

The Book of Job, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 10: The Third Round and Job's Reply

Job 22:1–24:25

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson carries two doctrinal weights that must be held together carefully. The first is the danger of false accusation born from a rigid framework. Eliphaz is not a villain in the ordinary sense; he is a devout man who believes that suffering always proves sin, and because he cannot bend his theology, he bends the truth instead. Watch how easily sincerity curdles into slander when a system matters more than a person. Your students need to see that defending a wrong idea about God can lead good people to do real damage to the hurting. We must resist the temptation, alive in every age, to read guilt into a brother's grief simply because his pain unsettles our tidy categories.

The second and heavier weight is the walk of faith when God seems hidden. Job models something we must not rush past. He does not deny his confusion (he cannot find God in any direction), yet he does not abandon his loyalty (he keeps God's way and treasures His words above food). This is mature faith: honest about the silence, faithful in the silence. Be careful here. Do not let the class slip into the false comfort that suffering proves sin or that the righteous always see swift justice. Job's chapter 24 forbids it. Teach instead that God's justice is certain even when delayed, that He is present even when unfelt, and that the fire is a furnace, not a grave.

Aim, then, to form students who can sit with a suffering friend without accusing, and who can endure their own dark seasons without letting go of obedience. Point them gently to Christ, who endured the deepest hiddenness (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me) and came forth as the firstborn from the dead. The gold Job hoped for is fully revealed in the One who was tried and proven, and who now calls us to trust the Refiner even when we cannot see His hands.

Question 1

Student Question:

What does Eliphaz's move from general accusation to inventing specific sins (22:5–9) reveal about how a wrong framework can corrupt even a sincere, religious person?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Eliphaz opens his third speech (22:1–4) with a cold logic: can a man be profitable to God? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous? His point is that God gains nothing from Job, so God has no reason to reprove him except for sin. The reasoning sounds humble, even

worshipful, but it is being used as a battering ram. From this premise Eliphaz concludes that Job's troubles must be punishment, and so the supposed sins must be great.

Then comes the dreadful turn in 22:5–9. Is not your wickedness great? There is no end to your iniquities. And now Eliphaz invents the specifics: Job stripped the poor of their clothing, sent widows away empty, broke the arms of the fatherless, withheld water from the weary. We, the readers, know from chapter 1 that Job was blameless and upright. These charges are pure fabrication. Eliphaz has no facts, only a framework, and when reality will not confirm the framework, he supplies the missing data himself.

This is the heart of the doctrinal lesson here. A wrong framework about God does not stay quietly in the head; it reaches out and reshapes how we treat people. Eliphaz believes suffering must equal sin. Job's suffering is undeniable. Therefore, Job must be a great sinner, and the imagination fills in the rest. Sincerity is no protection against this. A devout heart wedded to a false premise can slander the innocent and call it defending God.

Notice too that the church of Christ rightly insists on personal accountability (Ezekiel 18:20; guilt comes when we ourselves sin), and that very truth is what Eliphaz weaponizes wrongly. The principle that sin brings consequences is true. What is false is the inference that all suffering must therefore trace back to the sufferer's sin. Job's three friends are case studies in a true principle pressed into a false and cruel conclusion.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A wrong framework about God can lead a sincere, religious person to slander the innocent.
- Eliphaz argues from a humble-sounding premise (God gains nothing from us) to a cruel conclusion.
- Inventing specifics (22:5–9) shows how accusation fills in evidence it does not have.
- Personal accountability is true (Ezekiel 18:20); the false step is assuming all suffering proves the sufferer's sin.
- Defending a wrong idea about God can do real harm to real people.

Discussion Prompts

- Read 22:5–9 aloud. Why is it so jarring once we remember chapter 1?
- How does a true principle (sin has consequences) get twisted into a false one here?
- Where have we seen religious people invent guilt to protect a system?

