

The Book of Job, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 7: The Second Round: Eliphaz and Job

Job 15:1–17:16

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson carries two weights, and a teacher must hold both. The first is doctrinal: Eliphaz embodies a false but tempting theology, the belief that suffering is always the receipt for sin, that the size of a person's grief measures the size of their hidden guilt. The book of Job exists in large part to demolish that lie. Your students may carry it quietly, blaming themselves for hardships God never sent as punishment, or blaming others and withholding compassion as a result. Press the truth that God's justice is real but His ways are higher than our quick verdicts (Isaiah 55:8–9), and that the fear of the Lord includes the humility to say, I do not know why this is happening to you. Then lift their eyes to the brightest thread in the passage, Job's confidence in a heavenly witness, and show how that longing for an advocate is answered in full by Jesus Christ, who ever lives to intercede.

The second weight is spiritual formation. These chapters are a master class in how not to comfort, and every student is, sooner or later, both a sufferer and a would-be comforter. Help them feel the sting of being a miserable comforter so they will repent of it, and help them hear Job's gentler vision, lips that bring relief, a mouth that strengthens. The aim is not merely to understand bad theology but to become a different kind of presence in someone's worst week. As you teach, keep returning to the heart: are we coming to win arguments or to bear burdens? Are we quick to diagnose or slow to judge? Let the Spirit use Job's pain to soften your students into people who sit in the ashes with the hurting and point them, gently, to the One who sees.

Question 1

Student Question:

In Job 15, Eliphaz accuses Job of pride, empty words, and casting off the fear of God (15:1–13). What does Eliphaz get wrong about the connection between suffering and sin, and what does this reveal about the danger of confidently diagnosing another person's pain?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The second cycle of speeches opens with Eliphaz, and the change in tone is unmistakable. In the first round he had been almost courteous, appealing to a vision in the night and to Job's past kindness. Now in chapter fifteen he is blunt and biting. He accuses Job of filling his belly with the east wind, of speaking unprofitable words, of casting off the fear of God and hindering devotion before Him (15:2–4). The polite consoler has become a prosecutor.

The root error is one we must name plainly: Eliphaz assumes that suffering this severe can only mean sin this serious. He reasons backward from Job's losses to a hidden guilt that must, in his mind, explain them. He even insinuates that no one is clean before God, so surely Job is guilty of something deserving all this (15:14-16). It sounds humble, even biblical, but it is being used as a weapon to bludgeon a man God Himself called blameless and upright (1:8).

We, the readers, hold information Eliphaz does not. We watched the heavenly scenes in chapters one and two. We know Job's suffering is not punishment for sin but a test permitted by God for purposes Job cannot see. That gap between what the friends assume and what the reader knows is the engine of the whole book. It exposes the danger of confident misdiagnosis, of looking at another person's pain and announcing its cause as though we sat in God's council.

The doctrinal correction is this: God's justice is real, but His providence is not a simple vending machine where sin goes in and suffering comes out in matching measure. Jesus shattered this assumption directly when His disciples asked who sinned to cause a man's blindness, and He answered, neither this man nor his parents (John 9:1-3). Suffering has many sources, and the fear of the Lord includes the humility to confess that we often do not know which one is at work. To diagnose another's pain with Eliphaz's confidence is to play God, and to wound the very person we claim to help.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Suffering is not always the consequence of personal sin; the friends' core assumption is false (John 9:1-3, Luke 13:1-5).
- Guilt comes when we ourselves sin, not as an automatic verdict read off the size of someone's hardship.
- The fear of the Lord includes humility about what we cannot know (Deuteronomy 29:29).
- Confident misdiagnosis of suffering can wound the hurting and slander the innocent.
- We, like the reader of Job, must beware speaking as though we sat in God's counsel.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do we still secretly believe that big trouble equals big hidden sin?
- How did Jesus correct this very assumption in John 9?
- What does humility before God's hidden purposes look like in practice?

Question 2

Student Question:

Eliphaz leans hard on the wisdom of the aged and the traditions handed down (15:7-10, 17-19). When have you trusted a familiar explanation about why someone was suffering, only to realize later you did not actually know their heart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Eliphaz reaches for authority by appealing to age and inherited tradition. He sneers at Job, asking if he was the first man ever born, and claims the gray-headed and the aged are on his side, men older than Job's father (15:7-10). He frames his accusations as the settled wisdom of the ancients, the consolations of God handed down through generations (15:11, 17-19).

