



INTRODUCTION

COMPELLED TO ACT

Affirming the sanctity of human life has always been a high priority for maturing believers. When we take Jesus seriously, we're compelled to embrace His perspective regarding babies who haven't been born yet. They're precious to Him. Therefore, they're precious to us as well. Our perspective gives way to our conviction that their little lives should be protected.

As we grow in our walk with Jesus, we come to nourish the same conviction about other people around us who are powerless. They may have become helpless because of choices, circumstances, or a combination of both reasons. When we see their needs through the eyes of Jesus, our hearts break for them.

Not only does Jesus nourish our conviction about the sanctity of human life, He also compels us to take action. As we study the Bible passage in this session, we'll encounter the truth about putting our conviction to work. We'll be prompted to seek His guidance so we can get involved in protecting unborn babies. Also, we'll be urged to find our place in serving Him by looking out for powerless people who need us to help them.

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Special Focus

Compelled to Act

THE POINT

Let the fear and majesty of God compel you to look out for others.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Brace yourself.

You may find yourself mumbling those two words as you walk through the door into your dentist's office. Even if you live in fear of a dentist, you don't want to behave like a frightened child. You get anxious when the dental hygienist steps in to clean your teeth. And when the dentist walks in, you whisper those words once more so you'll be ready for whatever may happen next.

You may have also spoken those words to yourself just before you take your first look at the estimate of what it's going to cost to have your car repaired. Or just before you open the online portal so you can see your child's grades at school. The words beckon you to prepare yourself for a jolt.

The Bible passage for this session may startle you, so brace yourself. Studying the passage will bring into view the truth that God sees all people everywhere as His handiwork. In turn, He expects us to stand up and step in when unborn babies, orphans, widows, and other helpless individuals need our help.

QUESTION 1:

When have you had to say, "Brace yourself"?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

JOB 31:13–15

¹³ If I have dismissed the case of my male or female servants when they made a complaint against me, ¹⁴ what could I do when God stands up to judge? How should I answer him when he calls me to account? ¹⁵ Did not the one who made me in the womb also make them? Did not the same God form us both in the womb?

Job testified that he considered his servants to be equal to him. His testimony points Christians to a reality we can't afford to overlook. A mother's womb levels the playing field. All of us begin there. Job's resolve to honor his servants as individuals worthy of respect compels us to look into our own consideration of others. It constrains us to take a long look in the mirror and make an honest assessment of our connection with them. Do we value others as God's handiwork?

As we examine Job's testimony in these verses, we're met with two hard facts of life that we share in common with him. First, if we ignore powerless individuals or deny justice for them, most folks will never notice it. Even if they see it, they probably wouldn't call us out about it. Second, even though folks around us may not pay attention when we turn away from people in need, God sees us. He knows what we're doing. Therefore, pulling the wool over our eyes won't help. Because God knows, we do well to think through what we tell Him about powerless people and how we reach out to them. What reason can we give to Him for allowing people in need to be ignored by complacency or to be mistreated by injustice?

Such a question can be disturbing, but it deserves our thoughtful attention. In our culture, human life tends to be devalued. As a result, helpless faces in our world can be overlooked to the point that they become invisible to us. Over time, they become more like fixtures in our communities instead of real people who need help.

Job teaches us that God sees no distinction between people at all. He cares about powerless individuals. Furthermore, He guides His people to care about them too. Job's testimony raises the question: what do we say to God regarding our responsibility to care for those in need, as He expects?

Rest assured that God doesn't overlook powerless people. They're far from invisible to Him. God's heart goes out to anyone who has to suffer the misfortunes that circumstances could bring to any of us. Growing believers share His wholehearted concern for others. He expects us to have a burdened heart for people who have been victimized and are helpless.

As we reflect on Job's testimony, we come to appreciate the excellent example he sets for us. He shows us the value of affirming that God

cares for all people everywhere, and for one foundational reason—He created every one of us. The reality of God's work in creating each and every person reflects His perfect blend of authority and intimacy. God created the universe as well as everything and everyone in it. Furthermore, He continues to sustain His creation, but not from a faraway throne of disinterest. He has authority over the creation of life, and He exhibits compassionate intimacy as He carries out His work.

According to Job, God gets personally involved in forming a baby who's going to be born into the world (Job 10:8–11). The work of His hand can be seen in the baby's tiny body. He nour-

ishes the precious treasure who's growing in a mother's womb during her pregnancy. Also, He expects His people to treasure them as the personal work of His own hands. We're wise when we keep in mind that we're accountable to Him for the way that we treat those priceless lives while they're on their way to being born.

QUESTION 2:

What are the implications of God having created us in His image?

JOB 31:16–20

¹⁶ If I have refused the wishes of the poor or let the widow's eyes go blind, ¹⁷ if I have eaten my few crumbs alone without letting the fatherless eat any of it—¹⁸ for from my youth, I raised him as his father, and since the day I was born I guided the widow—¹⁹ if I have seen anyone dying for lack of clothing or a needy person without a cloak, ²⁰ if he did not bless me while warming himself with the fleece from my sheep . . .

Unborn babies stand out as the most helpless people of all. Therefore, they deserve everything that God's people can do to protect and defend them. But it's not just the unborn; God expects us to help others who can't help themselves, too. In Job's testimony, he brought into view an assortment of folks who need our attention.

- **People who live in poverty.** Job mentioned poor people whom he could have refused easily. Turning his back on them would probably not have been noticed. However, he knew that God created them. That same awareness prompts us to care about them too.

