

The Book of Job, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 15: God's Power Displayed in Behemoth and Leviathan

Job 40:3–41:34

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrinal stakes of this lesson are enormous and deeply practical. The entire book of Job has been building toward the question of whether God owes the sufferer an explanation, and here God answers not with a syllabus on suffering but with a thunderous display of His own power and wisdom in creation. The teacher must keep that theological center bright: God is the Creator, and we are creatures; He governs what we cannot even capture; He owns what we did not make. Behemoth and Leviathan are not a zoology quiz. They are God's chosen instruments to collapse Job's pretense of standing as God's equal in the courtroom. Help your students feel the logic of it. If Job cannot tame the beast, he cannot judge the Beast-maker. This guards us against the modern conceit, which seeps even into the church, that God must justify Himself to us before we will trust Him. The fear of the LORD, that reverent, worshipful awe, is the beginning of wisdom, and it is born exactly here, where human strength runs out and God's begins.

But the aim is not to crush the student; it is to free him. The goal of every lesson is the spiritual formation of the person sitting in the chair, and this passage forms us into people who can finally lay a hand over the mouth and rest. Teach so that your students leave not feeling small and dismissed but safe and held, the way a child feels small next to a strong father and is glad of it. The humble trust God works in Job is the same trust the Lord Jesus models and produces in His people, the trust that prays 'not my will, but yours be done' in the dark. Point them, where it is natural and accurate, to Christ, who calmed the very sea that mirrors Leviathan and who invites the weary to surrender their burdens to a power greater than their problems. The desired outcome is a congregation that can face unexplained suffering and still worship, not because they have figured God out, but because they have finally seen how worthy He is to be trusted.

Question 1

Student Question:

In Job 40:3–5, what does Job's response, 'I lay my hand on my mouth,' reveal about the proper posture of a creature before the Creator, and why is silence sometimes more reverent than speech?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Job's words in 40:3–5 are the hinge of the whole book. For thirty-some chapters Job has been the man with much to say, defending his innocence, demanding a hearing, even longing to lay out his case before God like a prince approaching a king (31:37). Now God has spoken, and Job's first humbled response is stunningly brief: 'Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.' The talker has been silenced, not by a lecture but by a Presence.

Notice that Job does not yet confess sin here. He does not say 'I was wicked.' He says, in effect, 'I am of small account; I have nothing fit to say.' This is the dawning recognition of his proper place: a creature before the Creator. There is a kind of silence that is sullen and another kind that is reverent, and this is the reverent kind. The gesture of laying the hand on the mouth was an ancient sign of submission and self-restraint, the same gesture princes made before a greater man (29:9). Job is taking his hat off, so to speak, in the throne room of God.

This teaches us something the noisy human heart resists: that silence can be more worshipful than speech. There are seasons when the most reverent thing we can do is stop explaining ourselves to God, stop coaching Him, stop rehearsing our complaints, and simply be quiet before Him. 'The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him' (Habakkuk 2:20). Not every question deserves an argument; some deserve a hushed and trusting heart.

Yet we must be honest that Job's first surrender is not the end. God is not satisfied with a man who merely stops talking; He wants a man who truly sees. So God presses on. This tells us that God's aim in our humbling is never mere submission for its own sake, but a deeper, clearer vision of who He is. The hand over the mouth in chapter 40 will become the broken, worshipful 'now my eye sees you' of chapter 42. God is patient, and He finishes what He starts.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The fear of the LORD as reverent silence, not terror that drives us from Him
- Creature-before-Creator humility versus the courtroom posture Job had taken
- Confessing smallness is not the same as confessing secret sin
- God patiently moves us from submission to genuine sight (40:4 toward 42:5)
- Habakkuk 2:20 and the discipline of holy silence

Discussion Prompts

- When was the last time you were genuinely silent before God, not rushing to fill the quiet?
- What is the difference between sullen silence and reverent silence in your own heart?
- Why might God want more from Job than simply that he stop complaining?

Question 2

Student Question:

When God exposes how little you actually control, do you respond with humility or with resentment? Describe a recent time your limits were laid bare and how you handled it.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is a self-examination question, and it goes straight for a nerve. God has a way of exposing how little we actually control, a diagnosis, a layoff, a wayward child, a body that will not cooperate, and the way we react to that exposure reveals what is really in us. Job's response is becoming humility. Many of us respond instead with resentment, a clenched fist toward heaven, an inner muttering that God is not running things the way we would.

The passage invites us to feel our limits without despair. The whole point of Behemoth and Leviathan is that there are creatures Job cannot master, and the right response to that is not bitterness but awe. When our limits are laid bare, we stand at a fork in the road: one path leads down into resentment and self-pity, the other up into humble trust. The same circumstance can harden one heart and soften another.