There is a half-truth here worth naming. Tradition and the counsel of older, godly people genuinely matter; Scripture honors the wisdom of age (Proverbs 16:31, Job 12:12). The error is not in valuing inherited wisdom but in using it as a club, in assuming that a familiar explanation must be the right one for this particular person in this particular pain.

This is a deeply personal trap. Most of us carry stock explanations for why people suffer, sayings we absorbed long ago, and we apply them quickly because they feel safe and proven. But a familiar saying is not the same as actually knowing a person's heart. Eliphaz quotes tradition at Job while remaining utterly ignorant of what is really happening in Job's life and before God's throne.

The self-examining question presses students to remember a time they reached for a tidy, inherited answer about someone's hardship, only to discover later that they did not understand the situation at all. The goal is not to discard wisdom but to hold it humbly, slow to apply our pet explanations to a soul we have not truly listened to.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The counsel of the aged is valuable but is not automatically correct in every case (Job 12:12).
- Inherited sayings can become weapons when applied without listening.
- Knowing a maxim is not the same as knowing a person's heart.
- Quick explanations protect us from the harder work of presence and compassion.

Discussion Prompts

- What stock sayings about suffering did you grow up hearing?
- When did a familiar explanation turn out to be wrong about a real person?
- How can we honor wisdom without weaponizing it?

Question 3

Student Question:

Job calls his three friends "miserable comforters" (16:2). According to Job 16:2-5, what does the text teach about the difference between speaking at a sufferer and bearing his burden with him?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Job's reply contains one of the most piercing phrases in all of Scripture for the failure of comfort: "miserable comforters are you all" (16:2). The Hebrew carries the sense of comforters

of trouble, helpers who add to misery rather than lift it. Job has had enough of their windy words, their endless speeches that answer their own theology while ignoring his actual agony.

Then Job does something remarkable. He describes what real comfort would have looked like by imagining the roles reversed (16:4–5). If they were the ones suffering, he says, he could heap up words against them and shake his head in mockery, but he would not. Instead, he says, I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the comfort of my lips would relieve your grief. In a single sentence Job sketches the difference between speaking at a sufferer and standing with one.

The contrast is the heart of this question. The friends came to defend a system; Job longs for someone to bear his burden. They are full of explanation; he needs presence. They diagnose; he needs a hand on the shoulder and lips that bring relief rather than verdicts. This is timeless instruction in the ministry of comfort, the kind every church member is called to (Romans 12:15, weep with those who weep).

Notice that Job, even shattered, knows the right way better than his upright friends do. Pain has taught him something their theology never did: that the hurting do not first need our answers, they need our nearness. The lesson for us is sobering. We can be doctrinally tidy and still be miserable comforters if we come to win rather than to bear.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- A miserable comforter adds to grief by speaking at the sufferer instead of bearing with him.
- True comfort strengthens and relieves; it does not lecture or accuse (16:5).
- Presence often matters more than explanation to the hurting (Romans 12:15).
- Right doctrine wrongly delivered can still wound deeply.
- Job, in his pain, models the comfort his friends withheld.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between speaking at someone and bearing with them?
- Recall a time someone simply sat with you in pain; what did it do?
- How might we come to bear burdens rather than win arguments?

Question 4

Student Question:

Job says that if your places were swapped, he would strengthen you with his mouth and his lips would bring relief (16:5). What is one specific situation right now where you could choose to comfort rather than correct?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is a self-application question, and it flows straight out of Job's words in 16:5: "I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the comfort of my lips would relieve your grief." Job

describes the ministry he wishes he had received, and in describing it he hands us a pattern to imitate.

The aim is to move from theory to a concrete choice. Most of us know a person right now who is struggling, and most of us, if we are honest, feel a pull to correct, to fix, to offer the explanation that will tidy their mess. The text invites a different impulse: to strengthen, to relieve, to comfort first.

Help students name a specific situation, not a general intention. A grieving coworker. A wayward family member. A friend whose marriage is unraveling. The question asks them to choose, in that named relationship, to comfort rather than correct, at least as the first word, trusting that there is a time for truth but that presence usually must come first.