Question 2

Student Question:

Eliphaz charged Job with sins Job never committed. When have you been tempted to read the worst into someone's hardship, and what did that say about your own heart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the mirror on us. It is easy to condemn Eliphaz from a safe distance, but the same machinery runs in our own hearts. When someone's marriage falls apart, when illness strikes, when a family member's life unravels, there is a quiet, almost reflexive impulse to ask what they did to deserve it. That question can be a way of reassuring ourselves that we are safe, that such things only happen to people who somehow earned them.

Reading the worst into someone's hardship is rarely about them; it is about us. If their suffering is their own fault, then our world stays orderly and our sense of control survives. But that comfort is purchased at the cost of compassion, and it makes us, like Eliphaz, accusers rather than helpers. The disciples did the same in John 9, asking who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind.

Press the class to be specific and honest. The goal is not to wallow in guilt but to notice the pattern so it can be repented of. When we feel that pull to assume the worst about a suffering person, it is an invitation to examine our own fear and self-protection, and to choose mercy instead.

The walk of faith calls us to weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15), not to audit them. A heart shaped by Christ runs toward the hurting with help, not toward conclusions about their guilt.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Assuming the worst about a sufferer is often self-protection in disguise.
- If their pain is deserved, our sense of a controllable world survives.
- The disciples' question in John 9 shows this instinct is ancient and common.
- Compassion (Romans 12:15) is the opposite reflex God wants to form in us.
- Naming the pattern honestly is the first step to repenting of it.

Discussion Prompts

- When have you caught yourself asking what someone did to deserve it?
- What fear of your own might be hiding behind that question?
- What would it look like to weep with someone instead of auditing them?

Question 3

Student Question:

In 22:21–30 Eliphaz preaches a genuinely beautiful call to acquaint yourself with God and be at peace. Why is even true-sounding counsel harmful when it is built on a false diagnosis?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

In 22:21–30 Eliphaz delivers some of the most beautiful words in the book. Acquaint now yourself with him, and be at peace. Receive instruction from his mouth, and lay up his words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you shall be built up. Taken alone, these are lovely, true invitations to draw near to God. Many of them could be lifted straight into a sound sermon.

And that is exactly the problem. The counsel is true-sounding, but it is built on a false diagnosis. Eliphaz is telling Job to return to God as though Job had departed from God, to repent as though Job were guilty of secret crimes. He is prescribing the right medicine for the wrong disease. Good counsel aimed at a sin that does not exist is not good counsel at all; it is a heavier burden laid on an already crushed man.

This teaches us something vital about how we help the hurting. It is not enough to say true things; we must say true things that fit the actual situation. Telling a grieving widow that her loss is God's discipline, or telling a faithful sufferer to repent of hidden sin, can wound deeply even when the words quoted are scriptural. The medicine and the diagnosis must match.

Job himself never denied that God is good or that drawing near to Him is right. His complaint was that the friends kept treating his trial as proof of guilt. Truth misapplied becomes a tool of harm, which is why wisdom requires not only correct doctrine but discernment about when and to whom it applies (Proverbs 25:11, a word fitly spoken).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Eliphaz's call to draw near to God (22:21–30) is true in itself.
- It is harmful because it is built on a false diagnosis of secret sin.
- Right medicine for the wrong disease still wounds the patient.
- Helping the hurting requires truth that fits the actual situation.
- Wisdom is a word fitly spoken (Proverbs 25:11), not just a true word spoken.

Discussion Prompts

- Read 22:21–30. Which lines would preach well in another setting?
- Why does true counsel become harmful when the diagnosis is wrong?
- How can we make sure our comfort fits the person's real situation?

Question 4

Student Question:

Job longed to find God and lay his case before Him (23:3–5). When you are in pain, is your instinct to run toward God with your questions or to drift away from Him in silence?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Job's response in 23:3–5 is one of the most moving cries in Scripture. Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat. I would order my cause before him, and fill

my mouth with arguments. Notice the direction of his longing. In all his pain, Job is not running from God; he is desperate to find Him, to stand before His throne and be heard.

This is the instinct God wants to nurture in us. When trouble comes, two paths open before us. One leads toward God with all our confusion and complaint, like Job. The other leads away, into silence, distance, and a slow cooling of the heart. Job teaches that faith is not the absence of hard questions; faith is bringing those questions to God rather than using them as an excuse to leave Him.