Be specific with your students here. Vague admissions of humility cost nothing. Ask them to name a recent moment, this month, this week, when their lack of control was undeniable, and to be honest about whether the first thing that rose in them was 'Lord, I trust You' or 'This is not fair.' Naming it is the beginning of letting God change it.

Encourage them that the goal is not to manufacture a feeling but to choose a posture. We may feel the sting of resentment first; the spiritual work is to lay our hand on our mouth, like Job, and let humility have the final word. Over time, that practiced posture becomes a settled disposition, and we find ourselves meeting our limits with peace instead of panic.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Limits as God's gift to teach trust, not merely a frustration to overcome
- The same circumstance hardens or softens depending on the heart's response
- Resentment toward God often hides behind 'reasonable' complaints
- Humility is a chosen posture before it becomes a settled disposition

Discussion Prompts

- What recent situation made your lack of control undeniable?
- Was your first inward response trust or resentment? Be honest.
- What would it look like to choose humility there this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

In Job 40:6–14, God challenges Job to clothe himself with majesty and bring down the proud if he can. What is God teaching Job (and us) about who alone is fit to govern the moral order of the universe?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

In 40:6–14 God answers Job a second time out of the whirlwind, and the challenge is breathtaking. ‘Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?’ (40:8). God puts His finger on the real problem. It was not that Job had a hard life; it was that, in his agony, Job had begun to argue that he could only be vindicated if God were shown to be unjust. God will not let that stand.

Then God issues a kind of dare: ‘Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity... Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him... Tread down the wicked where they stand’ (40:10–12). The challenge is essentially this: if you think you could run the moral universe more justly than I do, Job, then go ahead, take the throne, wield the thunder, humble every proud heart and crush every wicked one. If you can do that, ‘then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can save you’ (40:14).

The point is devastating and clarifying. Governing the moral order of the universe, weighing every motive, restraining every evil, dispensing perfect justice without ever overreaching, is a task fit for God alone. Job cannot even tame a hippopotamus, let alone judge the living and the dead. To demand that God justify His governance to Job is to demand that the clay instruct the potter. Only the One with both infinite power and infinite wisdom is fit to rule, and that One is not us.

For the church this is a steadying truth. We see injustice that infuriates us; we cry ‘How long, O Lord?’ and that cry is not wrong (the psalmists pray it constantly). But there is a fine line between a lament that trusts God and an accusation that would dethrone Him. This passage teaches us to bring our anguish to God without ever putting Him in the dock. He alone can be trusted to set the world right, and He will, in His time, supremely through Christ to whom all judgment has been given (John 5:22).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The deadly move of insisting God must be wrong for me to be right (40:8)
- Only God’s power joined to God’s wisdom is fit to govern moral reality
- Lament that trusts versus accusation that would dethrone God
- Self-salvation is impossible: ‘your own right hand’ cannot save (40:14)
- All judgment given to Christ (John 5:22) as the final fitness of God to rule

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between honest lament and accusing God of injustice?
- Why is governing the moral universe a task fit for God alone?

- Where do you need to bring anguish to God without putting Him on trial?

Question 4

Student Question:

Are there places where you secretly believe you could run things more justly than God does? Where does that quiet arrogance show up in your attitudes or complaints?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the previous truth into the conscience. God's dare to Job in 40:6-14 is meant to surface a secret arrogance that most of us carry but rarely name: the quiet conviction that we could run things more justly than God does. It rarely announces itself plainly. It hides in our complaints, our envy of the prosperous wicked, our bitterness when the undeserving thrive and the faithful suffer.

Help your students hear the tone of their own grumbling. When we say 'It's not fair that they get away with it' or 'If I were God I would never have allowed this,' we are, perhaps unconsciously, auditioning for a throne we are utterly unfit to occupy. Job, a genuinely righteous man, drifted into this, which should make the rest of us cautious. The danger is not reserved for the wicked; it is especially seductive to the sincere.

The remedy is not to stop caring about justice but to relocate our trust. We can hate evil and ache over injustice while still believing that God sees what we cannot and will act with a wisdom we lack. The proud heart says 'I would fix it now and my way.' The humble heart says 'You see the whole, Lord; I trust Your timing and Your justice.'

