

THE JOY OF JOB

*An Investigator's Perspective on the
Most Righteous Man on Earth*

An Extraordinary Story of
Repentance and Restoration

*"He will yet fill your mouth with laughter
and your lips with shouts of joy."*

— BILDAD TO JOB

Job 8:21

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*To Elizabeth Vander Weele,
My Mother and Cherished Friend*

*To Dr. Harold Vander Weele,
My late Father, a Man of Few Words but Many Deeds*



The cover of *The Joy of Job* depicts the author's late father, from whom she learned the value of the throwaway line, a key to unlocking the mysteries of Job. Her father's expression, captured at age 82, conveys living with joy in one's old age. Like Job, his journey ended well. The drawing was created by the author's sister, Susan Vander Wey of Tweed, Ontario, Canada. Her work can be viewed at www.pastelpaintings.ca

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Introduction

I learned the value of the throwaway line from my late father, a man of few words. At our family reunions, amidst heated debates over politics, my father would listen quietly. Then he would find an opening and, with one meaningful sentence, masterfully challenge an entire line of arguments. A hard worker supporting seven children, my Dutch-American father lived through actions, not words.

Now, years later, as a member of the corporate investigations profession, I teach the value of the throwaway line. It is a brief thought thrown over the shoulder at the conclusion of an investigative interview after notebooks and computers are packed away and everyone is about to leave. The interviewee has suppressed the thought throughout the entire conversation but, consciously or subconsciously, he can no longer hold it in. The words only hint at truth, but the hint contains the key to a matter.

The line has no context.

A throwaway line may be, “And I don’t know how he did all that snow plowing anyway,” uttered after an investigative interview that has nothing to do with snow plowing. The investigator follows the clue and finds that the company in question fraudulently billed for plowing snow at hundreds of sites, many of which had no parking lots.

The ancient Biblical book of Job is filled with throwaway lines that leave quiet, but unmistakable, clues to the mystery

of a suffering man whose story has confounded God followers for generations. The clues are part of an extraordinarily skillful undertaking by the author to teach the reader to “test” a person’s words.¹ For unraveling the mystery and powerful message of the book of Job requires a keen understanding of human nature and the gift of deciphering intentions. The investigative profession is skilled in this craft—and detecting throwaway lines is only one of its tools.

There are others.

Investigators learn to set aside the “metaview,” or lens through which we initially see a person. Doing so prevents preconceptions about his or her character or reputation from coloring the fact-finding process. We also know that the longer a person talks, the more likely truth will come out. When one is in pain, initial attempts to be brave or noble give way to an outpouring of one’s soul.

When we hear a person’s version of events, we don’t take it at face value. We listen for conflicting or inconsistent statements. We look for contradictory evidence from witnesses. We map out the described sequence of events, using logic to determine if the chronology rings true.

We are also attuned to projection, when a guilty person desperately tries to deflect criticism by accusing others. To disarm the listener, he takes a righteous stand against the very type of misdeeds of which he himself is guilty. Distinguishing

1. Job 34:3: “For the ear tests words as the tongue tastes food.” Job 12:11: “Does not the ear test words as the tongue tastes food?”

guilt from innocence requires exacting work, and the guilty person counts on the unwillingness of the judging party—an investigator, friend, boss, or relative—to take the time to determine who is telling the truth when the same accusation is leveled at both sides.

Investigators also recognize the more innocuous practice of telling stories about a mythical third party in the same situation as the listener in an attempt to convey truth. This device is used throughout the book of Job. We know that the story is a veiled reference to the listener when the listener accepts it as such.

Investigators can also sense fear and insecurity, which drive pride and demand extreme loyalty from followers, even if it means following a leader to destruction. Detecting delusion is another tool, described in greater detail at the end of this book. Whether a person—or a leader, as in the case of Job—views himself realistically provides a window to the soul.

In requiring this type of acumen, the author of Job encourages readers to be discerning about leadership and not to unquestioningly accept at face value who a person represents himself to be.