Ask the class to be honest about their own instinct. Many of us, when wounded, go quiet toward God. We stop praying, stop opening the word, because we are angry or numb or afraid He is not listening. Job shows a better way: he keeps knocking on the door even when no one seems to answer, because he would rather wrestle with God than live without Him.

This longing finds its fulfillment in Christ, through whom we have boldness and access with confidence (Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 4:16). The very thing Job ached for, an audience with God, has been opened to us at the throne of grace. Do not waste that open door in your hour of need.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Job's longing (23:3-5) is to find God, not to flee Him.
- Trouble opens two paths: toward God or away into silence.
- Faith brings hard questions to God instead of leaving over them.
- Going quiet toward God in pain is a common but dangerous drift.
- Christ has opened the access Job ached for (Hebrews 4:16).

Discussion Prompts

- Which is your instinct in pain, toward God or away from Him?
- What practically keeps you praying when God feels silent?
- How does Hebrews 4:16 change Job's longing for us today?

Question 5

Student Question:

What does Job mean when he says, when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold (23:10), and what does this teach us about the purpose God can work through suffering?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Job 23:10 is the radiant center of this lesson: but he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. In the middle of confusion and accusation, Job makes a stunning declaration of faith. Even though he cannot find God, he is certain that God can find him, that God knows his way precisely, and that the trial is not destruction but refining.

The image is the goldsmith's furnace. Ore is heated until the dross rises and is skimmed away, leaving pure, gleaming gold. Job is saying that his suffering, dreadful as it is, is functioning like that fire. It is not random cruelty and it is not punishment for hidden crime; it is a process from which he will emerge purer than he went in. He cannot see the Refiner's face, but he trusts the Refiner's purpose.

Be careful to teach this rightly. Job is not saying suffering proves sin, nor that every trial is divine discipline for wrongdoing. He is testifying that God can use the fire to purify and prove genuine faith. The same principle shines in 1 Peter 1:6-7, where trials test faith more precious than gold, that it may be found to praise and glory at the revealing of Jesus Christ.

This is the difference between a furnace and a grave. To the eye, fire only destroys. To faith, fire in God's hand purifies. Job cannot yet see the gold, but he trusts that God sees it already, and that conviction holds him steady when everything else has been stripped away.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- He knows the way that I take: God's full knowledge of Job even when Job cannot find God.
- The furnace image means refining, not random cruelty or proof of sin.
- Suffering can purify and prove genuine faith (1 Peter 1:6-7).
- Faith trusts the Refiner's purpose without seeing the Refiner's face.
- Fire is a furnace, not a grave, in the hand of God.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between seeing fire as a furnace and as a grave?
- How does it steady you that God knows the way you take?
- Where might God be skimming dross from your faith right now?

Question 6

Student Question:

Job confessed that he had treasured God's words more than his necessary food (23:12). Honestly, where does God's word rank against your daily appetites and comforts?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Job 23:12 gives a quiet but searching test of the heart: I have not gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. Job ranks God's word above the very bread that keeps him alive. In the depths of loss, with everything gone, he still treasures what God has said more than what his body craves.

This question presses that comparison into our own lives. Necessary food stands for our daily appetites and comforts, the things we feel we cannot do without. Job says God's words outrank even those. Most of us would not dare claim the same. We can go days without the word and

feel no hunger, while we would never skip our meals or our screens or our small comforts without noticing.

The point is not to shame anyone but to reveal where real treasure lies. Jesus said man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). The heart that has tasted that the Lord is good begins to crave His word the way a hungry body craves food.

Encourage the class toward honest self-examination. If God's word feels optional, the cure is not guilt but appetite, returning to the table until we taste again. A faith that survives the furnace, like Job's, is fed daily on the words of God's mouth.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Job esteemed God's words above his necessary food (23:12).
- Necessary food stands for our daily appetites and comforts.
- Most of us feel hunger for meals and comforts more than for the word.
- Man lives by every word of God (Matthew 4:4), not bread alone.
- The cure for spiritual appetite is returning to the table, not mere guilt.