Invite real honesty. Where does the 'I could do better' attitude leak out, in attitudes toward a difficult coworker, a wayward relative, a national headline, a personal disappointment? Naming the specific place is how we let God dethrone the little tyrant in our hearts and gladly hand the rule back to Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Arrogance toward God hides inside ordinary complaints and envy
- Even the righteous (Job) can drift into auditioning for God's throne
- Hating evil rightly versus presuming to govern it ourselves
- Trusting God's timing as the antidote to 'I could do better'

Discussion Prompts

- Where does the 'I could run this better than God' attitude leak out in you?
- What injustice tempts you most to question God's wisdom?
- How can you hate evil and still trust God's timing at the same time?

Question 5

Student Question:

In Job 40:15–24, God points Job to Behemoth, a creature of staggering strength that Job did not make and cannot master. How does pondering a creature you cannot tame reshape how you think about the God who made it ‘as well as you’ (40:15)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

In 40:15–24 God turns Job’s eyes to Behemoth: ‘Behold, Behemoth, which I made as well as you’ (40:15). That little phrase, ‘as well as you,’ is the key that unlocks the whole passage. God deliberately puts Job and the beast side by side. You are both My creatures. I made you both. Now look at this one and consider.

And what a creature it is. ‘His strength is in his loins, and his power in the muscles of his belly... His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like bars of iron’ (40:16, 18). It feeds on the mountains, lies under the lotus plants, is unmoved when a river rages, confident that he could drink the Jordan dry (40:23). ‘Can one take him by his eyes, or pierce his nose with a snare?’ (40:24). The implied answer is no. Job did not make this animal, did not give it its strength, and certainly cannot tame it.

Here is the theological force. Pondering a creature you cannot master is meant to recalibrate your entire sense of scale. If a mere animal, one item on the long inventory of God’s works, so far outstrips Job’s strength, what does that say about the strength of the One who made it ‘as well as’ He made Job, and who calls it merely ‘the first of the works of God’ (40:19)? Creation is God’s vast classroom, and every untamable creature is a lesson in the smallness of human power and the greatness of God.

This is why the Scriptures so often send us out to look. ‘Consider the lilies,’ said Jesus; ‘consider the ravens.’ ‘The heavens declare the glory of God’ (Psalm 19:1). When we actually stop and contemplate something we did not make and cannot control, the proud heart shrinks to its true size and the worshiping heart swells. Behemoth is God’s invitation to that holy recalibration.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- ‘Which I made as well as you’ (40:15) places Job and beast as fellow creatures
- Human power dwarfed by a single animal on God’s vast inventory
- Creation as God’s classroom teaching the fear of the LORD
- Behemoth as ‘the first of the works of God’ (40:19) and what that implies of the Maker
- Jesus’ habit of sending us to creation: consider the lilies, the ravens

Discussion Prompts

- How does contemplating a creature you cannot tame change your view of God?

- What does 'which I made as well as you' say about Job's true standing?
- When did creation last shrink your pride to its proper size?

Question 6

Student Question:

What is one part of God's creation that has recently filled you with awe, and how did that wonder affect the way you prayed or worshiped?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question turns the lesson outward and upward, asking the student to do what God told Job to do: look, and let wonder do its work. Awe is not a luxury for the spiritually advanced; it is the ordinary doorway to humility and worship. When was the last time some part of God's world genuinely stopped you in your tracks?

Awe has a way of resetting our prayers. The person who has just stood under a night sky thick with stars, or watched the ocean heave, or held a newborn, prays differently than the person who has not lifted his eyes from his screen in a week. Wonder reminds us whom we are addressing. It is hard to coach God and hard to despair before God when you have just been reminded how vast and how good He is.

Encourage your students to make wonder a practice, not an accident. We can deliberately go look, take the walk, watch the storm, study the bird, the way God deliberately marched Behemoth and Leviathan past Job. The discipline of attention to creation is a means of grace that quietly rebuilds a trust that anxious days erode.

Then connect the wonder to worship. The goal is not mere aesthetic pleasure but a heart lifted to the Maker. 'O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!' (Psalm 8:1). Let the creature always point past itself to the Creator, and let the awe become adoration.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Awe as the ordinary doorway to humility and worship
- Wonder reshapes the way we pray and steadies the anxious heart
- The discipline of attention to creation as a means of grace
- Creation pointing past itself to the Creator (Psalm 8)

Discussion Prompts

- What part of creation has recently filled you with awe?
- How did that wonder change the way you prayed or worshiped?
- How could you build the practice of wonder into your ordinary week?

