



## Dear Friends,

This week, we begin a sermon series on the Book of Job.

My first main encounter with Job was in my first year of Bible College in 1998. I had just left working as a lawyer for ten years to become a ministry candidate and sign up to four years of fulltime study and training. I was married with two kids and Kathryn was pregnant with our third child. It seemed like a crazy thing to do – to leave behind a job I loved, go back to school and live off AUSTUDY with a growing family.

Fulltime study at Bible College really does feel like pressing your mouth up to the fire hose and drinking from it. There is so much information coming at you. I was enrolled in overview of Old and New Testament units, Church History, Theology, learning New Testament Greek language, and practical classes like preaching. I loved learning. I discovered there was a huge amount I didn't know about the Bible, about the church's understanding of Christianity, and about how Christian truths are connected to each other. It was exciting. My mind was regularly being blown away by what I was learning in classes and in my readings.

But it was also challenging to be at College. I don't mean academically. I mean existentially. I mean spiritually. We spent a lot of time in the Bible, talking about God and thinking about God. Not just in formal classes. College also ran chapel services and fellowship groups.

This constant immersion in God's Word reminds me of the saying, "familiarity breeds contempt." All that time in the Bible and praying and engaging in devotional practices doesn't so much lead to contempt for the holy things of God, as it does complacency and a taking of things for granted so that you don't value them as you should. The last thing you want to happen to you at Bible College is that you become a smarter sinner.

I went to College thinking that I would receive all the information I needed about the Bible, Theology, etc., to be equipped to be a pastor in a local church. What I had not consciously accounted for was the invisible work that God wanted to do in me by his Spirit to make me more like Jesus. This work would be achieved through time in the Bible and being around Christians who were similarly ministry-minded. But it would also happen through the stuff of life.

This brings me back to the Book of Job. Job is the Biblical book with the most to say about suffering. It is the story of one man's journey of suffering. His suffering is long, painful, and intense. It's not so much a journey from one destination to another as it is an exploration into the mind and emotions of a person who experiences unimaginable pain at almost every level.

The book of Job raises epic questions about God, life and the universe.

- How can a good God allow a righteous person to suffer?
- Can God be both all-powerful and good?
- How are humans to respond when they suffer?
- How are we to care for those who suffer?
- What is the place of suffering in God's purposes?

It was while studying Job that I experienced the most harrowing year in my life. Studying Job was no longer an intellectual exercise. I was living it. It's truths became my reality. It's questions became my questions. My own suffering led me to ask, do I really believe all this stuff I'm learning about at College?

The answer to that question is, yes. But only after having a Job-like experience.

God Bless,  
Mark Adams