Discussion Prompts

- Be honest: where does God's word rank against your daily comforts?
- When did you last hunger for Scripture the way you hunger for food?
- What one habit would help you feed daily on God's word?

Question 7

Student Question:

In 23:8–9 Job says he goes forward, backward, left, and right, and cannot perceive God. What does this passage teach about the experience of God seeming hidden even to a faithful believer?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Job 23:8–9 puts the experience of divine hiddenness into unforgettable words. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him. On the left hand, where he does work, but I cannot behold him; he hides himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. Job searches every direction, and God is nowhere to be found by his senses.

This is crucial doctrine, and it must be taught plainly: even a faithful believer can experience God as hidden. Job is the blameless man of chapter 1, and yet here he cannot perceive God anywhere. The hiddenness of God is not always a sign of sin or of God's absence. Sometimes the most faithful walk passes through seasons where God seems to have withdrawn, where prayers feel unanswered and heaven feels like brass.

We must not promise the class that faithful people always feel God's nearness. That is not true to Scripture and it sets up the wounded for despair when the felt presence fades. The psalmists cry out, how long will you hide your face from me (Psalm 13:1). Even our Lord cried, why have you forsaken me. Hiddenness is part of the road, not proof that we have left it.

What makes Job's faith remarkable is the very next breath: but he knows the way that I take (23:10). Job cannot perceive God, yet he is sure God perceives him. The believer's anchor is not our awareness of God but God's unbroken awareness of us. He is there in the dark, whether or not we can feel His hand.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Even a faithful believer can experience God as hidden (23:8-9).
- Hiddenness is not automatic proof of sin or of God's absence.
- Scripture is honest about the felt withdrawal of God (Psalm 13:1).
- We must not promise that the faithful always feel God's nearness.
- The anchor is God's awareness of us, not our awareness of Him (23:10).

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever searched every direction and not perceived God?
- Why is it dangerous to teach that the faithful always feel God near?
- How does 23:10 hold you when 23:8-9 is your experience?

Question 8

Student Question:

Job refused to let go of God's commands even when he could not feel God's presence (23:11-12). What is one command you are tempted to loosen your grip on when God feels far away?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

In 23:11-12 Job describes how he held on when God felt absent: my foot has held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Notice the link. Job cannot feel God, but he keeps God's commands. He does not let his obedience depend on his feelings. When the presence faded, the obedience did not.

This is one of the great practical lessons of the chapter. There is a powerful temptation, when God seems far away, to loosen our grip on His commands. If He is not listening, we reason, what does it matter how I live? But Job clings tighter precisely when he feels least, walking the old path by memory and conviction when the light has gone out.

Ask the class to get specific. Which command is the first to slip when God feels distant? For some it is prayer, for others purity, for others gathering with the saints, for others honesty or

generosity or guarding the tongue. The thing we let go of first reveals where our obedience was secretly leaning on feeling rather than on faith.

Obedience in the dark is among the purest forms of faith. Anyone can follow when the way is bright and the rewards are visible. To keep God's way when you cannot perceive Him, as Job did, is to say with your feet what your lips cannot yet feel: I trust You still. This is the obedience of faith (Romans 1:5) that Christ Himself models in Gethsemane, not my will but yours.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Job kept God's commands even when he could not feel God (23:11-12).
- Obedience that depends on feeling collapses when feeling fades.
- The first command we drop reveals where faith leaned on emotion.
- Obedience in the dark is among the purest expressions of faith.
- Christ models obedience in the dark in Gethsemane (Romans 1:5).

Discussion Prompts

- Which command slips first for you when God feels distant?
- What does that reveal about where your obedience was leaning?
- How can you obey in the dark this week, by faith not feeling?

