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FALL SERIES 2024 – WEEK 6

Job 8, 18, 25: Bildad the Bully

*For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty.
Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; your own lips testify against you.
– Job 15:5-6 ESV*

- **When being right goes wrong**
 - Bildad is a theological thug
 - His God lacks mercy
 - So does Bildad's message
 - He is a dogmatist

dogmatist – Given to the expression of opinions very strongly or positively as if they were facts. – *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

“Bildad so focuses on God’s justice that he is blind to Job’s blamelessness.” – Daniel J. Estes, Job: Teach the Text Commentary Series

- **When theology becomes non-therapeutic**
 - His theology has desensitized him
 - He lacks compassion and empathy
 - His God and world are black and white
 - He is obsessed by rightness not righteousness

*Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:
“**Dominion** and **fear** are with God;
he makes peace in his high heaven.
Is there any number to his **armies**?
Upon whom does **his light** not arise?*

*How then can man **be in the right** before God?
How can he who is born of woman **be pure**?
Behold, even the moon is **not bright**,
and the stars are **not pure** in his eyes;
how much less man, who is **a maggot**,
and the son of man, who is **a worm!**" – Job 25:1-6 ESV*

- Bildad's concept of God:
 - God rules over all – men and angels
 - He has the power to promote or demote
 - He makes peace through intimidation
 - Nothing is of any worth or value to Him
 - He is the uncaring arbiter of men's fate

- **Deism, not theism**

A deist believes that God exists and created the world, but does not interfere with His creation. Deists deny the Trinity, the inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Christ, miracles, and any supernatural act of redemption or salvation. Deism pictures God as uncaring and uninvolved.

"Bildad focuses so much on the transcendence of God that God **becomes inaccessible** and unfathomable, and his sovereign control prompts a sense of dreadful awe from his creatures." – Daniel J. Estes, *Job: Teach the Text Commentary Series*

*Who is like the LORD our God,
who is seated on high,
who looks far down
on the heavens and the earth?
He raises the poor from the dust
and **lifts the needy** from the ash heap,
to make them sit with princes,
with the princes of his people.
He gives the barren woman a home,
making her the joyous mother of children.
Praise the LORD! – Psalm 113:5-9 ESV*

*The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.
He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him... – Psalm 1-3:8-11 ESV*

- According to Bildad, Yahweh is...
 - ...the all-powerful, judgment-wreaking God
 - ...the all-righteous, impossible-to-satisfy God
 - ...the justice-dispensing, vengeance-seeking God
 - ...the fear-inducing, peace-at-all-costs God

“Bildad’s God is so exalted that he is distant and remote from humans. His God demands justice to such an extent that there is **no room for grace or forgiveness.**” – Daniel J. Estes, *Job: Teach the Text Commentary Series*

- **An appeal to human wisdom**

*“For inquire, please, of bygone ages,
and **consider what the fathers have searched out.**
For we are but of yesterday and know nothing,
for our days on earth are a shadow.
Will they not teach you and tell you
and utter words out of their understanding?”* – Job 8:8-10 ESV

- Bildad is an **intellectual** and a **rationalist**
- His theology is based upon reason
- Without revelation, he is left to rely upon human intellect and experience
- His intelligence is his greatest enemy

*“I will again
do wonderful things with this people,
with wonder upon wonder;
and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish,
and the discernment of their discerning men shall be hidden.”* – Isaiah 29:14 ESV

- Paul quotes this verse:

For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? – 1 Corinthians 1:19-20 ESV

- **Consider the source**

- Where do you go for wisdom?
 - Who do you turn to for insights about life?
 - Who do you tend to quote?
 - Whose advice do you tend to take?
 - What’s your criteria for accuracy?
 - What’s the source of their knowledge?