The author of Job quietly, amidst the blustery and heated debates, implores us to be wiser than that.



Job was a famously righteous and wealthy leader who endured immense suffering after Satan dared the Lord to a contest of sorts. The Bible says Job feared God and shunned evil. One

day, the angels presented themselves to the Lord, and Satan came with them.² The Lord pointed out that there was no one on earth like Job. But Satan attributed Job's righteousness to his being blessed by God, arguing that it is easy to be grateful and upright when one has vast wealth. Satan challenged God to strike Job and predicted that Job would curse God, an act that would have hurled the greatest man in the East into Satan's domain and ultimate possession.

In a mystery that has haunted mankind throughout the ages, the Lord agreed to the pact. So began an excruciating test for Job. He lost his ten children,³ his servants, and his vast herds in a series of catastrophes, caused by both acts of nature and by marauders. Eventually, Job lost his health, too.

After months of suffering, deep grieving over his losses, angry debates with four friends about the nature of God and suffering, and a confrontation with the Lord himself, Job found healing. He fathered a new family, his fortunes were restored, and God gave him twice what he had before. He lived for nearly a century and a half after his restoration. In the end, Job emerged from his grief to discover joy.

As a child, I was taught that the lesson of Job was that innocent people—even the most righteous people on earth—can suffer without reason. God's ways are without

2. Job 1:6: "One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them."

3. Job 1:2: "He had seven sons and three daughters . . ." Job 1:18-19: "While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, 'Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead . . .'"

comprehension. We must simply accept the mystery and obey. Left unsaid was the unnerving sense that Job, an utterly righteous man, was the victim of a cruel cosmic battle in which humans were pawns in the game. Which is exactly how Job saw it. In Job 9:17, he spoke about God, saying:

*He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds **for no reason.***⁴

Although none of us dared to say it aloud, it seemed that God was capricious in allowing Satan to test Job for their mutual amusement. And if God were capricious, He could not be trusted. For years, I had no way to resolve the incongruity between the harsh and distant God of the book of Job and the loving and trustworthy God I knew.

Then one day, I opened my Bible to Chapter 29. A window opened, permitting me to peer, for the first time, into the unfiltered intentions of Job's heart. This was the first clue to the ancient mystery. More followed. I began to recreate the events of the book and run a movie of them in my mind. I looked at witness statements. I analyzed each accusation. In the heated debates about God's injustice and Job's innocence, I recognized the worst failings of people I have known—and I recognized my own. Startling throwaway lines, hidden without context amidst the bluster, leaped off the pages. The author, with a wink of the eye, had placed clues in plain view.

I now faced a choice: I could ignore these clues and cling to my traditional understanding of the book of Job—and thus join with Job in accusing God of being capricious and cruel—

4. Emphasis added by author.

or accept them, placing not God's character into question, but Job's.

I chose the latter. What I found was a masterpiece of a book that communicates one of the greatest stories of forgiveness and restoration ever told.

Chapter 1

REPUTATION

*“They waited for me as for showers
and drank in my words as the spring rain.
When I smiled at them, they scarcely believed it;
the light of my face was precious to them.”*

—JOB
Job 29:23-24

Imagine being a newcomer in a place of worship when you overhear two men speaking together. One of them says:

“Hey, did you notice that when I walk through services, people part to make a path for me?”

Intrigued, you edge closer. This must be a powerful man, you think. Is he a preacher? A rock star? A politician? A sports hero?

“Everyone stops talking when I enter the room. They hang on my every word. I’m the wisest person around,” he says. “And look: When I smile at them, they can’t believe they came this close to me!”

Did he really say that?

