

Job 32
October 11, 2026

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: When is youthful confidence refreshing, and when does it become arrogance? [Let people engage]

Transition: We are going to meet a *young man* named Elihu. That tension between confidence and arrogance is exactly what we see in Elihu—and it's worth asking whether his passion for truth justifies his approach, or whether his certainty blinds him to his own limitations.

So as we read his speeches, let's pay attention to what he says about Job and his friends, but also *how* he says it. What does his tone tell us about whether he's truly seeking to help, or primarily seeking to prove himself right? Let's begin

BOOK:

32 So these three men stopped answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. ² But Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became very angry with Job for justifying himself rather than God. ³ He was also angry with the three friends, because they had found no way to refute Job, and yet had condemned him. ⁴ Now Elihu had waited before speaking to Job because they were older than he. ⁵ But when he saw that the three men had nothing more to say, his anger was aroused.

⁶ So Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite said:

“I am young in years,
and you are old;
that is why I was fearful,
not daring to tell you what I know.

⁷ I thought, ‘Age should speak;
advanced years should teach wisdom.’

⁸ But it is the spirit in a man,
the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.

⁹ It is not only the old who are wise,
not only the aged who understand what is right.

¹⁰ “Therefore, I say: Listen to me;
I too will tell you what I know.

¹¹ I waited while you spoke,
I listened to your reasoning;
while you were searching for words,

¹² I gave you my full attention.
But not one of you has proved Job wrong;
none of you has answered his arguments.

¹³ Do not say, ‘We have found wisdom;
let God refute him, not man.’

¹⁴ But Job has not marshaled his words against me,
and I will not answer him with your arguments.

¹⁵ “They are dismayed and have no more to say;
words have failed them.

¹⁶ Must I wait, now that they are silent,
now that they stand there with no reply?

¹⁷ I too will have my say;
I too will tell what I know.

¹⁸ For I am full of words,
and the spirit within me compels me;

¹⁹ inside I am like bottled-up wine,
like new wineskins ready to burst.

²⁰ I must speak and find relief;
I must open my lips and reply.

²¹ I will show partiality to no one,
nor will I flatter any man;

²² for if I were skilled in flattery,
my Maker would soon take me away.

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:

On Humility and Self-Awareness

Elihu’s conviction that God’s Spirit imparts insight and understanding—not age or experience alone—raises an important tension: while age deserves respect, it doesn’t guarantee wisdom.¹

Do you assume wisdom flows automatically from seniority, credentials, or experience? Where have you been surprised by insight from unexpected sources?

On the Danger of Certainty

The three friends failed to address Job’s actual arguments and remained entrenched in personal conflict, while Elihu positioned himself as removed from the rancor and proposed fresh approaches.¹ Yet even Elihu’s corrective theology—that God sometimes chastens rather than punishes the righteous—ultimately went unvalidated when God appeared without referencing his speeches at all.² This teaches caution: certainty about why others suffer, even with good intentions, can miss the mark entirely.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W.W. (1996). *Be Patient*. (pp. 122-125) Victor Books

1. God is speaking through me (Job 32)

Elihu emphasized that he had waited patiently before speaking, and he gave two reasons. For one thing, he was younger than Job and the three friends; and youth must respect age and experience (Job 32:4, 6–7). It would have been a terrible breach of etiquette had Elihu interrupted his elders.

His second reason was because he wanted to hear the complete debate and have all the arguments before him (v. 11; Prov. 18:13). The fact that Elihu quoted from their speeches indicates that he had listened closely and remembered what each man said (Job 32:12). Like many “young theologians,” Elihu had a bit of youthful conceit in his speeches (“Hear what I know!”—vv. 6, 10, 17; 33:1–3); but for the most part, he was a sincere young man who really thought he could help Job find answers to his questions.

Having introduced himself into the discussion, Elihu then gave four reasons to explain why it was important for him to speak and for them to listen. After all, he was a “nobody”; and he had to convince them that what he had to say was worth hearing.

He was indignant (Job 32:1–3, 5). Four times in these verses we are told that Elihu was angry. He was angry at the three friends for not refuting Job, and he was angry at Job for justifying himself rather than God. Job claimed that God was wrong, and the three friends couldn’t prove that Job was wrong! Bildad, Zophar, and Eliphaz had given up the cause (v. 15) and were waiting for God to come and deal personally with Job (vv. 12–13). Elihu was disgusted at their failure.

“It is easy to fly into a passion—anybody can do that,” wrote Aristotle. “But to be angry with the right person to the right extent and at the right time and with the right object and in the right way—that is not easy, and it is not everyone who can do it.”

He was inspired (Job 32:8–10). Age should bring wisdom, but there is no guarantee that it will (Prov. 16:31). Alas, there are old fools as well as young fools! As a younger man, Elihu couldn’t claim to have wide experience in the ways of God and men; but he claimed to have something better: the insight of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit had instructed Elihu’s spirit (1 Cor. 2:11) and revealed God’s truths to him. Elihu didn’t need the wisdom that comes with experience, for he had been taught by God (Ps. 119:97–100).

This explains why Elihu repeatedly exhorted Job and his friends to listen to him (Job 32:10; 33:1, 31, 33; 34:2, 10, 16; 37:14). It also explains why he emphasized the phrases “mine opinion” (32:6, 10, 17; “what I know” in the NIV) and “my words” (33:1–3). It isn’t every day that you can hear a man who has been inspired by God, so you had better listen!