Question 9

Student Question:

In chapter 24 Job stares straight at the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the poor and asks why God seems to delay justice. How do we hold on to faith in God's justice and presence when judgment looks delayed and God seems hidden?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 24 is the heaviest ground in this lesson. Job stops defending himself and stares straight at the moral disorder of the world. Why are times not kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know Him never see his days? He then catalogs the crimes that go unpunished: men remove landmarks, drive away the flocks of the poor, snatch the fatherless from the breast, send the needy naked into the cold. And the heavens do not answer.

Job refuses to pretend the world looks just. The wicked prosper; the poor are crushed; and God, for now, seems silent. This is the most dangerous moment for faith, the apparent delay of justice. If God is good and powerful, why does He let the boundary stones get moved and the widows get robbed while the robbers grow fat? Job does not have the full answer, and the text does not hand him one. Yet he does not curse God or conclude that God does not see.

Here is the doctrine the class must carry home. God's justice is certain even when it is delayed. The wicked who seem to escape are, as Job himself says later in the chapter, exalted for a little

while, but gone and brought low, cut off like the tops of the ears of grain. Delay is not denial. The same truth runs through Psalm 73, where Asaph nearly stumbles over the prosperity of the wicked until he goes into the sanctuary and sees their end.

We hold faith in two hands here. In one, honesty: we will not pretend the world is tidy or that the righteous never suffer while the wicked thrive. In the other, trust: vengeance belongs to God, who will repay (Romans 12:19), and the Judge of all the earth will do right (Genesis 18:25). To trust God's justice and presence when He seems hidden and judgment seems delayed is the very marrow of mature faith.

And this is where the gospel quietly shines. The cross is the place where delayed justice and certain justice meet: where evil seemed to triumph utterly, God was at work to save, and the One who seemed forsaken came forth as gold on the third day. The believer who waits in the dark waits with a Lord who has walked through it ahead of us and will surely set all things right.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Job honestly names the prosperity of the wicked and suffering of the poor (24:1–12).
- The apparent delay of justice is the hardest test for faith.
- Job does not have the full answer and the text does not hand him one.
- God's justice is certain even when delayed; delay is not denial (24:24).
- Psalm 73 and Romans 12:19: the end of the wicked and vengeance belong to God.
- We hold honesty and trust together, refusing both pretense and despair.
- The cross is where delayed and certain justice meet in Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- Where does the prosperity of the wicked most shake your faith?
- What is the difference between delay and denial of justice?
- How does the cross help you trust God's justice in the dark?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across this whole passage, Job longing for God, trusting the fire, clinging to the word, and wrestling with delayed justice, name one specific way the Lord Jesus is forming you to walk by faith when you cannot see Him.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the whole passage. Across these chapters Job models the walk of faith when God cannot be seen: he longs to find God (23:3), he trusts the fire to refine him (23:10), he clings to the word and the commands (23:11–12), and he wrestles honestly with delayed justice without letting go (24). Every thread is the same: faith that keeps walking when sight has failed.

Invite the class to name one specific way the Lord Jesus is forming this kind of faith in them. Not a vague resolution, but a concrete shaping: perhaps He is teaching you to bring your questions to Him instead of going silent, or to obey one command in the dark, or to wait on His justice instead of taking it into your own hands, or to treasure His word above your comforts.

Point them to Jesus as both the model and the means. He endured the deepest hiddenness, crying my God, my God, why have you forsaken me, and yet committed Himself into the Father's hands. He was tried and came forth as gold, the firstborn from the dead. The faith Job reached for is fully embodied in Christ, and by His Spirit that same faith is being formed in us.

Close by reminding the class that walking by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7) is not a one-time decision but a daily discipline. The Lord is patiently making us into people who trust Him in the furnace, knowing that the One who knows the way we take will surely bring us forth as gold.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The passage models faith that walks when God cannot be seen.
- Threads: longing for God, trusting the fire, clinging to the word, waiting on justice.
- Jesus is both the model and the means of this faith.
- He endured hiddenness and came forth as gold, the firstborn from the dead.
- Walking by faith, not sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), is a daily discipline.

Discussion Prompts

- Name one concrete way Jesus is forming faith in you right now.
- How does Christ's own forsakenness encourage you in the dark?
- What daily step will you take to walk by faith and not by sight?