If he were a preacher or politician, would you like him? If he were a famous musician, would you respect him? If he were a sports champion, would you want your son or daughter to

emulate him? Most importantly, would you leave thinking that someone so fixated on his own acclaim—someone who so loved the stage of human approval—was truly righteous? Yet, these are the sentiments of Job who, in Chapter 29, Verses 7-11, recalls his way of life before catastrophe afflicted him:

When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square, the young men saw me and stepped aside and the old men rose to their feet; the chief men refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands; the voices of the nobles were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths. Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me.

Job continues in Verses 21-24:

People listened to me expectantly, waiting in silence for my counsel. After I had spoken, they spoke no more; my words fell gently on their ears. They waited for me as for showers and drank in my words as the spring rain. When I smiled at them, they scarcely believed it; the light of my face was precious to them.

To New Testament readers, Job's opinion of his own importance sounds familiar. Jesus described the teachers of the law and the Pharisees in a similar way.

Everything they do is done for people to see . . . they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be

greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called “Rabbi” by others.⁵

The Bible instructs God’s followers to glorify God,⁶ and the Lord states in Isaiah 42:8, “I will not yield my glory to another,” but Job focused on another type of glory: his own. In one of the book’s obscure but powerful throwaway lines, Job explained, simply, that he expected that his own glory would not fade.⁷

But fade it did, and in all that he lost—children, wealth, and power—Job was fixated most on one particular type of loss: his loss of reputation. Job said he was humiliated,⁸ jeered at,⁹ and ridiculed, even by little boys.¹⁰ Young men whose fathers he would have disdained to put with his sheep dogs mocked him in song.¹¹ Mockers surrounded him and were hostile toward him.¹² They detested him and spit in his face.¹³ They struck his cheek in scorn.¹⁴ He had become a laughingstock to his friends,¹⁵

5. Matthew 23:5-7.

6. Romans 15:6: “So that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

7. Job 29:20: “[I thought] my glory will not fade.”

8. Job 19:5: “If indeed you would exalt yourselves above me and use my humiliation against me . . .”

9. Job 16:10: “People open their mouths to jeer at me . . .”

10. Job 19:18: “Even the little boys scorn me; when I appear, they ridicule me.”

11. Job 30:1: “But now they mock me, men younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs.” Job 30:9: “And now those young men mock me in song; I have become a byword among them.”

12. Job 17:2: “Surely mockers surround me; my eyes must dwell on their hostility.”

13. Job 30:10: “They detest me and keep their distance; they do not hesitate to spit in my face.”

14. Job 16:10: “They strike my cheek in scorn and unite together against me.”

15. Job 12:4: “I have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called on God and He answered—a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless!”

and even his intimate friends detested him.¹⁶ His dignity was driven away by the wind.¹⁷ Success had also been driven from him.¹⁸ He was full of shame.¹⁹

Job sorely missed his own adulation. Despite his initial reverent words²⁰ and a heroic refusal to stop believing in a powerful God—a choice that has been rightly venerated throughout the centuries—Job was devastated by his loss of prestige, a loss he blamed on God. It was God who had stripped him of his honor and removed the crown from his head.²¹ It was God who made him a byword to everyone, a man in whose face people spit.²² It was God who had wronged him.²³

Lamenting loss of stature is an understandable human reaction in times of devastation, but it is not that of a righteous man filled with the Spirit of God. The proud nature disdains shame most of all, says William Gurnall in his landmark book, *The Christian in Complete Armour*.²⁴

16. Job 19:19: “All my intimate friends detest me; those I love have turned against me.”

17. Job 30:15: “My dignity is driven away as by the wind . . .”

18. Job 6:13: “Do I have any power to help myself, now that success has been driven from me?”

19. Job 10:15: “For I am full of shame and drowned in my affliction.”

20. Job 2:9-10: “His wife said to him, ‘Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!’ He replied, ‘You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?’ In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.”