- Even Job questioned his friend's wisdom

*"But do people know where to find wisdom?
Where can they find understanding?
No one knows where to find it,
for it is not found among the living."* – Job 28:12-13 NLT

*"But do people know where to find wisdom?
Where can they find understanding?
It is hidden from the eyes of all humanity."* – Job 28:20-21 NLT

*"God alone understands the way to wisdom;
he knows where it can be found...
he saw wisdom and evaluated it.
He set it in place and examined it thoroughly.
And this is what he says to all humanity:
'The fear of the Lord is true wisdom;
to forsake evil is real understanding.'"* – Job 28:27-28 NLT

"A larger practical application of Bildad's speech...is that we should acknowledge when our understanding of God's ways has reached its limits. Neither Job nor any of the three could explain why Job had been afflicted, and none of them know how to respond to the problem of evil." – Duane A. Garrett, Job: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary

- **The complexity of theodicy**

- The all-too-pervasive problem of evil
- How do you reconcile a **good** God and **evil**?
- If God is the creator of all things...is He responsible for evil?
- Job's friends defend God's righteousness
- But they can't explain the presence of evil

Theodicy is a branch of philosophy dealing with the issue of evil in light of the existence of God. If God is just, holy, and good, then how do evil and misery exist?

Is God willing to prevent evil,
but not able?

Then he is not omnipotent.

Is he able, but not willing?

Then he is malevolent.

Is he both able and willing?

Then whence cometh evil?

Is he neither able nor willing?

Then why call him God? – Epicurus – 1st Century B.C. Philosopher

“If God is all powerful, he cannot be all good. And if he’s all good, then he cannot be all powerful.” – Lex Luther, *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*

- This is what Bildad accuses Job of saying
- But look closely

*“For the arrows of the Almighty are in me;
my spirit drinks their poison;
the terrors of God are arrayed against me.” – Job 6:4 ESV*

*“What is man, that you make so much of him,
and that you set your heart on him,
visit him every morning and
test him every moment?” – Job 6:17-18 ESV*

*“If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of
mankind?
Why have you made me your mark?
Why have I become a burden to you?
Why do you not pardon my transgression
and take away my iniquity?” – Job 6:20-21 ESV*

- **Confessing confusion, not sin**

- This is **not** an admission of guilt
- It’s a cry for pity and a call for justice
- Job is simply saying:
“I’m not guilty and you know it!”
*“And if I **was** guilty, you could forgive!”*
- But Bildad sees it as heretical

*“How long will you say these things,
and the words of your mouth be a great wind?
Does God pervert justice?
Or does the Almighty pervert the right?” – Job 8:2-3 ESV*

- **The impatient, non-empathetic theologian**

- Bildad has a lousy bed-side manner
- He would rather argue theology than offer condolences and compassion
- Job isn’t attacking God, he’s questioning Bildad’s theological framework
- Job is asking questions no one will answer

- **If your theology is indefensible, it’s probably insufficient**

- Bildad was attempting to silence Job
- Job’s questions made him uncomfortable
- He could only provide platitudes, not persuasive arguments

