

Text – Job 1:1-5 (NIV 1984) — ¹ In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. ² He had seven sons and three daughters, ³ and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

⁴ His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵ When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

In the land of Uz,—this word "UZ" is pronounced **oots** according to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance¹ and it stems from a root word that means "to consult." "In the land of consultation," well that's something for all you psychologists in the congregation to ponder.

In the land of Uz, there lived a man whose name was Job." (Job 1:1a) Our text, which was just read, introduces us to Job. Of all the people in the Bible, Job is unique. No one else has the name of Job.

We know that the names given in the Bible are not accidental. For example:

- **Abraham:** means "father of a great multitude;"
- **Daniel:** means "the judgment of God" or "God is my judge;"
- **Moses:** who was found floating on the Nile by Pharaoh's daughter, means "taken out of" or "drawn forth;"
- **Ichabod:** who was born as the news came of Israel's defeat by the Philistines, means "where is the glory?" and
- **Iscaiot:** who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, means "a man of murder" or "a hireling."²

¹ Word entry number: 5780.

² Meanings of the names are from Hitchcock's Dictionary of Bible Names, except where noted otherwise. Public Domain.

Because names have significant meanings, they provide deep insights into the character and history of the men and women in the Bible. Biblical scholars give us a number of possible meanings for the Hebrew name of "Job." Some derive it from a passive form of the verb *אָיַפּ* (*ayap*), which means "to be an enemy," and thus they understand the name to mean "*He Who Is Persecuted*,"³ "*He Who Is Hated*," or even "*He Who Weeps or Cries*." Others trace its etymology from an Arabic verb that means "to return" and thus they believe the name means "*He Who Turns to God*". All of these meanings certainly seem appropriate, given what we know of Job's story.

However, Job was not an Israelite. He did not speak Hebrew. He was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau. To an Edomite, the name of "Job" would have meant "*No Father*," or "*Where is My Father?*"⁴

If we accept that meaning of Job's name, it is possible to conclude that he may never have known his father—that his father was either absent or unknown at the time of his birth. In that ancient culture, if Job were fatherless, perhaps even illegitimate, he would have been scorned from the day he was born. He would have been *hated* and *persecuted*. We can only imagine how often he would have *wept* and *cried* out from that loneliness—from the anguish of being fatherless—from the stigma of illegitimacy. Thus, it is from both the Edomite and Israelite cultures that we get the fullest meaning of Job's name.

Horatio Alger was an American author who wrote nearly 100 novels between 1867 and his death in 1899. We remember them as "rags to riches" stories. His heroes were impoverished boys or young men who,

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ <http://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Job.html> The origin of the name Job is unclear (unknown says BDB Theological Dictionary). Some (NOBS Study Bible Name List reads **Returning**) derive it from an Arabic verb '**he who turns (to God)**'. Others (HAW Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament) see similarities with the verb *אָיַפּ* (*ayap* 78), to be an enemy. Jones' Dictionary of Old Testament Proper Names derives the name Job from this verb and is convinced that the name Job is a passive form and thus means **The Persecuted**."

Then there are occurrences of this same name in related languages, and mean there is **No Father** or **Where Is My Father?**

A **Hebrew** audience would probably hear **Enemy** for the name Job, and perhaps (as HAW Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament & BDB Theological Dictionary suggest) a passive form of the verb, so that the name-bearer becomes the object of hostilities, specifically those imposed on Job by God. Others understand perhaps that God is never an enemy to a righteous man and righteous Job, as much as he loved God, was His enemy by nature, and *that* got the ball rolling.

after leading exemplary lives and struggling valiantly against poverty and adversity, were able to attain both wealth and honor, and ultimately they realized the American Dream.⁵

Well, we might say that Job was the Horatio Alger hero in the ancient land of Uz. He goes from being a despised bastard child to the richest and most powerful man in the land.

How rich did Job become? Today's text tells us that "he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys."

Based on current prices in the world's livestock markets:

- 7,000 SHEEP at \$177/head are worth \$1,239,000.
- 3,000 CAMELS at \$7,600/head are worth \$22,800,000.
- 500 YOKE OF OXEN at \$3000/pair are worth \$1,500,000.
- 500 DONKEYS at \$834/head are worth \$417,000.

THE TOTAL VALUE OF JOB'S HERDS is \$25,956,000.

With nearly \$26,000,000 there is no question that Job was well invested in the stock market, and that doesn't count his land and houses and barns and wagons and all the other stuff he had to have.

Not unlike the typical Horatio Alger story, Job went from rags to riches, but he also went from being fatherless to having seven sons and three daughters. He obviously had enough wealth to provide for such a large family, but what kind of a father was he. Was he a good father, a model father?

