

Job Chapters 4-7, the opening speeches

1. The exchange of ideas and principles begins! Eliphaz is the first to speak. Remember, he has been a great friend and sat silently with Job in ashes and mourning. He did not speak until Job spoke out of pain, loss and confusion. Eliphaz is not trying to silence Job or minimize his suffering; he is trying to help him see the big picture, to contextualize his pain.
2. And he is trying to defend God. While they may have only scraps of solid information about God, they are doing their best to be faithful to the Creator (think of Romans 1 where Paul says what can be known about God can be seen in the universe/creation. That was all they had).
3. It is a natural thing to leap to God's defense. Sometimes, it is also the correct move (WV radio host saying religion caused almost all wars, Dawkins' attacks, etc.), but we must always beware that, when we speak to defend God, we are not to cross a line and say more than we know. Eve made that mistake. (**Genesis 3:1-3**)
4. One of the problems in trying to speak for God and bring comfort to a sufferer is that one will actually insult the sufferer and increase their suffering. Eliphaz seems like a good person but some of the things he says are hurtful. In chapter 4:3-5, he reminds Job that he, Job, has helped many who were suffering. He goes on to suggest that Job apply the same words he has used to comfort others to comfort himself.
5. He then, like Eve, says too much. **4:7-9**. Is this true? Is it true that innocent people are never wiped out and the upright are not destroyed? Is it also true that those who are evil only reap trouble? Well...no. Eliphaz has a worldview and a theology that comforts him but destroys anyone he wants to comfort. The life and horrific death of Jesus would put paid to this sort of nonsense...one would think. But it is still being placed out there.
6. Jesus warned his followers that they would be put out of synagogues and even suffer death because they followed him – NOT because they were evil, but because they were good. One book about the

Book of Job is entitled “When All Hell Breaks Loose: you might be doing something right.” (Steven Lawson, 1993, out of print)
Ecclesiastes has just told us in detail that we cannot use blessings and curses or even life or death as a sign of God’s favor or disfavor. Life happens to all of us.

7. Eliphaz in 4:12-5:7 reveals that he has had a heavenly messenger – or at least something from the supernatural world has come to give him a message. That message is that all of us are below God and have no right to speak against Him or question here. **4:16-19.**
8. Eliphaz continues in chapter 5 to say that Job’s suffering didn’t just come out of nowhere; there must be a reason. Of course, we know the background and the conversation that took place in heaven, but Eliphaz isn’t talking about that: he believes Job can’t be as innocent as he claims or these things wouldn’t be happening. **5:6,7.**
9. Eliphaz then goes on to tell Job that everything will be all right. Just have faith! It’s all good! (Calvinists, John Piper, the slaughter of the innocents. The whole “this is all part of God’s wondrous plan” concept). It fascinates me that, more than 3000yrs after this book was written, we still use the same wording and ideas that Eliphaz uses here. **5:17-27.**
10. Job responds by saying that Eliphaz has grossly underestimated Job’s pain – which I think we have to say is correct. Don’t dump too much on Eliphaz here as the fact is that none of us understands the pain of another. Each of us arrives pre-bruised and scarred. **6:2-4,11.**
11. He tells Eliphaz that friends should be reliable sources of comfort, not intermittent streams that dry up just when he needs them most. In chapter 6, he challenges Eliphaz and his other friends to show him what sin he has committed that would bring this pain upon him. **6:24,28-30**
12. Job then changes his focus and speaks out to God in chapter 7. After saying that he can no longer find sleep and that the night finds him staring and wishing for death, he asks God, if God is the source of his trouble, why Job is worth His time. **7:17-21.**

13. Wow. Just...wow. We can race ahead, turn the pages of our book quickly, and speak of how Jesus showed us so much, but the problem of pain and suffering continue and there are many in our neighborhoods who do not believe in God, or a personal God who cares for them, because their life has been full of pain.
14. Read chapters 8-10 for next week. For now, I leave you with an admonition from Paul. **Romans 12:9-21**