

Job 16
June 14, 2026

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What makes someone a good comforter when you're hurting? [Let people engage]

Q: What helps you maintain hope when you don't have explanations for your suffering or hardships? [Let people engage]

Transition: There are several themes that emerge in chapter 16: inadequate comfort, loneliness in suffering, honesty with God, and the desire for someone to advocate on our behalf. I hope we don't get tired of listening to Job! He is being very transparent with his friends and with God. Let's hear what he has to say. Would someone read Job 16 out loud?

BOOK:

16 Then Job replied:

² "I have heard many things like these;
miserable comforters are you all!

³ Will your long-winded speeches never end?
What ails you that you keep on arguing?

⁴ I also could speak like you,
if you were in my place;
I could make fine speeches against you
and shake my head at you.

⁵ But my mouth would encourage you;
comfort from my lips would bring you relief.

⁶ "Yet if I speak, my pain is not relieved;
and if I refrain, it does not go away.

⁷ Surely, O God, you have worn me out;
you have devastated my entire household.

⁸ You have bound me—and it has become a witness;
my gauntness rises up and testifies against me.

⁹ God assails me and tears me in his anger
and gnashes his teeth at me;
my opponent fastens on me his piercing eyes.

¹⁰ Men open their mouths to jeer at me;
they strike my cheek in scorn
and unite together against me.

¹¹ God has turned me over to evil men
and thrown me into the clutches of the wicked.

¹² All was well with me, but he shattered me;
he seized me by the neck and crushed me.

He has made me his target;

¹³ his archers surround me.

Without pity, he pierces my kidneys
and spills my gall on the ground.

¹⁴ Again and again he bursts upon me;
he rushes at me like a warrior.

¹⁵ “I have sewed sackcloth over my skin
and buried my brow in the dust.

¹⁶ My face is red with weeping,
deep shadows ring my eyes;

¹⁷ yet my hands have been free of violence
and my prayer is pure.

¹⁸ “O earth, do not cover my blood;
may my cry never be laid to rest!

¹⁹ Even now my witness is in heaven;
my advocate is on high.

²⁰ My intercessor is my friend (*Or My friends treat me with scorn*)
as my eyes pour out tears to God;

²¹ on behalf of a man he pleads with God
as a man pleads for his friend.

²² “Only a few years will pass
before I go on the journey of no return.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Choose compassion over quick answers. Job’s friends were convinced they understood why he was suffering, but their explanations only deepened his pain. When someone is hurting, focus first on listening and showing compassion rather than immediately offering explanations, advice, or judgments.

Hold onto hope even when you don’t understand why you’re going through such hardship and suffering. Despite his anguish, Job expresses hope that there is a witness or advocate for him (v.19-21). In the midst of despair, he still looks beyond his circumstances. When life doesn’t make sense, trust that God sees, understands, and will ultimately vindicate what is right – even when answers are delayed.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W.W. (1996). Be Patient, (pp. 60-62) Victor Books

Job's response is to utter three heartfelt requests: first, a plea to his friends for sympathy (Job 16:1–14); then, a plea to God for justice (vv. 15–22); and finally, a plea to God to end his life and relieve him of suffering (17:1–16).

A plea for sympathy (Job 16:1–14). Job's friends still had not identified with his situation; they did not feel his agony or understand his perplexity. Job had already called them deceitful brooks (see 6:15) and "worthless physicians" (13:4, NIV), but now he calls them "miserable comforters" (16:2). All of their attempts to comfort him only made him more miserable! As the saying goes, "With friends like you, who needs enemies?"

Job assured them that, if they were in his shoes, he would treat them with more understanding than they were showing him. Instead of making long speeches, he would give them words of encouragement. He would listen with his heart and try to help them bear their burdens.

Sometimes we have to experience misunderstanding from unsympathetic friends in order to learn how to minister to others. This was a new experience for Job, and he was trying to make the most of it. However, whether Job spoke or kept quiet, he was still a suffering man (v. 6). In his appeal for loving sympathy, Job told his friends what he was receiving from the hand of God (vv. 7–14). Job is worn out; his family is gone; he is gaunt and weak. Both men and God attack him. Job feels like God has painted a target on his back and handed everybody bows and arrows! There is no relief—God keeps assaulting him like a relentless warrior. "I didn't attack God—He attacked me!" God was his enemy (16:9; 13:24), and nothing Job could do would bring about a truce. If Job looked up, God was against him. If he looked around, his friends were against him. Where could he turn?

A plea for justice (Job 16:15–22). How had Job responded to God's attacks? He put on sackcloth, wept in humiliation and contrition, and buried his face in the dust. In spite of the accusations of Eliphaz (15:4–6), Job knew he was right before God and that God would hear his prayers (16:17).

Job was caught on the horns of a dilemma. His suffering was so great that he longed to die, but he didn't want to die before he could vindicate himself or see God vindicate him. This explains his cry in verse 18: "O earth, do not cover my blood, and let my cry have no resting place!" (NKJV) The ancients believed that the blood of innocent victims cried out to God for justice (Gen. 4:8–15) and that the spirits of the dead were restless until the corpses were properly buried (Isa. 26:21). Even if Job died, he would be restless until he had been proved righteous by the Lord.

Job's repeated cry has been for a fair trial before the Lord (Job 9:1–4, 14–16, 19–20, 28–35; 10:2; 13:6–8, 19). He has lamented the fact that he had no advocate to represent him before God's throne (9:33). None of his friends would defend him, so his only hope was that God in heaven would defend him and bear witness to his integrity (16:19). But Job yearned for someone to plead with God on his behalf (v. 21).