This does not mean truth never gets spoken. It means we earn the right to speak it by first proving we are safe, that we have come to bear the burden and not to add to it. Comfort that has been genuinely given opens the door for truth that can actually be heard.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Comfort and correction both have their place, but presence usually must come first.
- Burden-bearing is a command, not an optional kindness (Galatians 6:2).
- Generic good intentions rarely change how we treat the hurting; specific choices do.
- We earn the right to speak truth by first proving safe.

Discussion Prompts

- Who in your life is hurting right now?
- What would it look like this week to comfort rather than correct them?
- How can comfort open the door for truth later?

Question 5

Student Question:

Throughout chapter sixteen Job describes God's hand as having worn him out, gnashed at him, and set him up as a target (16:7–14). What does it tell us about honest faith that Job pours out such raw words and still does not curse God or walk away?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter sixteen contains some of Job's most violent imagery about his suffering, and astonishingly he aims it at God. He says God has worn him out, has gnashed at him with His teeth, has seized him by the neck and dashed him to pieces, and has set him up as a target for His arrows (16:7–14). These are not gentle words. Job feels assaulted by the very God he has served.

We must let students sit with how raw this is. Job is not offering polite, sanitized prayer. He is pouring out anguish, accusing God of treating him as an enemy. And yet, this is the man Scripture twice calls blameless. His honesty is not sin; it is the cry of a real faith under unbearable pressure.

Here is the doctrinal treasure: honest faith can carry hard words to God without breaking faith. Job complains bitterly, but notice where he aims his complaint. He does not turn to idols, he does not curse God and die as his wife suggested, he does not walk away. He brings his agony to God, which is itself an act of trust. The lament Psalms do exactly the same thing, hurling raw grief at heaven while still holding on (Psalm 13, Psalm 88).

This frees suffering believers from the false piety that says we must only ever feel grateful and calm before God. The God who inspired the book of Job and the Psalms can handle our honest anguish. What ruins faith is not honest lament but turning away. Job, even at his most bitter, keeps facing God, and that facing is the faith that endures.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Honest lament is not the same as rebellion; Job complains yet does not curse God (2:9–10).
- Faith can carry raw, even angry, words to God and remain faith (Psalm 13, 88).
- The danger is not honest grief but turning away from God altogether.
- False piety that forbids lament can drive sufferers into isolation.
- Job aims his anguish at God, which is itself an act of trust.

Discussion Prompts

- Does it surprise you that a blameless man speaks this way to God?
- What is the difference between honest lament and turning away?
- Where do you need permission to be honest with God in your pain?

Question 6

Student Question:

Job admits he is exhausted, sleepless, and surrounded by mockers (16:6–10, 17:1–2). Where in your own weariness are you tempted to believe that no one, not even God, truly understands what you are carrying?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Job's exhaustion is total. He says he is worn out, that God has made desolate all his company, that mockers surround him and his eye grows dim from grief (16:6–10, 17:1–2, 7). His spirit is broken, his days are extinct, and the grave is ready for him (17:1). This is the bone-deep weariness that long suffering produces, the kind that makes a person feel utterly alone.

This question is a self-application that meets students in their own fatigue. Everyone who lives long enough knows what it is to be tired in a way sleep cannot fix, to feel that no one, perhaps not even God, fully grasps the weight they carry. Job names that feeling without flinching.

The pastoral move is to let Job's words give language to weariness students may have hidden. Naming the loneliness of suffering is the first step toward bringing it to God rather than burying it. Job models a man who refuses to pretend he is fine, and that refusal keeps him in honest relationship with God instead of hollow performance.

And there is quiet hope underneath the question. We know what Job does not yet fully see, that God has never stopped watching him, that the heavenly scenes prove God's intimate attention to His servant. The very loneliness Job feels is not the truth of his situation; God is nearer than he knows. The same is true for the weary believer today (Psalm 34:18, the Lord is near to the brokenhearted).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Long suffering produces a loneliness that feels like even God does not understand.
- Naming weariness honestly is healthier than hiding it behind performance.
- The felt absence of God is not proof of His real absence (Psalm 34:18).
- God's attention to His servant continues even when the servant cannot sense it.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you carrying a weariness that sleep cannot fix?
- When have you felt that no one, not even God, understood?
- What truth about God's nearness speaks to that loneliness?

