



# BIBLE IN A YEAR 2020



## Summary

How do we deal with suffering, especially when it seems unfair? Do you think we can understand it? Should we be getting good answers ready for people who ask?

This story explores the suffering of a faithful man which has no apparent cause other than the action of Satan. But it gets compounded and amplified by religious people who are certain that they can explain the reasons why Job is suffering and what he must do.

It's a magnificent but frustrating account in which sorrow, anger and grief have maybe never been expressed so richly. It can meet us where we are if we are suffering. And if our friends and neighbours are going through difficult times, it should warn us not to overestimate our own understanding or underestimate God's power, glory and love.

**Bern Leckie**

# **Monday April 13: Job 1-3**

## **Why do bad things happen to good people?**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

## **What did I like about today's reading?**

When bad things happen, and we don't know why, how do we make sense of it? What do we think, say and do? Are there any easy answers to questions of unfair suffering when we believe in a just and loving God?

This seems like a great book to dig into right now. But it needs to come with a health warning which will need repeating throughout. Job is hard to tackle in short daily chunks because it's filled with things which look like wisdom but are not wise. I've come to think of it like a Facebook comments conversation.

Stuff happens. People misunderstand but comment on the stuff like they are experts. Gradually the conversation becomes less about the stuff and more about how everyone is feeling for being misunderstood. In the end, how are the friends still friends, and what is really happening? This is hard to understand from just reading bits of the comments, which is what we'll be doing most days. It will be frustrating. I believe the author intended that.

The best way to take in this story is, some say, all at once. I listened to the whole thing – it took just under two hours, an age in "bible study" terms, but pretty short for a box set binge. I recommend diving in and letting the big shape of what God is doing speak to you. We've published every part of these notes already on the website to help you zip through.

What I love about how this story starts is Job's good heart, faith and purity, even in the worst of circumstances. He isn't judging his own success by stuff done, things owned or even people he is in relationship with. As he declares that "naked I came from my mother's womb" he recognises God's provision and ownership of everything.

And yet, he is human. His suffering is painful, and he can honestly express it in terms of darkness and despair – maybe we can relate, or know others entering darkness right now.

## **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

God knows us inside out. He knows what is going on with us even when we are overwhelmed with questions about suffering. Why doesn't God prevent suffering, though? Is it some kind of test? We don't yet know – and if we think we have the answers, beware...

## **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

I love Job's attitude of honouring God in the good times, which seems to have built his discipline to keep glorifying and praising God in the bad times. I want to build that discipline.

## **Who am I going to share this with?**

I'm fortunate to have groups of people I catch up with even when physically isolated. We have difficult times to talk about. But I'll encourage us to keep praising and praying to God.

## **Tuesday April 14: Job 4-7**

### **Aren't you entitled to my opinion?**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

**HEALTH WARNING:** there is more nonsense than gospel here. Don't be tempted to cut out Eliphaz's words to stick on your fridge.

We are entering the long stretch of this book which I think is bound, maybe even designed, to frustrate us as much as an awkward Facebook comments exchange.

Isn't it cringe-inducingly relatable? Job has shared his status, and Eliphaz piles in with assumptions based on half-baked theology, judgments based on no understanding of (or asking about) Job's circumstances, and opinions framed spiritually as if they were God's wisdom, but with less substance than a puff of incense.

We know that Job did not do anything wrong. Eliphaz assumes that he did, or else he would not be suffering. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

No wonder Job becomes, if this is possible, even more upset. Where he had been even tempered and recognised God's right to give and take away, his prayer is now becoming flavoured by the "bitterness" which is brewing complaint in his soul. It's well spoken, poetic, but painful to see grace being displaced by a desire for self-justification.

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

This distorted picture is not good for drawing any conclusions about God's nature. It does show me that while God's awesome power and many aspects of his character can be widely recognised, people who only live with the idea of God will end up frustrated and fighting, while God really wants a relationship with us.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

To be honest, one reason I get frustrated with the story from here is that I don't just relate to Job for being misunderstood and unfairly criticised. I also relate to Eliphaz. I want to think that I know what's going on, that I understand more than I really do, and that my opinion can therefore be presented as fact. I need to learn from where this is going and avoid that.

