

Job was a Member of the “Organized Church” (And so were his friends!)

Why do BAD things happen to Good people?

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“Woe to him that Striveth with his Maker!” Isaiah 45:9

Job is a legendary Bible character, “famous” for his suffering. Christians – and many non-Christians – point to Job’s life as the most well-known example of how “BAD things happen to GOOD people.

Christians often use this Bible story as proof that:

1. Illness “just happens” because we “live in a sinful world” – therefore illness is “not our fault.” After all, the Bible says Job was “perfect.”
2. God is so far above us that we shouldn’t even try to understand His ways. We’ll just have to “wait until we get to heaven – then we can ask Him.”
3. We’ll never understand, on this earth, why BAD things happen to “GOOD” people.
4. God is justified in putting individuals through great trauma and stress to teach lessons to the rest of the world.
5. That Satan is the source of all evil.

These are the time-worn “lessons” that the “church” believes we should understand from the book of Job.

But if those are the lessons to be learned, we must assume that God is arbitrary, downright unloving, mysterious in His ways, and has created an Adversary who is equal – or at least, almost equal – with God.

Who was Job? When did he live?

Most Christians picture Job as a pitiful character sitting in the dirt by a local garbage dump, scraping the pus from his painful boils with a sharp piece of pottery from a broken clay pot.

But the evidence reveals that Job was a very wealthy and highly respected man – a sage – meaning a profoundly wise man.

“Neither the book of Job nor any other book of the Bible indicates forthrightly when God’s servant Job lived upon the Earth. Furthermore, no biblical genealogies with chronological information, such as that found in Genesis 5 and 11, help in approximating the century in which Job lived. Nevertheless, various **clues** within the book of Job seem to indicate Job lived sometime after the Flood, but long before the time of Moses.

First, Job’s postdiluvian status seems apparent from a question Eliphaz raised in his final speech. While accusing Job of wickedness, Eliphaz asked: “Will you keep to the old way which **wicked men** have trod, who were cut down before their time, whose foundations were **swept away by a flood?**” (Job 22:16, emp. added). As Wayne Jackson noted: “That this is a reference to the Flood of Noah’s day is almost universally conceded by scholars” (1983, p. 58).

Second, that Job was a patriarch who lived prior to the time of Moses, and probably closer to the time of Abraham, seems evident from the following facts:

Like other patriarchs of old (Genesis 8:20; 12:7-8; 31:54), Job, as the head of his family, offered up sacrifices to God (Job 1:5; cf. 42:8). In the book of Job, there is no mention of the Levitical priesthood, the tabernacle, the temple, the Law of Moses, etc.

Unlike Israelite law, where the family inheritance was passed on to daughters only in the absence of sons (Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13), Job gave his daughters “an inheritance among their brothers” (Job 42:15).

Job’s material wealth was measured, not in money, but in the amount of livestock he owned (Job 1:3; 42:12), which is more characteristic of patriarchal times.

Finally, that Job lived long before the time of Moses seems evident by the fact that the longevity of his life is more comparable to the long lives of the patriarchs who lived around 2200 B.C. The book of Job reveals that Job lived long enough to marry, become “the greatest of all the men of the east” (1:3), and then witness his first 10 children reach at least the age of accountability (1:5), and probably

much greater ages (cf. 1:13,18). Then, after suffering greatly, losing all of his children and his material wealth, God blessed Job with 10 more children and twice as much wealth (42:10-13). The book of Job then concludes: “**After this** Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations. So Job died, old and full of days” (42:10-17, emp. added). Thus, it would appear that Job lived well into his 200s or beyond. Interestingly, the Septuagint testifies that Job died at the age of 240—an age more comparable to the ancestors of Abraham (e.g., Serug, Abraham’s great-grandfather lived to be 230—Genesis 11:22-23).”

Eric Lyons, M. Min, Apologetics Press.org

Where did Job live?