He was impartial (Job 32:14, 21–22). “Now he has not directed his words against me, so I will not answer him with your words” (v. 14, NKJV). Elihu made it clear that he had no reason for taking sides since neither Job nor any of the three friends had attacked him personally. Elihu also

said that he would avoid rehashing the same arguments that they had used, though he didn't fully live up to that promise.

Elihu may have been impartial but he was by no means neutral. He was too angry for that! He promised to deal only with issues, but some of the things he said in his anger were more personal than philosophical. But he did keep his promise and not flatter anyone (vv. 21–22). As you read his speech, you will notice that six times he addressed Job by his first name (33:1; 34:5, 7, 35, 36; 35:16), something that even Job's three closest friends had not done in their many speeches. In the East, it was most unusual for a younger man to address his elders in such a familiar way.

He was impelled (Job 32:16–20). Elihu had waited a long time for the opportunity to speak; and while he was waiting, the pressure within him had built up to the bursting point. He was full of words like a wineskin full of wine. As the new wine ferments, it produces gas that inflates the wineskin; and if the skin is old and dry, it will break (Matt. 9:17). If anybody had suggested that Elihu was “full of gas,” he would have been offended; because to him, it was God's Spirit compelling him to speak. Elihu had a mandate from God to tell everybody what he knew. Little did he know that, when God finally appeared on the scene, He would completely ignore Elihu and all that he said.

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. 755-756) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

a. Introduction to Elihu (32:1–5)

32:1–3. Job's **three** opponents gave up the battle because they could not persuade him to deny his innocence and confess to having led a wicked life. Sensing that all four debaters were talked out (cf. vv. 5, 15–16), **Elihu** then pitched in. Elihu's father **Barakel** was a **Buzite**, probably a descendant of Abraham's nephew Buz (Gen. 22:20–21). Interestingly Uz, the older brother of Buz (!), was possibly the person after whom “the land of Uz” (Job 1:1) was named.

Elihu was **angry** (cf. 32:5) with both sides of the debate. He was incensed **with Job** because he defended **himself** against all wrongdoing while accusing **God** of doing wrong (cf. 40:2). Job was more willing to cast aspersions on God's character than to admit to any sin. Also Elihu was inflamed **with the three ... because they** pronounced **Job** guilty but without adequate evidence (cf. 32:12). Anger seemed to characterize much of these verbal bouts. The three pugilists were mad at Job; he was mad at them and at God; and he sensed that God was angry with him. And now Elihu was infuriated too!

32:4–5. **Elihu**, however, had been patient during the lengthy controversy, deferring to their age as was the custom in the ancient Near East (cf. 29:8a, 21; 32:6–7, 11–12a). Seeing that **the three men had** run out of ways to play their one string, Elihu was irritated (cf. vv. 1–2). Perhaps **his anger was aroused** because he felt they should have done more than merely pounce on Job repeatedly as if he were an inveterate sinner who needed to repent.

b. Elihu's introduction of himself (32:6–22)

Before Elihu actually began his argument against Job (starting in 33:1) he first took a number of sentences to justify his right to speak. Rather than these words being a sign of braggadocio, as some writers suggest, they seem to be necessary as a way for Elihu to be accepted and to gain a hearing. For him, a silent listener, to barge in without defending why he should be allowed to enter the debate, would have been obtrusive. A pushy attitude might mean he would have been turned off with no one listening. Yet Elihu was confident he had insight into Job's situation (32:10, 17; 33:33; 36:2–4).

(1) Elihu's defense of his wisdom.

32:6–9. Admitting his younger age, **Elihu** said he dared not interrupt and give his views (he mentioned **what I know** four times: vv. 6, 10, 17; 33:3), because **wisdom**, as was acknowledged in those days, supposedly resided with the elderly (cf. 12:12). One's **advanced years** gave him more experience and hence more insight. However, Elihu reasoned that younger persons are not necessarily without wisdom because it comes from God, not from **years**. **The spirit in a man** may refer to the Spirit of God (cf. NIV), who is often associated with wisdom (Gen. 41:38–39; Ex. 31:3; Num. 27:18–21; Isa. 11:2; Dan. 5:11–12) as its source. **Understanding**, Elihu dared suggest, is not limited to **the aged**. (**The old**, Job 32:9, is lit., “many,” possibly meaning those who have lived many years.)

(2) Elihu's disappointment with the three (32:10–14).

32:10. Elihu now asked that they **listen to** him since he had listened for so long to them. Eight times he voiced his request that the three and/or Job listen to him (v. 10; 33:1, 31, 33; 34:2, 10, 16; 37:14), apparently expressing his apprehension that they might not hear him out because of his youth. But yet Elihu believed he had some knowledge on the issue at hand that had not yet been aired (**what I know**; cf. 32:6, 17; 33:3).

32:11–13. He had been patiently silent **while** they spoke and he heard their **reasoning**. (Their **searching for words** might possibly suggest that some time [hours or even days] may have lapsed between some of the speeches.) With their **arguments** they had **not ... proved Job wrong** in his claim to an upright life. Therefore, they should not claim to be wise or claim that if they could not **refute** him, **God** would. The second line of verse 13 could be understood, however, as Elihu's own suggestion, rather than as part of his quotation of the three. If so, then his point was that they should let *God* defeat Job's arguments, since man could not do it.

LOOK:

1. Layton Talbert, [*Beyond Suffering: Discovering the Message of Job*](#) (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2007), [178](#).
2. Warren W. Wiersbe, [*Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993).