- His anger revealed his frustration

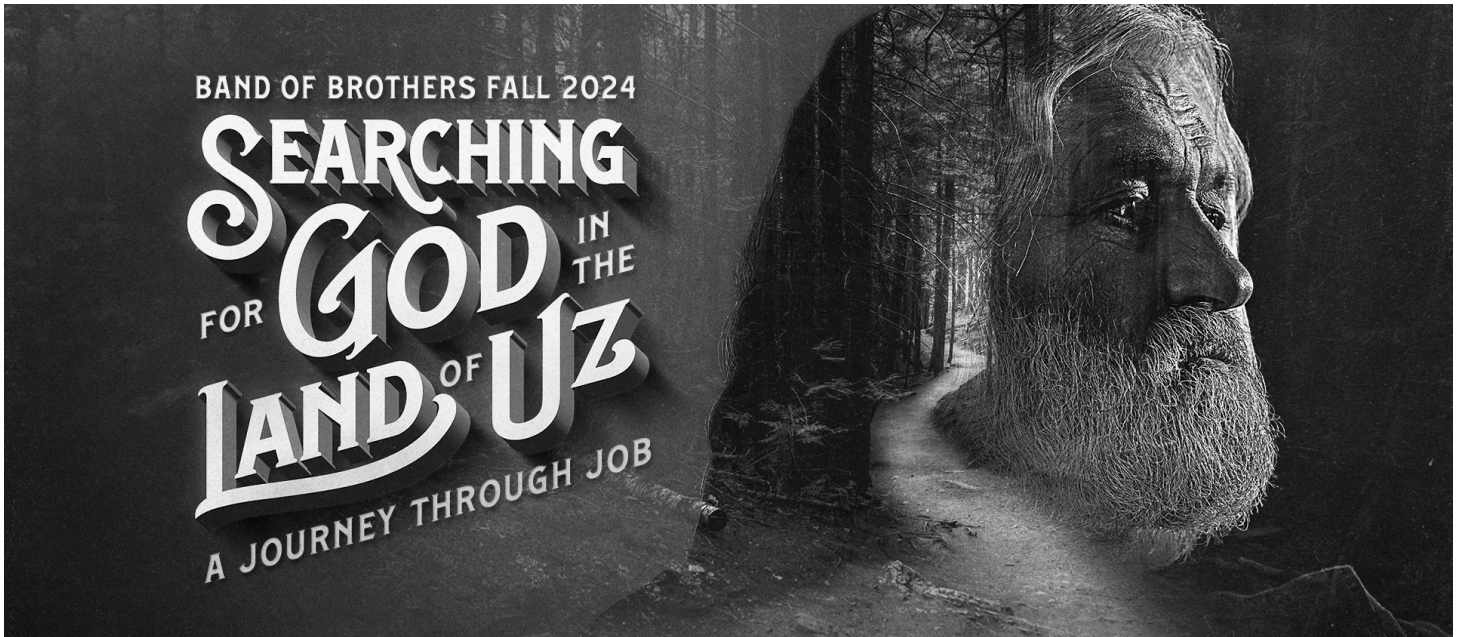
“When a person tries to cut off a discussion and silence an opposing point of view, it is often a sign that the opponent has the stronger argument. This implies that Bildad’s outburst comes from a lack of faith. He is afraid that Job may be right and that his theology will fall apart.” – Duane A. Garrett, *Job: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*

- **Discussion questions**

How do we prevent our theology from discouraging rather than encouraging those around us?

Why do we get nervous when people ask difficult questions about God or the Bible? What should our response be instead?

According to 1 Peter 3:13-17, how’s does Peter’s advice differ from Bildad’s approach?



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FALL SERIES 2024 – WEEK 7 HOMEWORK

WEEK 7 – Zophar the Zealot – Job 11, 20

This week's lesson brings us to Zophar, the third of Job's vociferous friends. This guy throws fuel on the fire, adding insult to injury and causing further pain and suffering for Job. Like his friends, Zophar speaks with unwavering confidence, making declarative statements about God that are based on nothing more than rumor, opinion, or the teachings of men. There is no written Word for him to consult. He has received no divine revelation from God. And yet, he speaks as one having authority and fully confident in his assertions. But he is woefully and painfully wrong.

- Read Job 11, and 20. Since Zophar is not as wordy as his two friends, this week's reading should not take as long. So, take some time to look for statements from Zophar that demonstrate his faulty or incomplete understanding of how God works. Simply write down the Scripture reference and a brief note as to why he is wrong.
- Now read pages 83-86, 129-138 of Ken's Devotional™ on Job. As always, look for anything that strikes a chord or raises a question. Underline anything you see that helps provide clarity about Zophar's less lengthy, but no less significant speeches.
- In chapter 11, where do you see examples of Zophar taking his rhetoric to a more caustic and aggressive place than his two friends? How does he exhibit a greater degree of animosity?

Look at verses 5-6. Why does Zophar wish that God would speak? What would he expect God to say and why does this make his wish a bit twisted?

If we are to take Zophar at his word, what do verses 7-9 tell us about God that make portray Him as less than knowable and accessible?

Why would this conclusion about God be unhelpful and event detrimental to Job?

Verses 10-12 are particularly discouraging. What does Zophar say about God that paints Him in a negative light?

What is Zophar promising Job in verses 13-19?

If Zophar has not received these promises directly from God, how does he know they will actually come true?

If he proves to be wrong, what are the possible consequences for Job's faith?

Look closely at verses 4-6. What assumptions does Bildad make about Job and why is he not only wrong but way off base in doing so?

- Read verses 1-11 of chapter 18 and briefly summarize what you hear Zophar saying?

Do the same thing with verses 12-19.

Now summarize verses 20-29.

When you consider Job's situation, what makes all these statements so unhelpful and hurtful?