The Book of Job is generally considered to be set in Arabia, i.e., in nearer Arabia. The land of Uz (Job 1.1) cannot be positively located. It has been tentatively placed between Edom and Arabia, or in the Hauran (south of Damascus), or near Palmyra (northeast of Damascus) now called Tadmur. Eliphaz is called a Temanite (Job 2.11), and Teman was in Edom (Amos 1.11-12). Job’s home was located where the Sabeans (Job 1.15) and the Babylonians (or Chaldeans [Job 1.17]) alike could raid it. Once again, it is clear that we are dealing with the portion of Arabia that borders on Transjordan. The Old Testament, then, is principally concerned with nearer Arabia, and references to south Arabia are very few.

From: “Arabia” by W. S. LaSor, in The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, general editor; 4 volumes; 4th edition (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979-1988), 1:220. Originally published in 1915.

Ancient Syria: a Hotbed of Paganism

The most prominent building in Palmyra was the Temple to Bel – Satan! Ancient ruins in Damascus reveal its period under Roman rule and the pagan temple to the god, Jupiter.

Job, though apparently not an Israelite, was a worshiper of the true God.

Job, Chapter 1:

“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job: and that man was upright, and one that feared God, and shunned evil. And there were

born unto him seven sons and three daughters.

His possessions were seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred female donkeys, and a very great household (many servants): **So that this man was the greatest of ALL the men of the east.**

And his sons went and feasted in their houses, everyone his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.

And it was so, when the days of their feasting were over, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job regularly.”

Obviously, Job was going through the “church rituals.” He loved his children and wanted them to believe – and behave – as he did, living their lives as upright “church members” as Job was.

Vs. 6 “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan (the Adversary) came also among them.

This verse suggests that there are other inhabited planets (in addition to planet earth) where there is no sin. The representatives of those planets are termed “sons of God.” Satan is not included in that term. He “came also among them.

Vs 7 “And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.”

Satan considered the “earth” his domain – and under his control.

“Vs 8: And the Lord said unto Satan, Have you set your heart on My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?

“Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing?

You have made a hedge of protection about him, and about his household, and about all that he has on every side. You have blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land.

But if you stretch out your hand now, and touch all that he has, he will curse you to your face.

And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power: only upon his person you cannot put forth your hand.

So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.”

We can see from this passage that Satan can do nothing unless God allows it. Therefore, anything Satan does - - - is God’s will. God controls Satan completely. Satan can nothing of his own will

So Satan instigated the death of all of Job’s children by “a great wind” that collapsed the house they were in (a tornado?). And a raid by the Sabeans caused the death of all his servants. All his sheep were burned up and all his camels stolen.

Job had lost all his children, all his servants, and all his wealth.

“He fell upon the ground and worshipped and said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gives, and the Lord has taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.

“In all this Job sinned not, nor accused God with wrong.” Job 1:20-22.

As if this was not enough, Satan asked for permission from God to attack Job physically saying,

Skin for skin, yea, all that a man has he will give for his life. If you stretch forth your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, he will curse Thee to Thy face.

And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in your hand; but save his life.

So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto the crown of his head.

And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal: and he sat down among the ashes.

Then his wife said to him, Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God, and die.

But he said unto her, You speak as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we accept good at the hand of God, and shall we not accept calamity? In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Why did Job become sick?

Job had worried continuously about his children. He had sacrificed regularly for any sin they might commit. And when they were killed he said, in Job 3:25:

“For the thing which I **greatly feared** has come upon me, and that of which **I was afraid** of has come unto me.”

In His Word, God repeatedly tells us to “Fear Not.” Job had “greatly feared” – and stress, including fear and anxiety, is one major cause of illness.

Job is visited by his friends

Now Job’s three friends heard about his calamity and came to visit him: Eliphaz, the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar, the Namathite. They were also great and wealthy men of the area. They sat down with Job for seven days and seven nights and did not speak a word to him, “for they saw that his grief was very great.”

Then, Job’s friends, purporting to be consoling him, start in accusing him.

Eliphaz was a Temanite. Teman was an Edomite town noted for wisdom. Eliphaz counsels Job to be confident that his piety will count with God, and that though God is now chastening him for some sin, it is to a good end, and he can be assured that God will not destroy him along with the wicked.

Eliphaz continues by saying that All mortals are sinful; therefore God has a right to punish them. And that Job should be thankful for the correction God is giving

him.