What can I do instead? In some cases, I think I need to be better at staying quiet and listening. In many cases, I'd be better advised to pray before offering any advice. I sometimes forget that even well-intentioned advice isn't as good as seeking to understand.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

Next time I'm in a situation where I believe I could give advice, even if asked for it specifically, I will spend more time asking, listening, praying and trying to understand.

## **Thursday April 16: Job 8-10**

**If only there were a mediator**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

We can get a lot from this if we remember the daily **HEALTH WARNING** for most of this book, that stuff which sounds like wisdom without context is not really wisdom. Bildad sounds godly, but his theology is twisted around the idea that good people must be enjoying increasing prosperity throughout life, and therefore misfortune must indicate sin.

I'm not sure if his response was even focused on Job as much as the tension which is emerging as misplaced initial advice from Eliphaz has framed Job's situation with a faulty premise, and misunderstandings are likely to grow like an increasingly off-topic thread of comments.

Despite the frustration piling up, I love that Job still has a stack of faith in God to draw from. He speaks a lot of awe-inspiring truth about God. But the mistakes that Job and his friends are increasingly making are in how God relates to people and what makes us righteous.

Job's despair that he can never prove his innocence to God brings him to say, "If only there were someone to mediate between us, someone to bring us together..." Without this, "even the light is like darkness."

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

God wants us to live in relationship with him and I am reminded that Jesus is the mediator that Job knew could make all the difference.

God does not want us to feel the way Job does. We will never be good enough to earn God's favour, and worshiping a distorted image of God made from human misunderstandings can only result in pain. But relationship with the real God is something good and we can have it, even though we are not perfect, because of Jesus.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

This reminds me that my view of God can easily get distorted if I spend too much time focusing on stuff and not enough simply being with God, getting to know Jesus and letting me and my views get shaped by him. So I will spend more time over the next few days listening to God and letting Jesus and his Spirit bring us together.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

When I pray with people this week and next, I will make sure we make time and space to be with God and let him speak to us rather than only fire our thoughts and concerns at him.

## **Friday April 17: Job 11-14**

### **It's easy to misunderstand stuff without good relationship**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

It's helpful alongside a **HEALTH WARNING** that lots of stuff here has the form of Psalms and wisdom but lacks a foundation of truth. Please don't turn it into songs.

Zophar joins the comment thread with vigour and forceful accusation. Funny how comment threads can go like that, especially when everyone happens to be an expert. Unfortunately, no matter how much Zophar might be right about God in many ways, by failing to understand Job and by assuming that he must know why Job is suffering (spoiler alert: he does not know), Zophar's apparent wisdom is no wisdom at all. It's a mockery of wisdom.

If I want to guide other people, I find that people will tend to do what I do much more readily than do something I tell them to do. I think Job is showing that in his response to Zophar, which matches and elevates the mocking tone, making it hard to tell what he really thinks about the God he appears to recognise as powerful. Which bits are only mock praise, honour and worship in this black mirror of a Psalm? Does Job even know?

Somewhere in this discussion about the ideas of God and sin, I think Job has been losing his clear view of God and his grasp on the discipline which kept his life pointing towards God. Job is developing anger which has changed how he expresses his desire to argue with God - he is increasingly up for a fight, and this is hardening the self-justification he would need in order to prevail.

However, his sense of hopelessness is also heightening, and this is now leading him to start accusing God of being a destroyer of hope. The image of God Job has started to form in his head is a dark distortion of God's true nature, and it is tearing him up. I don't like any of this, but I recognise some of it.

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

This distorted picture is not good for drawing conclusions about God's nature. It does show me that while God's awesome power can be recognised, people who only live with the idea of God will end up frustrated and fighting, while God really wants a relationship with us.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

I don't want to be like a worker putting up signs warning people not to fall into a pit, only to step back, admire my own work and fall into the pit myself. This passage shows that it's not enough for me to write about the idea of God. I'm going to keep trying to increase the amount of time I spend praying and listening.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

Good relationships are key. I need to build relationship with God in relationship with other believers. So I will discuss how we can do this in our next open house discipleship chat.