Question 7

Student Question:

In Job 16:19–21 Job declares, “my witness is in heaven,” and longs for one to plead his case with God as a man pleads for his neighbor. What does this confidence reveal about Job's view of God even in the middle of his complaint?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

In the midst of his complaint, Job suddenly looks up. “Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and he that vouches for me is on high” (16:19). While his three friends accuse him on earth, Job appeals to a higher court. He is confident that someone in heaven knows the truth about him, even if every human voice has turned against him.

This is a stunning flash of faith. Job has just finished describing God as the one who has wounded him, and yet in the next breath he reaches toward God, or toward one with God, as his witness and advocate. He longs for one who would plead the case of a man with God, as a

man pleads for his neighbor (16:21). He is reaching for a mediator, someone to stand between him and God on his behalf.

What this reveals about Job's view of God is profound. Even at his most accused and abandoned, Job believes that ultimate reality is not the verdict of his friends but the knowledge of heaven. He trusts that God, or one in God's presence, sees rightly. His confidence is not in his own performance but in being known truly by One on high.

This is the upward look that holds the whole lesson together. When the people around us misjudge us, we, like Job, have somewhere higher to turn. Job reached for a witness in heaven by faith and could not yet see His face. We know His name. The confidence Job groped toward is fully ours in Christ.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Job appeals past human verdicts to a witness and advocate in heaven (16:19).
- Even while wounded, Job trusts that God sees the truth about him.
- Job longs for a mediator to plead his case before God (16:21).
- Faith looks up when earthly voices turn against us.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that Job's witness is in heaven, not on earth?
- How can being known by God free us from others' false verdicts?
- Where do you need to appeal to a higher court than human opinion?

Question 8

Student Question:

Job's friends keep promising that if he repents, light will return, yet Job sees only the grave ahead of him (17:11-16). When has your hope felt as thin as Job's, and what kept you from letting go of God entirely?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter seventeen is heavy with despair. Job's friends keep dangling the promise that if he repents, light will dawn and morning will return. But Job looks ahead and sees only the grave. He says the grave is his house, that he has made his bed in darkness, and asks where then is his hope (17:13-15). His days are past, his plans are broken off, and he calls corruption his father and the worm his mother and sister (17:14).

This is hope worn down to a thread. Job is not denying God, but he can no longer see a way through. The future the friends promise feels like cruelty to a man who sees no future at all but death. This is the experience of many faithful people in deep trial: not loss of belief, but loss of any visible reason to hope.

The self-application invites students to remember their own thin-hope seasons, times when, like Job, they could not see light ahead and clung to God almost by reflex more than by feeling. The question asks what kept them from letting go entirely, and it is a question worth sitting with, because the answer is usually grace.

Here is the quiet wonder: even in chapter seventeen, Job has not let go. The same man who calls the grave his house also said, just verses earlier, that his witness is in heaven. Hope and despair coexist in him, and that is real faith in a real trial. The believer does not always feel hope, but the One who holds them does not let go even when their grip is weak (Psalm 73:23, you hold my right hand).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith can endure even when visible hope wears down to almost nothing.
- The friends' easy promises feel cruel to a man who sees only the grave.
- Loss of felt hope is not the same as loss of faith.
- God holds the believer even when the believer's grip is weak (Psalm 73:23).

Discussion Prompts

- When has your hope felt as thin as Job's in chapter seventeen?
- What kept you from letting go of God in that season?
- How does it help to know God holds you when you cannot hold on?

Question 9

Student Question:

Job 16:19–21 reaches upward to a heavenly witness, an advocate, one who vouches for him on high, while God's full knowledge of the righteous sufferer runs underneath the whole passage. What does this longing for an advocate teach us about how God sees the suffering of those who fear Him, and how does this hope find its fullness in Christ our Advocate (1 John 2:1, Hebrews 7:25)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and it gathers up the brightest thread in the passage: Job's appeal to a heavenly witness and advocate. In 16:19–21 Job declares, my witness is in heaven, he that vouches for me is on high, and he longs for one to maintain the right of a man with God, as a man pleads for his neighbor. Underneath this cry runs a truth the reader already knows from chapters one and two: God knows the righteous sufferer intimately and completely.