- **People who wrestle with despair.** In Job's day, a widow who had no family to look after her could barely scratch out an existence for herself. She had no hope for anything better. Her difficult circumstances gave way to the flood of her tears. Over time, however, she would have no more tears to shed over her miserable plight. Despair plagues hurting people with endless torrents of loneliness, worry, and grief. Helping them begins simply by looking into their hopeless eyes.

- **People who suffer with hunger.** Job mentioned a hungry orphan who showed up in his life. Seeing the aching hunger in the little boy's face stirred his heart. He couldn't

endure the notion of eating his meager meal while the hungry boy watched. Today, folks in our world continue to suffer because they don't have enough food to eat. From children who go to bed hungry at night to senior adults whose income won't allow for groceries as well as medicine, hunger torments helpless individuals. Their need for nourishing meals beckons spiritually alert believers to help them.

- **People who lack reliable family ties.** A home that had only one parent provoked Job to get involved. He became something like a father figure to a boy without a dad. At the same time, he took care of the boy's mother by giving her guidance on her difficult journey as a widow. Without Job's help, she and her son would have run the risk of becoming destitute. Families today also face the same kinds of challenges, and they can be rendered powerless as they try to address them by themselves. Devoted Christians can become a reliable spiritual family to struggling parents and their precious children.
- **People who live without the basic essentials.** Job encountered a poverty-stricken man who didn't have enough clothes. The man's lack of a cloak had become an issue of life and death for him. Without a cloak, he had no protection from the torturing sunlight and relentless heat during the day. And when the sun set, he had to suffer through the frigid nights without a cloak to keep him warm. No wonder he expressed wholehearted gratitude to Job for providing him with wool garments. Clothing continues to be a real-time need that helpless people cannot meet for themselves. God's people

who follow Job's example want to provide them with clothing as well as other basic essentials.

QUESTION 3:

How does our abundance foster a responsibility to help those who are in need?

The list of needs identified in Job's testimony has a distinct connection with the instruction of James to growing believers who take Jesus seriously. We underscore the sincerity of our walk with Him by our determination to care for people who can't help themselves. As James wrote, "Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (Jas. 1:27). When following Jesus becomes a priority for us, we express it by caring for people who need us.

QUESTION 4:

What excuses do people sometimes make for not helping others in need?

Engage

HELPING OTHERS

Choose the situation listed below that would be the most likely to compel you to act and provide help. Answer why that is. Then pray for God's guidance and look for an opportunity to meet that kind of need.

- A family without food
- A shivering child without a coat
- A homeless man
- A lonely resident in a nursing home
- A single mom struggling to pay the bills
- A widow with no family
- A senior citizen who can't afford necessary medicine

Why?

My Prayer:

JOB 31:21–23

²¹ if I ever cast my vote against a fatherless child when I saw that I had support in the city gate, ²² then let my shoulder blade fall from my back, and my arm be pulled from its socket. ²³ For disaster from God terrifies me, and because of his majesty I could not do these things.

In Job's testimony, the scene took a significant shift. As we will see, the shift reinforces the truth that we've been called to promote justice for anyone who's being mistreated. Job stood before a child who didn't have a father at the city gate. The city gate functioned as something like a courtroom. Job happened to be one of the city leaders who was responsible for passing judgment. In the face of the fatherless child who had been brought before the city gate tribunal, Job observed the child's helplessness and acted on his behalf.

Perhaps this was a boy who had brought trouble upon himself, or maybe he had been victimized by heartless criminals who had used him to commit their cruel crimes. Either way, he was now standing or kneeling before Job with no one in authority to plead his case for him. The other city leaders might want to throw the book at the boy and make him an example to other miscreants. If they were eager to treat the boy to their brand of self-serving justice, they might wait with hopeful anticipation that Job would support them by raising his hand. In the Hebrew language, however, raising Job's hand suggests more than just casting a vote against the boy. It paints a troubling picture of a person in authority raising his hand in order to strike the helpless child.

Job couldn't raise his hand against the boy. His conviction about justice wouldn't allow him to

mistreat the boy who appeared before him. He vowed that if he raised his hand to cast judgment on the boy, he would call for his body to be mutilated in a ghastly fashion. The grotesque mutilation of his body would serve a beneficial purpose. He would never be able to raise his hand to mistreat another helpless person again.

Job leaves us with a sobering challenge. We can't remain idle while indifference or injustice threatens someone who can't do anything about it. Believers are to embrace Job's resolve wholeheartedly. As we ponder the challenge, we're wise to reflect on two of God's character traits: His integrity and His majesty. Regarding His integrity, we can rest assured God isn't going to be quiet while His people ignore the needs of those He created. He will confront us with the need to change our attitudes. God lavishes His grace on believers by making us citizens of His eternal Kingdom when we give our lives to Christ. Reaching out for powerless people who can't help themselves expresses our loyalty to Him and His reign over us.

QUESTION 5:

What are some ways our group can work against injustice toward the vulnerable in our community?

LIVE IT OUT

Studying this passage opens our eyes to what God expects us to do. Now we have a better grip on our responsibility to Him for helpless people. Choose one of the following applications:

- **Pray for help.** Every day this week, ask God to reshape your perspective regarding powerless people who need people like you to help them.
- **Share your concern.** Talk with others in your Bible study group about specific ways God intends for growing believers to look out for people in need.
- **Meet a need.** Take the initiative to serve God by locating and volunteering at a Christ-centered pregnancy clinic or a shelter for individuals or families in crisis.