# Monday April 20: Job 15-17

## How to break people and relationships

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### What did I like about today's reading?

This is escalating. That's not so much a "like" as "observe", I suppose, and the regular **HEALTH WARNING** not to clip out wise-sounding snippets for your journal still applies.

There is a classic sign of relational breakdown here as Eliphaz's specific (and unfounded) criticism of Job's unconfessed sin blows up into a teardown of his character. Eliphaz is so sure he understands, he so wants to be right and to correct Job. He seems to have stopped listening a while ago, and his rant against wicked people in general is becoming epic.

Job seems right to call out his "miserable comforters." "What ails you that you keep on arguing?" is a great question. The classic rule that applies to comment threads should apply to Job – don't feed the trolls. There is clearly something wrong which is starting to eclipse Job's original causes of suffering. But can Job deal with this silently? Of course not!

His words let us into his world of pain, and how relational suffering has turned his initial trust in God to bitterness against him. This is a deep cause for concern.

"All was well with me, but he shattered me;" Job recognises the huge change in his "broken" spirit, and as he feels undermined in himself, he can only attribute this to an act of God.

### What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

Once again, nothing in terms of quotable theology. While Job's words may reflect the truth of his feelings, we should not take them as correct about God.

The fact that God allows people to carry on like this, however, might prompt us to ask why. People whose characters are brought into question tend either to respond quickly and forcefully (as here) or cut off relationship as much as they can. God's response will come, but he allows people time to come to their own conclusions about him rather than constantly stepping in to argue with us. God's reply to Job will be forceful, but there will never be a question about whether he wants us to be in relationship with him.

### What am I going to do differently as a result?

When I have a dispute with someone or concerns about what they have done, I must remember how damaging it is to start questioning their motives, character and background. I think this is something I know in theory to avoid but is surprisingly easy to end up accidentally doing in practice, especially if I get angry. I need God's help to be a peacemaker instead, growing in my ability to be patient, listen well, not jump to conclusions, love more.

### Who am I going to share this with?

I will pray and reflect first to see if there is anyone I need to seek forgiveness from for doing this! I will be happy to share with them why I want to do better in relationship.

## **Tuesday April 21: Job 18-21**

**I know that my redeemer lives**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

This is definitely feeling like an epic comments thread gone fully ranty. Bildad may have been the inventor of CAPS LOCK and reminds me of the daily **HEALTH WARNING** that there are shards of insight here, but we risk cutting ourselves if we handle them out of context.

The tone has moved from concerned to anxious to almost hysterical mocking. Job is already upset and depressed, so he doesn't need any of this, but I think his reaction in chapter 19 reveals something interesting. Is it an oasis of hope? Could it be that someone who is unjustly accused is closer to God than his loud religious accusers?

It is almost as if, at the height of false accusation, Job connects with Jesus. "I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth." Job has a moment of lucidity, seeing beyond his circumstances and far into the future, even to a time when he will see God with flesh after death. As a self-defence, this would be ridiculous, but as hope inspired by God, it is something remarkable and, better still, we can share it.

Not that it has much effect on Job's accusers - they are too busy ratcheting up their attack to notice the appearance of God saving the world. They are not budging from their certainty that they understand what is happening. How could they ever grasp God's real plans for us?

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

While there is a lot of "nonsense" and "falsehood" in the talk about God in these chapters, I think there is a standout truth which Job finds in the difficulty - Jesus is ultimately inescapable. We might think that it's unfair that people can seem to evade justice in their lifetimes, and we might feel hard done by when goodness gets overlooked, but God's insight is greater and his plan is an eternal one, which he will involve us with even after we think life is all over for us.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

This reminds me to trust Jesus more and rely on my own understanding less. God wants us to build our understanding, I am sure, but life following Jesus is about having our minds changed, not being thanked by God for believing in him and holding onto half-truths and glaring gaps in our wisdom.

I need insight from God to understand other people in my community, especially those with other faiths, and I want him to direct me in loving and growing good relationships with them where our discussions will never sound like these.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

People in my school community, especially those I have been praying with.

