

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **Justice and Adversity**

February 2022

Winter Quarter

**February 19, 2022**

**Lesson #3 – Bildad Misspeaks God’s Justice**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Job 8:1-10, 20-22

**ICE BREAKERS-**

1. *Why might it be easy to assume that God was punishing someone to whom bad things were happening?*
2. *How can you guard against thinking or speaking in ways that assume you know why God has allowed something to happen?*

***Key Verse: Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, How long wilt thou speak these things? and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind? —Job 8:1–2***

**LESSON BACKGROUND –**

The book of Job is among the oldest biblical texts, and it deals with one of humanity’s oldest challenges: maintaining hope in the face of suffering. The text also addresses another shared experience: the desire for justice in the midst of suffering.

Job’s suffering was the catalyst for his friends’ arrival. At the onset of the book, Job was described as “perfect and upright,” one who actively “feared God” and “eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). However, Job experienced undue tragedy. His flocks and servants were taken or killed (1:13–17), his 10 children died (1:2, 18–19), and he was afflicted with intense physical suffering (2:7). Without an explanation for the tragedies, Job remained faithful to God and did not “sin with his lips” (2:10).

Job’s friends—Bildad, Eliphaz and Zophar—are introduced when, on hearing of Job’s suffering, they “made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him” (Job 2:11). When they reached Job, they were shocked at his appearance and were unable to recognize him. They raised their voices, wept, and took a posture of mourning, remaining silent for “seven days and seven nights” (2:12–13).

Finally Job spoke, pouring out his anguish in great torrents of despair. His suffering overwhelmed him to the point of his cursing his own birth (Job 3:3). Job cried out that the thing he dreaded in life had happened: he experienced no consolation and no peace (3:25–26).

In response to Job’s lament, his friends spoke in cycles of back-and-forth discussions. Eliphaz and Bildad each addressed him three times, while Zophar addressed him twice. Each argument was countered by Job. This lesson’s Scripture text highlights Bildad’s first response to Job’s lament. It is reasonable to conclude that Job’s friends were sincere in wanting to care for Job, even though their counsel was incompetent (see Job 6:21; 16:2).

## **LESSON COMMENTARY**

**8:1–14.** Job ended his lament in chap. 7 with the statement, “For now I will lie down in the dust; and You will seek me, but I will not be” (v. 21). His complaint and questioning of God brought a stinging rebuke from one of his visiting friends, **Bildad**, who is identified as a **Shuhite** (v. 1). In cuneiform tablets, an area near the Euphrates River is called Suhu. Some see Bildad as a member of the tribe named for Shuah, the son of Abraham and Keturah (Gn 25:2). Bildad addressed Job’s turmoil and responded in a much harsher tone and attitude than did Eliphaz.

As did Eliphaz, Bildad believed that a person’s calamities result from his or her sins. Bildad also echoed Eliphaz in saying that Job might be able to recover from his woes if only he would acknowledge his sin. But in contrast to Eliphaz’s appeal to personal experience (“I have seen,” 4:8) and his dream (4:12–21), Bildad appealed to the experience of previous generations in this speech. And while Eliphaz began his first speech with a question that was “soft and courteous ... Bildad’s opening query was blunt and discourteous” (Zuck, *Job*, 43).

Bildad directly stated that Job harbored perverted ideas about God’s justice, for apparently his children got what they deserved (vv. 1–4). Bildad was angry at Job’s insistence on his innocence, his expressed frustration with his three friends, and his statements that God was hounding him despite his lack of wrongdoing. Bildad was also apparently upset that Job had rejected Eliphaz’s gentle rebuke. He characterized Job’s defense to Eliphaz in chaps. 6–7, as just a **mighty wind** (v. 2) producing nothing of value. In v. 3, Bildad strongly argued that if Job’s accusations about God were true, then that would make God unjust since He would be afflicting one who did not deserve it (cf. 40:8). The only explanation for the death of Job’s children was that God **delivered them into the power of their transgression** (v. 4)—a charge that must have wounded Job deeply. But as far as Bildad was concerned, if God is God as presented by Job and his friends in this theological debate, then the only conclusion anyone could come to was that Job must be the one who is wrong.

Bildad then confronted Job, maintaining that *his* sin must have to be the cause of the death of his children. Alden notes, “The most cruel and least tactful part of Bildad’s confrontation is just a restatement of the basic theology of retribution that the three friends held to so tenaciously” (*Job*, 116). Bildad told Job to **seek God** and if he did, God would restore his **estate** (vv. 5–7). Bildad also encouraged Job to seek the sound wisdom of **past generations** (v. 8) and not to forget it because one’s life is like a mere **shadow** (v. 9). Bildad directed Job to consider a body of truth handed down from former generations. Apparently Bildad believed that truth and wisdom were not limited to their generation. His statement that Job would learn from past generations by studying the **words from their minds** may have been Bildad’s way of “sarcastically hinting that Job’s words were from his mouth only [v. 2] and not from his mind” (Zuck, *Job*, 44).

**8:15–22.** Job had no respite from Bildad’s accusations. The latter said the wicked person **trusts in his house, but it does not stand**—perhaps suggesting that Job was trusting in his estate as his confidence. Bildad also suggested that Job was like a thriving plant that was then uprooted (vv. 16–18), to be replaced by

other plants (v. 19). But God honors people of **integrity** (v. 20). If Job were to repent, God would enable him to laugh and the wicked would be abolished (vv. 21–22).

**LESSON NUGGET** – Bildad was a devoted traditionalist who called his witnesses from the past. There is nothing wrong with our learning from the past, provided it does not turn the present into a museum and the future into a cemetery. Someone has said, “Tradition is the living face of dead people, while traditionalism is the dead face of living people.” Is the past encouraging you or embalming you?

***Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary***