Titus 2:11](#); [2 Peter 1:3](#)).

13. And he also had seven sons and three daughters.

Notably, the number of Job's children remains the same (compare [Job 1:2](#)). One cannot help but wonder why Job's estate doubled in size but not the number of his children. It would seem that a natural explanation is best; it would be reasonable to assume that Job and his wife needed time to have 10 more children.

One temptation in reading this part of the story might be to inadvertently think that Job's *seven sons and three daughters* replaced Job's killed children ([Job 1:18–19](#)). Certainly Job and his wife continued to live with the scars of their tremendous loss. The addition of a child can never replace the loss of another.

14–15. The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.

Much has been made over the fact that the names of *Job's daughters* are explicitly given. It is not uncommon in ancient epics, however, for heroic or successful women to be named and granted a place of prominence.

That the daughters and *their brothers* received an *inheritance* might provide evidence for why the text of Job is thought to be one of the oldest in the Old Testament. Old Testament law stipulated that daughters only received an inheritance if their father had no son (see [Numbers 27:5–8](#)).

One might conjecture that Job's generous act of providing an inheritance for both his daughters and sons makes sense in a historical context apart from Israel's law. Perhaps Job's life predated the priestly law, thus placing his narrative within the time of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, that conjecture may not be accurate, and Job's generosity toward his daughters could simply be a demonstration of gratitude toward God for his act of blessing.

What Do You Think?

What is one countercultural thing you can do this week that honors the Lord?

Digging Deeper

What countercultural things have you seen Christians do that dishonored the Lord?

16–17. After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their

children to the fourth generation. And so Job died, an old man and full of years.

Some debate exists as to whether *Job* died at the age of one *hundred and forty years* or lived for another 140 years. Regardless, his long life further illustrates his commitment to righteousness (compare [Psalm 91:16](#)). Job's epitaph parallels Abraham's ([Genesis 25:8](#)), Isaac's ([35:28–29](#)), David's ([1 Chronicles 29:28](#)), and Jehoiada's ([2 Chronicles 24:15–16](#)). As Job's narrative ends, the words of Moses resonate as an appropriate description of Job's life: "Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess" ([Deuteronomy 5:33](#)). Job lived in righteous obedience to God's commands, and God blessed him as he lived in the land.

Conclusion

A. Give Us an Explanation!

It's highly unlikely that any of us have had 10 children die and have lost all possessions, etc., as Job did. Even so, our reactions during challenging circumstances often mirror Job's. He lamented in unknowing, and allowed the intensity of his emotions to govern his speech toward God. After Job experienced God's presence and pointed line of questioning, Job realized his insignificance and the baseless nature of his questioning of God. Job had questioned his just God, only to realize he spoke out of turn. Job learned firsthand that God's purpose or plan may not be evident to human eyes, but God remains just in the midst of it all.

Often, when faced with unexplainable and challenging circumstances, we want answers and explanations for the reason for our suffering. So we ask *why* relentlessly, implying that answers will satisfy the longing of our souls as they explain the unexplainable. But a greater salve for our wounded souls is an overwhelming vision of God, in which his eternal presence and wise counsel become the anchor for our lives and guide us to whatever he might have next for us.

What Do You Think?

What aspect of today's text do you see most difficult as addressing modern problems or applying to life today?

Digging Deeper

How will you go about resolving this difficulty?

B. Prayer

God of infinite wisdom, remind us that we do not see as you see. Give us confidence to

trust that you are just and worthy of full obedience. In Jesus' name. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

Instead of asking *why*, ask, “What’s next?”

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with NIV® Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the NIV® Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

Into the Lesson

Give each participant a blank index card on which to write the name of a favorite novel or movie. Collect and redistribute the anonymous cards, making sure no one receives his or her own card back. Have each participant guess the writer of the card held. The writer should then tell why he or she liked the ending of the book or movie chosen.

Alternative. Distribute copies of Image 1 of the “New Perspective” exercise on the activity page, which you can download. Have participants guess what it depicts (*answer: grain of sand*). Then distribute copies of Image 2 and let participants know that the subject matter is the same thing. Finally, distribute copies of Image 3 and pose the following two questions to the whole group. (Do not state both questions together; allow responses to the first question before posing the second.)

1–Why did the grain of sand seem so big and important in Image 1?

2–When did it become clear that you were looking at mere sand?

Invite participants to give other examples of things (or experiences) that become clearer as one “zooms out” or see the bigger picture.

After either alternative, say, “Today’s lesson describes one man’s experience of gaining greater perspective about God’s work in his life. Let’s take a look.”

Into the Word

Ask a volunteer to read [Job 42:1–6](#). Then play some randomly recorded sounds, each one just a few seconds long. (Some possibilities are popcorn popping, children laughing, water running, and/or birds chirping.) Invite participants to guess what the sounds are. After correct responses, press for more details, particularly details that cannot be known by sound

alone. (For instance, you could ask for the ages and number of children laughing, since these cannot be determined accurately by sound alone.) As participants make their guesses, display pictures (you provide) that correlate with each sound as you play them again.

Then ask the group to distinguish between the values gained by hearing vs. seeing. Jot responses on the board as you guide participants in connecting the discussion with [Job 42:5](#). (*Option.* For deeper study on hearing and seeing, compare and contrast [Job 42:5](#) with [Job 13:1](#); [Matthew 13:13–17](#); [John 20:29](#); [1 John 1:1–3](#).)

After a volunteer reads [Job 42:10–17](#), have participants compare the new riches Job received with what he lost in [Job 1:3](#). Challenge participants to consider other ways Job was blessed, beyond what is specifically listed. (*Possible responses:* restored relationships with neighbors, wife, and friends; stronger faith and love for the Lord.) List all on the board as mentioned. Make a transition to the Into Life segment by asking participants to review the list on the board and choose one blessing that stands out as something especially valuable. Offer the chance to share why as time allows.

Into Life

Share a personal story about going through a difficult trial and learning to trust God in the midst of it. Then ask for volunteers to share with the class a personal experience they had that was difficult, and how they have seen God’s mercy and redemption through it.

Alternative: Distribute the “A Sincere Prayer” exercise from the activity page for learners to complete in study pairs.

Distribute handouts (you prepare) headed “A Letter to God.” Invite learners to write a letter to God in the week ahead regarding a perceived injustice. Caution them not to question God’s justice, but rather to seek guidance to help correct the injustice. Encourage them to be prepared to share a brief reflection of this experience next time.