Question 7

Student Question:

In Job 41:1–11, God asks whether Job can draw out Leviathan with a hook or make a covenant with him. God then declares, ‘Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine’ (41:11). What does this claim teach about God’s absolute ownership and Job’s (and our) standing as debtors who can demand nothing?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 41 is devoted entirely to Leviathan, the terror of the deep, and the questions come like waves. ‘Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook or press down his tongue with a cord? Can you put a rope in his nose...? Will he make a covenant with you to take him for your servant forever?’ (41:1–4). The expected answer to every question is a humbling no. Men do not fish for Leviathan; if they are wise, they do not go near him. ‘Lay your hands on him; remember the battle; you will not do it again!’ (41:8).

Then comes one of the towering verses of the book. After noting that no one dares stir up even the creature, God reasons upward: ‘Who then is he who can stand before me? Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine’ (41:10–11). The logic is airtight. If no one can face the creature, no one can face the Creator; and since God owns everything under heaven, no one can put Him in his debt.

This is a crucial doctrinal anchor: God owns it all, and we own nothing that we did not first receive from Him. ‘What do you have that you did not receive?’ Paul will later ask (1 Corinthians 4:7). This dismantles the entire premise of Job’s lawsuit, and of ours. We come before God not as creditors to whom He owes a debt, not as plaintiffs with a claim, but as creatures who have received everything and earned nothing. We cannot demand; we can only receive and give thanks.

Paul echoes this very passage in Romans 11:35–36, ‘Who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.’ The right response to God’s total ownership is not negotiation but doxology. When we truly grasp that everything is His and nothing is owed to us, complaint gives way to gratitude, and demand gives way to worship.

For the believer there is deep comfort here too. The God who owns all things, who holds Leviathan and the whole heaven in His hand, is the same God who has chosen to give, and to give His own Son. The One we cannot put in our debt has, in sheer grace, made Himself our Father. We do not have to pry blessings from a reluctant God; we receive them from a generous one.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Leviathan untamable: ‘remember the battle; you will not do it again’ (41:8)
- If none can face the creature, none can face the Creator (41:10)

- 'Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine' (41:11): God's absolute ownership
- We are debtors, not creditors: 'what do you have that you did not receive?' (1 Cor 4:7)
- Romans 11:35–36 turns God's ownership into doxology, not negotiation
- The God we cannot put in our debt freely gives, even His Son

Discussion Prompts

- What does 'whatever is under the whole heaven is mine' mean for your prayers?
- How does seeing yourself as a debtor, not a creditor, change how you approach God?
- Why is doxology, not negotiation, the right response to God's ownership?

Question 8

Student Question:

When you cannot 'land' a problem in your life, something you cannot fix, force, or control, how do you tend to react, and what would trusting God's ownership look like there instead?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-question takes the truth of God's ownership and presses it into the places where life feels uncontrollable. There are 'Leviathans' in every life: problems we cannot land, hooks that will not hold them, situations that defy every effort to fix, force, or manage. The diagnosis you cannot reverse, the relationship you cannot mend, the addiction in someone you love, the door that will not open. How do you react when the harpoon bounces off?

Our instinctive reactions tend to run two ways: frantic striving (throwing more ropes, more effort, more worry at a creature we were never going to land) or sullen despair (giving up on God along with the problem). Job's God offers a third way, the way of trust rooted in ownership: this Leviathan, too, is under the whole heaven, and therefore it belongs to God, not to me.

Trusting God's ownership does not mean we stop acting wisely or praying earnestly. It means we stop carrying what was never ours to carry. The thing I cannot control is held by the God who controls all things. 'Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you' (1 Peter 5:7). We can do our part and then, with open hands, hand the uncontrollable back to its rightful Owner.

Invite your students to name their Leviathan, the specific unfixable thing, and to practice the handover this week: 'Lord, this is Yours, not mine. I cannot land it, but You hold it, and I trust You.' That sentence, prayed honestly, is the difference between a sleepless heart and a resting one.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Every life has 'Leviathans': problems we cannot fix, force, or control
- Frantic striving and sullen despair as the two false responses
- Trust rooted in ownership: the unfixable thing still belongs to God

- Casting anxiety on God (1 Pet 5:7) as the practical handover

Discussion Prompts

- What is the 'Leviathan' in your life you cannot land right now?
- Do you tend toward frantic striving or sullen despair? Which is it?
- What would it look like to hand that thing back to its rightful Owner?

Question 9

Student Question:

Taking Job 40:6–41:34 as a whole, especially the untamable Leviathan whom 'no one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up' (41:10), how does God's incomparable power over all creation summon us not merely to admit His strength but to humbly trust and surrender to Him, even when He has not explained our suffering?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and it gathers the whole sweep of 40:6 through 41:34 into one searching question: how does God's incomparable power over creation summon us not merely to admit His strength but to bow in humble, surrendered trust, even when our suffering remains unexplained? Notice carefully what God does not do in these chapters. He never tells Job why he suffered. He never mentions the wager with Satan, never gives the back-story, never offers the explanation Job demanded. Instead He offers Himself, His power, His wisdom, His sovereign care over a creation Job can neither make nor master.