# Thursday April 23: Job 22-24

## Top tips to make people feel bad

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

## What did I like about today's reading?

I'm building up a very useful picture of how NOT to offer pastoral care to someone in difficulty. The wisdom here carries the usual **HEALTH WARNING** that it sounds good in little chunks, but it's still toxic to Job as it's rooted in error, so don't take it to heart.

Here are the main tips I gleaned from Eliphaz's masterclass in not helping:

1. Ask big, important, interesting questions and then leave them hanging - they make you look clever. "Can a man be of benefit to God?" is a brilliant discussion point, but the best way to impress (or annoy) someone is to ask it rhetorically - make sure there's no space for a reply, and move straight on to another topic as quickly as you can.
2. Make up your mind about the cause and solution of someone's problem for them. Why risk sounding weak and vulnerable by listening properly to the person with the problem when you can be strong and decisive instead? Specific, clear accusations like "You gave no water to the weary and you withheld food from the hungry" will impress your authority upon anyone listening - they don't have to know you have no actual evidence for this. Your heartfelt belief and opinion are what matter most.
3. Whatever a person's problem or state of mind, sweeping generalities about blessings from God will surely make them feel better. In fact, if you know a formula for prosperity, just preach that - what else matters?

## What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

Eliphaz's advice might actually make sense if God worked the way he seems to expect, as a dispassionate and predictable overseer of a manageable religious system. But I think there is an answer to his rhetorical question, "What pleasure would it give the Almighty if you were righteous?" - lots! Right relationships are everything to God, and the Old and New Testaments are full of examples of the lengths God has gone to so that we can find righteousness and enjoy life with him. We find that through life in Christ, bought for us by the Almighty at the greatest imaginable cost.

## What am I going to do differently as a result?

Be a better helper than Eliphaz! I think remembering the depths of God's love as shown in Jesus is key to this, because it reminds me that, as clever and insightful as I'd like to think I am, God is the source of the wisdom, love and righteousness which can solve problems, and the best thing I can do is bring people to him to find those things.

## Who am I going to share this with?

We have a new open house group for online discussion. I'm hoping people will bring others along who want to get closer to Jesus. Our aim for this is that, even though we are physically separated, we can seek him together rather than try and sort life out by ourselves.



## **Friday April 24: Job 25-28**

### **How can a mortal be righteous before God?**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

We are reading most of this book with a **HEALTH WARNING** that there is much deliberately bad theology tossed into the word salad. We should be picky as we eat.

I really like that Job's advisors seem to be running out of steam. They've failed to convict Job of wrongdoing he has not done, and Bildad drops his mic (but not in a good way) with his conclusion that people are "maggots" who cannot possibly be pure before God. Maybe he was only thinking about what people could do by their own effort. He forgot about God's grace, power, love and promises.

Job remembers God's power and seems to realise something is missing from his understanding but can't identify what it is. At least he has hope and he knows there is wisdom which can help him.

But where is it? It's hidden and only "God understands the way to it." Are we about to see a breakthrough?

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

God knows how much we do not know, better than we know ourselves. But while we frustrate ourselves and each other by acting as if we have got our heads around everything, God encourages us to reach out to him when we know that there are things we do not know and cannot do by ourselves.

It turns out that the things which add the most value to our lives come through relationship with God. He does not offer them in exchange for our riches or efforts. Instead, he wants us to turn away from evil and towards him, swapping self-centred life for God-centred life. Then we can lose our delusions that we understand everything from our own points of view, but gain wisdom, starting to see everything from the viewpoint of the universe's creator.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

I value learning and growing understanding a great deal. I'm also finding out more about teaching thanks to good relationships with Noah's school and a new job (like millions of other parents) as a home tutor during lockdown! I believe that God gave us brains which are used well when we seek understanding through science. But our wisdom is not complete without knowing God directly – otherwise, how can we know what to do with knowledge? So we'll spend some more time praying and enjoying God's company this term at home.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

We'll share what we are doing, how and why with Noah's teacher and other staff, and I'm looking to share more about how people are home schooling in a new podcast soon. Look out for it (and let me know if you would like to be in it!)