We must handle Job's words with care, not forcing onto them more than Job himself understood. Job is not laying out the doctrine of Christ. He is groping, by faith, toward

something his heart knows must be true: that there is One in heaven who sees rightly, who knows his innocence, who would stand between him and God on his behalf. This is a longing for a mediator, an advocate, a witness who vouches. It is one of the deepest cries of the human heart in suffering, and it reaches forward toward an answer Job could not yet name.

What this teaches about God is the doctrinal core. God is not distant from the suffering of those who fear Him. The very framework of the book, where God boasts of Job to the heavenly court and watches over his trial, shows a God who knows His servant by name, who is not fooled by the false verdicts of friends, who keeps perfect account of the righteous in their pain. The God of Job sees what no human comforter can see. Nothing about Job's anguish escapes His knowledge.

And here we may point forward reverently to Christ, because the longing Job felt is fulfilled in Jesus. The advocate Job reached for has come. We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1). He ever lives to make intercession for those who come to God through Him (Hebrews 7:25). He is at the right hand of God interceding for us (Romans 8:34). The witness in heaven that Job could only hope for is, for the believer, a known and living Savior who pleads our case before the Father.

Teach this carefully. We do not claim Job foresaw Christ in detail. We do claim that the Spirit who inspired Job planted in his cry a hope that only Christ could satisfy, and that the same God who knew Job in his ashes knows every suffering saint, and has given us in Christ the very Advocate Job longed for. When others accuse us falsely, our defense is not our own eloquence but the living Christ who vouches for us on high.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Job longs by faith for a heavenly witness and advocate, not yet naming Christ (16:19–21).
- We must not force more onto Job's words than he understood, nor undersell the genuine hope they reach toward.
- God knows the righteous sufferer intimately; nothing in our pain escapes Him (chapters 1–2).
- The longing for a mediator is answered fully in Christ our Advocate (1 John 2:1).
- Jesus ever lives to intercede for those who come to God through Him (Hebrews 7:25).
- Christ is at God's right hand pleading for the believer (Romans 8:34).
- Our defense against false verdicts is not our eloquence but our living Advocate.

Discussion Prompts

- What did Job long for in 16:19–21, and how far did his understanding reach?
- How does the framework of Job show that God knows the righteous sufferer?
- How does Christ our Advocate fulfill the hope Job groped toward?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across Job 15 through 17, where have you been more like the miserable comforters than like Christ, and name one specific way Jesus is forming you into a person who can sit with the suffering and point them upward?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone question asks students to look back across all three chapters and turn the mirror on themselves. The most uncomfortable truth of this lesson is that we are far more often the miserable comforters than we are Job. We come to win arguments, to defend our theology, to fix what we cannot fix, and in the process we add to the grief of the hurting.

The aim is honest confession leading to formation. Where have we been like Eliphaz, confident in our diagnosis, quick to assume hidden sin, eager to lecture rather than to bear? Where have we offered easy explanations to people who needed our nearness? Naming this is not meant to shame but to open the door to change.

Then the question turns toward Christ as the one forming us. Jesus is the true comforter who came near, who wept at a grave even knowing He would raise the dead, who did not break the bruised reed or quench the smoldering wick (Matthew 12:20). The Spirit is conforming us into His image, into people who can sit in the ashes with the suffering and point them upward to the Advocate in heaven.

Push students to name one specific way Jesus is forming them through this lesson: perhaps learning to listen before speaking, to be present before being right, to bring their own pain honestly to God, or to point a hurting friend to the living Advocate rather than to a tidy explanation. The goal is a changed presence in someone's worst week, shaped by the One who comforts us in all our affliction (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We are more often the miserable comforters than the sufferer; honesty here leads to growth.
- Christ is the true comforter who came near and did not break the bruised reed (Matthew 12:20).
- The Spirit forms us into people who sit with the suffering and point them upward.
- Real comfort flows from having been comforted by God (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you been more like Eliphaz than like Christ?
- Name one specific way Jesus is forming you to comfort the hurting.
- How can our own comfort from God overflow to others?