Robert Sutherland in his book *Putting God on Trial*,⁶ writes the following:

In the words of Almighty God, "there is no one like ... [Job] on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil." (Job 1:8) God's judgment repeats the author's judgment from the [very] first [verse of Job 1]. Job is humanity at its very best.

"There is no one like him on the earth." (Job 1:8)

His righteousness exceeds that of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. His righteousness exceeds that of God's chosen people. There is no one like him.

⁵ Alger, Horatio. The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th ed. 2007. Columbia University Press. 13 Apr 2008

⁶ www.thebookofjob.org

Throughout *The Bible*, this kind of praise is only used to describe two individuals: (1) God and (2) the incarnation of God—the man Jesus Christ. The prophet Isaiah repeatedly describes God as the one beside whom there is no other. (Isaiah 43:11; 44:6; 45:5) And the apostle John describes Jesus as the only ... [one] in whom the glory of God's character found its fullness. (John 1:14-18) The writer of ... *Hebrews* describes Jesus as one like us in every way, "yet without sin". (Hebrews 4:15) Job is in the very best of company. He is as truly and fully human as God is truly and fully divine. There is no one like him. Needless to say, this has to mean that Job is so righteous that he is neither worthy of punishment nor in need of character development. He is the best he can be. He is the best all of us can be.

It is also needless to say; that this has to mean that Job was the best father it was possible to be. There was no one like him.

What does it take to be a good father?

Most authorities agree, "you gotta to be there." An absent father is not a good father, and the statistics on what happens to fatherless children are staggering.

Children from fatherless homes account for:

- 60% of the nation's rapists⁷
- 63% of youth suicides⁸
- 70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions⁹
- 71% of teenage pregnancies¹⁰
- 71% of all high school dropouts¹¹
- 72% percent of adolescent murderers¹²
- 75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers¹³
- 75% of all prisoners¹⁴
- 80% of rapists motivated by displaced anger¹⁵
- 85% of all youths in prisons¹⁶
- 85% of all children who exhibit serious behavioral disorders¹⁷
- 90% of all homeless and runaway children.¹⁸

⁷ N. Davidson, "Life Without Father," *Policy Review*. 1990

⁸ US Dept. of Health & Human Services

⁹ U.S. Dept. of Justice, *Special Report*, Sept 1988

¹⁰ US Dept. of Health & Human Services

¹¹ National Principals Association Report on the State of High Schools

¹² D. Cornell et al, *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 5. 1987

¹³ Rainbows for all God's Children

¹⁴ Daniel Amneus, *The Garbage Generation*, Alhambra, CA: Primrose Press, 1990

¹⁵ *Criminal Justice & Behavior*, Vol. 14, p. 403-26, 1978

¹⁶ Fulton Co. Georgia jail populations, Texas Dept. of Corrections 1992

¹⁷ Center for Disease Control

On the other side of the coin, children who have grown up in “intact” homes (where both of their biological parents are present and married to each other) are:

- 5 times less likely to commit suicide;
- 9 times less likely to drop out of high school;
- 10 times less likely to abuse chemical substances;
- 11 times less likely to exhibit violent behavior;
- 14 times less likely to commit rape;
- 20 times less likely to have behavioral disorders;
- 20 times less likely to end up in prison; and
- 32 times less likely to run away

than children who are fatherless.

So, Dads, take heart and hang in there. It's worth it.

These rewards are great; yet they are nothing but the rewards that come from “just being there” – from just showing up at the dinner table, so to speak. The studies that support these statistics do not distinguish whether a father is a good father or a bad father—they only measure the results of whether he is present or absent. Imagine how much our children would benefit and how great our rewards would be if fathers were not just in attendance, but were actively participating in the lives of their children.

Now, let's get back to Job and the proposition we brought up earlier— that Job was the best father it was possible to be—that, even as God said, there was no one like him. Job who was fatherless, Job who was a Gentile and not an Israelite, Job who had no good examples, no role models in word or deed, no special revelations such as are found in the Old and New Testaments, this Job still somehow found written within his own heart all the knowledge he needed to be a good father.

For it is true, God makes Himself known to mankind. He implants into our hearts the ability to discern right from wrong. He has given us the will and the freedom to choose what is good. And best of all He has given us all the grace we need to do both.

¹⁸ US Dept. of Justice

The Apostle Paul tells us:

¹³ For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

[Just as Job was declared righteous by God.]

¹⁴ (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, ¹⁵ since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) – Romans 2:13-15

Yes, Job knew how to be a father because it was written on his heart.