# Monday April 27: Job 29-31

## Good grief

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

## What did I like about today's reading?

Maybe we don't need the daily **HEALTH WARNING** about not applying little bits of this too literally today because Job has turned fully into self-defence and self-justification. This might not be surprising after the attacks he has faced, but I'm wondering if his losses and suffering are also being expressed here in grief. There are some of the classic stages:

**Denial (chapter 29):** When psychologists talk about this in relation to grief, they mean denial of some present circumstances to avoid getting overwhelmed by shock. Numbness and a disconnection from sense might then change one's view of life and self. Job has been busy with a different kind of denial - against false accusations from his friends - but as he reflects on his losses, he seems to have an increasingly warped view of himself.

**Anger (chapter 30):** Job would normally turn to God for comfort, but he does not receive this through his religious-minded friends who did not understand as much as they thought they did. God even looks distant to Job now, so his unrelieved pain is sharply expressed in angry outbursts. In his determination to blame his troubles on something, it's between himself and God. So, he blames God for overwhelming, ongoing terrors in his life.

**Bargaining (chapter 31):** We often describe part of getting on with a situation as "dealing" or "coming to terms" with it. Here, Job is making terms and conditions with the words "if..." and "then...". Job is defending himself self-righteously, for sure, but it feels to me like, in his grief, Job is also reaching out to agree terms and build a contract with God.

In all of this, has Job sinned? We will get God's answer soon. But it does strike me that in this moment, Job's ability to be "one who comforts mourners" is profoundly drained. I don't know how much of this was an inevitable reaction to his initial losses, but I can see how much people who claim to understand more than they do are not very helpful.

## What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

God lets us grieve. He is not absent in our suffering but present, patient and ready for us to reach out to him when we are ready.

## What am I going to do differently as a result?

We may be entering a time where we know more grieving friends, family and neighbours than we have ever experienced. I am struck that as much as I like sharing bits of understanding and trying to help, I don't want to be like Job's friends. I need to get better at listening and supporting through presence rather than ill-informed advice.

## Who am I going to share this with?

I'm hoping there will not be too much grief in our immediate community, but we'll see.

## **Tuesday April 28: Job 32-35**

**Without love, we are nothing**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

I find this bit of the book awkward because Elihu reminds me of (a slightly younger) me. He has clearly studied up on God, and he's clever and attentive enough to have worked out which of Job's words he can use to hammer Job down. Elihu is sure he is right and, watching in frustration at everyone else messing up, he is attempting to minister out of anger. There's a reason why Jesus told us not to be angry - we can't handle anger, even "righteous anger", the way he can. We're much more likely to be self-righteous like Elihu, and he's not helping.

Why not? Much of what he says about God seems right. God does speak to people; he guides those who listen and delivers people from destruction. God does no evil, he does not pervert justice, and he is aware of people's actions - there is nowhere we can hide from God. In these respects, I think Elihu is right, but as a good friend once told me, I can be absolutely right and absolutely wrong at the same time.

Elihu lets his book learning and ideas speak louder than experience. His confidence to share his understanding so forcefully is misplaced because he has more to learn than he realises.

Elihu fails to recognise or respect Job's grief and apply any sensitivity whatsoever. Even if he did have spiritual understanding, it's being expressed without the love Paul wrote was so vital in 1 Corinthians 13 - he could fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, but if he does not love, he is nothing.

But worst of all, Elihu does not recognise God's love or its expression in Jesus. When Elihu asks about God "If you sin, how does that affect him?" he is arguing that God is above our actions, supremely detached, yet we know that God loved us so much that he sent Jesus, and that he would feel the full effect of all of our sins. We can know God's laws and crave his justice, but if we don't know his love, grace and self-sacrifice, we don't yet know God.

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

God knows the journey we have to go on to get to know him properly. It's not just about learning stuff, it's about loving him and our neighbours. He also knows that we can't learn to do that just from being told to do it. He might let us practise through difficult relationships.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

This reminds me that when I ask God to help me love more, I don't tend to feel a warm-feeling boost as much as I find there is someone challenging in my life to love. So I don't ask to do this as often as I should. That should change.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

Looking to grow in God's love and get better at sharing it needs to be a core topic in our open house discipleship group. We'll look together at how God wants to use us right now.