The Christian believer has this heavenly Advocate in Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1–2). As our interceding High Priest, Christ gives us the conquering grace we need when we are tempted and tested (Heb. 2:17–18; 4:14–16). If we fail, then He is our Advocate to forgive us and restore us when we confess our sins to Him (1 John 1:5–2:2).

Of course, Job wanted a “lawyer” to plead his case before God and convince Him that he was innocent. Once Job had won his case, then God would vindicate him before his critical friends and restore Job’s honor. God’s people don’t need that kind of intercession because the Father and the Son are in perfect agreement in their love for us and their plan for our lives. The Lord Jesus ever lives to make intercession for His people (Rom. 8:31–39; Heb. 7:25) and to perfect them in the will of God (13:20–21). We come to a throne of grace, not a throne of judgment; and we have confidence that our loving Father will do that which is best for us.

Zuck, R. B. (1985). *Job*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 738-739) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

a. Job’s disgust (16:1–5)

16:1–5. What disappointing consolers these so-called friends turned out to be! They told **Job** nothing new (cf. 9:2), and they were **miserable comforters** (lit., “comforters of trouble,” *‘āmāl*, the same word Eliphaz had just used, 15:35). They compounded rather than eased his trouble. Furthermore, they babbled with **long-winded speeches** and arguments (cf. “blustering wind,” 8:2; and “hot east wind,” 15:2), unlike good counselors who console and listen. Apparently, Job was surprised that Eliphaz came back at him a second time as if something **ails** him (**you** in 16:4–5 is plural, but in v. 3b it is singular).

If they could change places, Job could fire verbal bullets at them and deride them (to **shake** one’s **head** was to mock; cf. 2 Kings 19:21; Ps. 22:7). But he would not do that. Instead, he would give encouragement and **comfort** (as he had done in the past for others; Job 4:4; 29:21–23) in order to provide some **relief** to their problems. He would console, not condemn.

b. Job’s distress (16:6–17)

16:6–8. Once again Job turned to bemoan his torment at the hands of God. Whether he spoke up or not, his **pain** lingered on. **God** had **worn** him down and weakened him with all his agony; he was distressed because for one thing his offspring and servants (**household**) were killed, and for another he was physically emaciated, as his **gauntness** clearly showed (cf. 17:7).

16:9–14. Like a savage beast **God**, in His hostility, Job sensed, attacked him, tore at him **in ... anger** (cf. 14:13; 19:11), and snarled and glared at him. Besides that, people made fun of him (cf. 30:1, 9–10), struck him, and in their opposition amassed themselves **against** him like soldiers. **God** had left him in the hands of **evil men** and **the wicked**, an obvious contradiction of Eliphaz’s hints that Job was wicked (15:12–35).

Job accused God of shattering him (cf. 16:7) and, again like a beast (cf. v. 9), grabbing him **by the neck** and crushing him (cf. 9:17). Besides being like a fierce beast, God was like an archer, using Job for **target** practice (cf. 6:4; 7:20), wounding him, and causing his **gall** to spill out. Job

also likened God to a **warrior** attacking him. In all this, Job was again wrong in attributing hostility to God. Yet he could see no other explanation.

16:15–17. Because of God’s attacks, Job wore **sackcloth** (like burlap) as a symbol of grief (cf. Gen. 37:34; 2 Kings 19:1; Neh. 9:1; Es. 4:1; Lam. 2:10; Dan. 9:3; Joel 1:8, 13), thrust his **brow** (lit., “animal horn”), **in the dust**, the figure of a defeated animal. His tears made his **face ... red**, and his anguish put **shadows** under his eyelids. **Yet** Job was **free of violence**, not ruthless as Eliphaz had suggested (15:20), and his praying was from **pure** motives, not selfish ones. So his ordeal was unexplainable. Why should he be in such torment when he was not a terrible person?

c. Job’s desire (16:18–17:5)

16:18–21. Job pleaded with the **earth** that it not **cover** his **blood**, that is, that his injustice be vindicated (cf. Gen. 4:10) and that his **cry** for justice not be buried and forgotten.

Turning from earth to **heaven** Job was confident that there he had a **witness**, or an **advocate** (*šāhēd*, an Aramaic word, used only here in the OT), one who is an **intercessor** (*mēlīš*, “an interpreter or ambassador”; cf. Job 33:23, “mediator”; Gen. 42:23, “interpreter”; Isa. 43:27, “spokesman”). This **friend**, Job hoped, would plead (*yākah*, “argue, debate in court”) **with God** on his **behalf**. Since no mediator could rise *above* both God and man (Job 9:33), Job wanted a spokesman, a kind of heavenly defense attorney who could speak on God’s level. Job’s companions had not spoken on his behalf, so he needed someone who would.

16:22–17:2. Since Job thought his life was drawing to a close (**only a few years.... my days are cut short**; cf. 7:6, 9; 9:25–26; 10:20; 14:1–2, 5; 17:11), with death being final (**no return**; cf. 7:9; 10:21; 14:12), he needed an intercessor’s help right away. He was depressed (**my spirit is broken**), for all he could see around him with his tear-filled **eyes** (cf. 16:16, 20; 17:7) were his friends (whom he called **mockers!**) with **their hostility**.

Garrett, D. A. (1998). *The Poetic and Wisdom Books*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (pp. 207-208). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Job Laments and Prays (16:1–17:16). Job vented his frustration over his pain, his confusion about what God had done to him, and his anger at the empty words of his “comforters.” But the careful chiasm (a pattern repeating ideas in inverted order) shows that there is more here than an emotional outburst, and a confession of hope stands at the very center of the whole.

That confession returns to the theme of the heavenly Arbitrator or Intercessor. Job was now certain of the reality of the Intercessor. He had previously only wished that such an Intercessor existed (9:33–34). Job had already far surpassed his friends in the understanding of God’s ways, and his sufferings would drive him deeper still.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Job 16). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.