Leviathan is the climax of the argument. 'No one is so fierce that he dares to stir him up' (41:10); 'On earth there is not his like, a creature without fear. He sees everything that is high; he is king over all the sons of pride' (41:33–34). Even the proudest, fiercest creature on earth is beyond human conquest, and that very creature is God's handiwork, His to command. The God who made and rules Leviathan is operating on a scale that makes Job's demand for explanations look like a child insisting his father justify the orbit of the planets.

Here is the deep logic the book is teaching: the proper response to a God this powerful and this wise is not to wait for explanations before we trust, but to trust because of who He is shown to be. If God is great enough to govern Leviathan and the whole heaven, He is great enough to be trusted with the parts of my story I do not understand. Faith does not require that the suffering make sense to me; it requires that the God who permits it be worthy. And these chapters prove, overwhelmingly, that He is.

This is precisely the surrender that does not come easily and cannot be faked. It is the difference between resignation ('I guess I have no choice') and worship ('I choose to trust You'). The book of Job exists to walk a suffering saint, and every reader, from the courtroom to the sanctuary,

from 'I demand an answer' to 'I lay my hand on my mouth' and finally to 'now my eye sees You.' God's power is displayed not to terrify us into silence but to woo us into trust.

Point your students, where it is natural and accurate, to the Lord Jesus, who is the final answer to the cry of Job. On the cross He entered unexplained suffering Himself, crying 'My God, my God, why?' and yet surrendered: 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' And He showed His mastery over the very deep that Leviathan haunts when He stilled the storm and the disciples asked, 'Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?' (Mark 4:41). The God of the whirlwind has come near in Christ, and the surrender He calls for is the surrender He Himself modeled and now empowers in us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God answers suffering not with an explanation but with Himself
- Leviathan, 'king over all the sons of pride' (41:34), still God's handiwork
- Trust grounded in God's worthiness, not in our understanding
- Surrender as worship ('I choose to trust') versus mere resignation
- The arc from courtroom demand to 'I lay my hand on my mouth' to 'now my eye sees You'
- Christ enters unexplained suffering and surrenders: 'into your hands' (Luke 23:46)
- The One who stills the sea (Mark 4:41) is greater than Leviathan

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God offer Job Himself instead of an explanation for his suffering?
- How does God's power over Leviathan ground a trust that does not need answers?
- What is the difference between resignation and true surrender in your suffering?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across this whole passage, name one specific way the Lord Jesus is using God's overwhelming power and wisdom to form a deeper, quieter trust in you, the kind of trust that can say 'I lay my hand on my mouth' and mean it.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question asks the student to look across the whole passage and name one specific way the Lord Jesus is using God's overwhelming power and wisdom to form a deeper, quieter trust in them. This is not an invitation to vague spiritual feelings but to honest, particular self-knowledge: what is God actually doing in me through these chapters?

Spiritual formation always moves from truth seen to life changed. Job's encounter with God's power did not leave him with more information; it left him a different man, quieter, humbler, more at rest. The same God who marched Behemoth and Leviathan past Job is, through His

Spirit and His Word, marching His greatness past us, working to produce in us the rare and beautiful trust that can lay a hand over the mouth and mean it.

Help your students be concrete. Perhaps the Lord is using this passage to loosen their grip on a situation they have been trying to control. Perhaps He is replacing their demand for answers with a settled confidence in His character. Perhaps He is teaching them to pray with more awe and less anxiety, or to meet their limits with worship instead of resentment. Whatever it is, naming it makes it real and makes it stick.

Finally, root this formation in Christ. It is Jesus, the One greater than Leviathan, who calms our inner storms; it is His Spirit who works the surrender these chapters call for; it is His own trust, 'not my will but yours,' that He is reproducing in us. The trust we are being formed into is not self-generated willpower but the very life of Christ taking shape in the believer. Send your students out not merely impressed by God's power but quietly resting in it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Formation moves from truth seen to life genuinely changed
- The same God who humbled Job is at work humbling and steadying us
- Naming one specific work of grace makes it real and durable
- Christ's own trust ('not my will but yours') reproduced in the believer

Discussion Prompts

- Name one specific way Jesus is forming deeper trust in you through this passage.
- Is He loosening your grip, quieting your demands, or replacing fear with awe?
- How will you cooperate with that work in the coming week?