## **Thursday April 30: Job 36-38**

**BOOM, God shakes the room**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

I can't help picturing Elihu as a manic street preacher. Not the good kind, but the sort that winds himself up into a little ball of self-righteous rage before exploding into a magnificent monologue which aims to connect people with God but misses spectacularly. Turns out he didn't get Job and he didn't get God, but he did get properly into ranting.

I'm also loving that, as he comes to a thunderous crescendo, he feels the heavens opening and believes he is about to get showered with praise. "Well done! Thanks for defending me, young Elihu, I really needed that!" said God. At no time. To anyone. Ever.

Now that God has arrived, what did you think he was going to say?

When I first read this, I was pretty good at school and study and expected my understanding to be recognised, if gently corrected and nudged forwards from time to time. There is nothing gentle about God's response! It's a proper "BOOM son, don't you know who I AM?"

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

God wants us to know him. He does not want us to get too comfortable with our ideas about him. We really don't understand as much as we think we do, or as much as we will after we spend more time with God and put his words, power and love into practice.

Maybe that is why encounters with God can be so surprising. Have you heard the ones about people praying for healing and finding their legs stretch? (We found that at Causeway Coast Vineyard with Mark Marx!) Or the people who got gold fillings out of nowhere? (That made the BBC News in 1999...) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/324274.stm>

"Hasn't God got anything better to do?" asked one Christian critic at the time. Maybe he could follow our project plan instead. Look, we've mapped it all out with our understanding. God, in his understanding, knows that what we need most is to meet and recognise him.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

I need to spend more time with God, listening to him and expecting him to show up, perhaps in surprising ways. I know he doesn't need any lessons or defence from me, and I don't want my limited understanding to make me fail to get him and learn when he acts.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

People I pray with, especially when we intercede and ask God to do particular things in situations we think we understand. Maybe God will answer our prayers in surprising ways. I know that I don't want to fall into the trap of thinking I should direct him to act when he can do far more amazing things by simply revealing himself. Then we can believe, and he can direct us.

## **Friday May 1: Job 39-42**

### **Now my eyes have seen you**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

It would be madness at this point to say that I now understand everything about God and suffering. Clearly the writer is not trying to tie up a simple idea with a neat little bow as much as smash us around the heads with the enormity of God's glory. It changes Job, and through this his family, community and country are also blessed.

It turns out that while our fingers might be pointing at ideas we think we have mastered or people we know are to blame for all of our ills, God's arms are wide open to show us wonders beyond our comprehension, unfathomable depths of concern for and involvement with us, surprising kinds of intervention and unfeasible amounts of love for us to share.

Have you seen this? Has God impressed you yet? I don't think anything can change and empower us as much as an encounter with the living God, even if we can't understand everything about it.

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

Is there a cooler dad anywhere? I want to spend time with him! Also, I think I can appreciate some of the importance of family and relationships to God through this whole story. It illustrates how religion without relationship was only ever going to be a frustrating experience for us, leading to misunderstanding and conflict - all the things people blame religion for before they have really got Jesus.

In a way I think Job points towards Jesus - blameless but suffering, and given the ability by Father God of speaking prophetic truth about him and performing some priestly duties to benefit some people. But Jesus will be so much more, the fullness of God in a form we can relate to, a prophet, a priest and also a King for the benefit of us all.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

The question has kept crossing my mind about how God might be steering and preparing us to meet grieving, suffering people who want answers or at least a satisfying way forwards. As someone who enjoys exploring ideas, I'm happy to debate hard questions with anyone who wants to reconcile the existence of suffering in a world with a loving, powerful God.

But I don't want to trouble my neighbours the way Job's friends troubled him with their understanding. What if we simply don't know why? I am resolving to be less like the clever people with answers, but more like Job after he stopped arguing and looked at God.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

I don't yet know. I expect there will be time to hear people's stories and worries soon enough. I pray that the Spirit will move us to stop, grieve and cry if we need to, but also meet and move us to wonder about hope, love and "things too wonderful for me to know."