In chapter 29, we find Job looking back wistfully to the time before his troubles, and we catch a glimpse of life as it once was in Job's household:

⁴ Oh, for the days when I was in my prime,
when God's intimate friendship blessed my house,
⁵ when the Almighty was still with me
and my children were around me,
⁶ when my path was drenched with cream
and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil.

Here we see a picture of blissful family life in the household of Job: a home life blessed by the "intimate friendship" of God, under the protection of the Almighty, with all ten of his children happily scurrying around him. Life couldn't have been better if it had been drenched with cream.

But it doesn't stop there. Job who was fatherless—Job who wept bitterly because of the scorn of having no father—this same Job became the protector of all those who had no one to defend them. He took up the cause of the orphan who had no father, the widow who had no husband, and the stranger who had no benefactor.

¹¹ Whoever heard me spoke well of me,
and those who saw me commended me,
¹² because I rescued the poor who cried for help,
and the fatherless who had none to assist him.
¹³ The man who was dying blessed me;
I made the widow's heart sing.
¹⁴ I put on righteousness as my clothing;
justice was my robe and my turban.
¹⁵ I was eyes to the blind

and feet to the lame.
¹⁶ I was a father to the needy;
I took up the case of the stranger.
¹⁷ I broke the fangs of the wicked
and snatched the victims from their teeth.

Yes, Job rescued the poor from his plight; he gave comfort to the dying; he led the lost and blind to safety; he carried the crippled and lame over the barriers they faced; he was a father to all who were in need. Job knew how to be a father and a protector. Job knew the "intimate friendship" of God. Yet, in spite of all this, Job somehow did not know God as a father, as his father.

Job knew a lot about God, and he knew God by many of His names. Throughout the Book of Job, God is called "**God**¹⁹" a total of 119 times. He is called the "**Almighty**²⁰" 31 times. Surprisingly, the name "Almighty" is found only 16 other times in the Old Testament. God is identified as the "**LORD (YHWH)**²¹" 22 times; as the "**Creator**²²" or "**Maker**" 6 times, and as the "**Redeemer**²³" only once. In addition, there are four other names of God that appear only once, and all are found in the same place: Job 16:19-20:

Even now my **Witness** is in heaven;
my **Advocate** is on high.
My **Intercessor** is my **Friend** ...

There is one name of God with which Job was unfamiliar. He did not know God as Father, and he had never called out to God as his Father. In the entire book of Job, there is just one occasion in chapter 38: verse 28, when God is speaking to Job that He refers to Himself as "**Father**²⁴". In this one instance, the LORD, YAHWEH, the Almighty God, the Creator, the Maker of heaven and earth speaks out of the eye of the hurricane to the fatherless Job and in tenderness asks:

¹⁹ Word entry numbers listed here and following are from *STRONG'S EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE*, 410. 'el: God; 430. *elohiym*: Supreme God; 433. *elowahh*: Diety.

²⁰ 7706 - *Shaddai*: Almighty.

²¹ 3068 - *Yahweh*: LORD.

²² 6213 - *asah*: Creator, Maker.

²³ 1350 - *ga'al*: Redeemer.

²⁴ 1 - 'ab: Father, c.f. *abba*.

"Does the rain have a father?
Who fathers the drops of dew?"

In the end, this righteous Job acknowledges that he has not really understood who God is:

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know.
My ears had heard of you
but now my eyes have seen you. —Job 42:3,5.

Job finally learns what the Psalmist knew:

As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;
for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust. —Psalm 103:13-14.

Job comes to know God as his father and discovers what it is to be a true son:

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "*Abba*, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.—Romans 8:14-17

Beside this encounter with God, there are just a few other instances in the Book of Job where the word "father" even occurs, and they are never in reference to God. They all refer directly or indirectly to Job. It is in the last three of these references that we get our final insights about our good father Job:

We read earlier where Job said:

"I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger..."

and in chapter 31:18, Job says:

"from my youth I reared him as would a father..."

And finally, in chapter 42, we learn about the return of Job's health and wealth and family. Domestic tranquility reigns once more:

¹² The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys.

That's twice what he had before—now it's \$52 million plus all of his land and other holdings.

¹³ And he also had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. ¹⁵ Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.

Job demonstrates once again that he is a father who is without equal, that there is no one else like him. Thousands of years before Christ, in a culture where women had little or no value, where they were seen simply as property or as a means for obtaining an heir, Job responds to his own daughters with the same magnanimous grace and generosity he has received from the One whom he now knows to be his own true Father, the Father of us all. And here at the conclusion of his life we read:

After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so he died, old and full of years.—Job 42:16-17