21. Job 19:9: “He has stripped me of my honor and removed the crown from my head.”

22. Job 17:6: “God has made me a byword to everyone, a man in whose face people spit.”

23. Job 19:6: “Then know that God has wronged me and drawn his net around me.”

24. William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, (Reprinted by First Rate Publishers, Volume 1, 1662). The reprint does not provide page numbers. John Newton, the converted slave trader, reportedly said that if

In contrast, the Apostle Paul relinquished his reputation as a wise and powerful religious leader to take on the sufferings that would lead him and others into the knowledge of Christ.²⁵ Paul no longer sought the praise of man. He had no need to garner approval like a rock star from the powerful.²⁶ In fact, Paul stated that if he were trying to please people, he could not serve Christ.²⁷ Other Apostles also rejoiced because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for Christ's name.²⁸

Although Job mourned the loss of his path “drenched with cream” and the rock that “poured out for [him] streams of olive oil,”²⁹ Abraham willingly left his home country for the unknown land of Canaan.³⁰

he were confined to one book beside the Bible, he would choose *Christian Armour*. Charles Spurgeon commented that Gurnall's work is “peerless and priceless; every line full of wisdom. The book has been preached over scores of times and is, in our judgment, the best thought-breeder in all our library.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Gurnall

25. 2 Corinthians 11:24-28: “Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.”
26. Galatians 2:6: “As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism—they added nothing to my message.”
27. Galatians 1:10: “If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”
28. Acts 5:41: “The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.”
29. Job 29:1-6: “How I long for the months gone by . . . when my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil.”
30. Genesis 12:5: “He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.”

Consider Moses, one of the great men of faith whose journey is recounted in Hebrews 11, the book of faith heroes in which Job is notably absent. Moses, by faith, walked away from the honor and riches of being in the household of the powerful Pharaoh. “He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of [the promised] Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.”³¹ When instructed by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses did not believe himself worthy to undertake such a task.³²

Job, in contrast, saw himself not only as eminently worthy of leadership, but *entitled* to praise for one reason: *because* he rescued the poor and the fatherless.³³ “I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban,” he recalled of his former way of life.³⁴



“Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me,” Job recalled. Job’s statement raises a pressing question: Was it accurate?

Evidence suggests it was not.

First, Job’s claim of universal regard is, on its face, unrealistic. What leader garners universal acclaim? Even the

31. Hebrews 11:24-26.

32. Exodus 3:11: “But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’”

33. Job 29:11-12: “Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help”

34. Job 29:14.

wisest and holiest leader in the world, Jesus Christ, faced a murdering crowd consumed by jealousy. Furthermore, like any great leader, Job would have made difficult decisions that left some people angry. His wealth would have attracted naysayers and envious critics.

Second, a highly regarded man in power garners sympathy—not contempt—after he faces tragedy. Think of a great leader who suffered a disaster not of his own making, a leader such as U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, who was stricken with polio. Although the extent of his disease was not fully known, the public knew he had been afflicted. Did such a disaster decrease his stature? No, experience tells us that heroes who face adversity gain more—not less—respect from their adoring people. How then could family, friends, the chief men, servants, his community—everyone—drop Job like a hot potato when this good man ran into trouble that he did not create? Why were those pearls of wisdom he boasted about no longer in high demand?

Third, Job’s claim that everyone spoke well of him for rescuing the poor is contradicted by his own description of skirmishes he had with a group of starving young men living among the rocks. These young men detested him—and the feeling was mutual.

Fourth, the only friends who visited Job forcefully contradicted his claims of blamelessness. When Eliphaz the Temanite talked to Job, nearly the first words out of his mouth were, in effect, “You reap what you sow.”³⁵ Zophar

35. Job 4:8: “As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.”

the Naamathite said that God had even forgotten some of his sins.³⁶ Elihu, son of Barakel the Buzite, begged Job to return from evil.³⁷ Bildad the Shuhite concurred. All four agreed: Job was not blameless.

As we shall see, Job eventually came to realize this himself.

36. Job 11:6: "Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin."

37. Job 36:21 (NLT): "Be on guard! Turn back from evil, for God sent this suffering to keep you from a life of evil."