Eliphaz implies that Job is resentful against God and that Job should stop behaving like a fool and should humble himself. Then God would bless Job. Eliphaz's conclusion: Job must turn from unrighteousness and resentment against God and accept God's righteous discipline.

Job rejects Eliphaz's counsel

Job rejects the idea that God is punishing him for some secret wickedness. He says he has always been upright and worshipped God. He accuses God of "punishing" Job unjustly. But He still believes in God and worships Him.

Now it's Bildad's turn

Bildad reasons as follows: God cannot be unjust, so Job and his family must be suffering as a result of sinfulness. Job should plead for mercy, and if he has been upright, God will restore him.

Job responds to Bildad

Job does not claim to be sinless, but he wishes to have his day in court so that he can prove he is innocent of the kind of sin that deserves the suffering he endures. In his despair he voices awful complaints against God, yet he does not abandon God. He does not curse God as Satan said he would.

Job was suffering so severely that he loathed his life and wished for death.

Job imagines that God is angry with him, an innocent and righteous man, and that he takes delight in the wicked. (Job eventually will repent of these words, and God will forgive.)

Then Zophar, the Naamathite speaks:

Zophar assume that Job's problems are rooted in his sin: all Job has to do is to repent, and then his life will become blessed and happy.

Job replies:

Job thrashes out at Zophar and rejects his premise that Job's problems are rooted in his sin. Though never claiming to be sinless, Job knows that he is a good man, that he does the right thing, that he is not guilty of monstrous sin, and that he has never turned his back on God.

The theme of Job's response is that God is sovereign in the created world, but Job dwells on the negative aspects of God's power and wisdom, such as the destructive forces of nature, how judges become fools, how priests become humiliated, how trusted advisers are silenced and elders deprived of good sense.

Job continues to accuse God of punishing Job unjustly, and pleads for his "day in Court" with the Lord – to get some answers. Yet, in spite of Job's accusations against God, He still worships Him.

Finally, a fourth man – a younger man – Elihu, speaks:

Elihu feels Job needs to be corrected about his view of God as Job's enemy. Elihu is also offended by what he considers Job's claim to purity, even though Job has never claimed to be "without sin." Job admits being a sinner but disclaims the outrageous sins for which he thinks he is being punished. And he complains about God's silence through all of this.

Are the theories proposed for Job's sufferings still prevalent today?

The theories of Job's three friends regarding why Job is suffering mirrors not only the theory of today's churches about "suffering" but also some pagan beliefs.

Today's churches, particularly those of the televangelists believe that God "blesses" you by making you rich. That's why they live such lavish lifestyles. If you aren't rich, the implication is that you have some hidden sin that needs repentance before God can "bless" you – or – that you haven't "given enough money" to the church (read; to "them") for God to bless you.

Apparently, they have never thought of Jesus' life on earth. He had no wealth whatsoever – "no place to lay His head." And after his 3 1/2 year ministry on earth, healing numerous people, and even raising some from the dead, there were only five people who stood by Him at His crucifixion; and one of those five was His mother.

Some eastern religions, including Hinduism, believe that if you are suffering – you deserve it. And if someone helps decrease your suffering they are dooming you

to additional suffering.

The Longer View

Neither Job nor his friends, including Elihu, understood the Long View – the view that God always has a loving purpose for all we go through. God is not an instigator of irrelevant or vicarious violence. We don't suffer – just for the sake of suffering, without God having a loving and noble purpose in it.

Certainly, the suffering we experience ultimately comes from God. Again, Satan can do nothing unless God permits it. Therefore, that suffering IS God's will because:

“All is of God, and through God, and for God.” Romans 11:36

Lessons Job learned

Finally, God did answer Job directly because Job needed an “attitude adjustment.” Job needed to understand that God's ways were far higher than Job's understanding. God asked Job a series of about 70 or more questions.

God speaks to Job

1. The Lord speaks to Job from the whirlwind.

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:

a. **Then the LORD:** Over the previous 35 chapters (since Job 2), God has been directly absent from the account. We read nothing of God's direct role in comforting, speaking to, or sustaining Job in the midst of his crisis. Over that time, Job has *ached* repeatedly for a word from God.

i. Elihu saw the coming storm and spoke about God's presence in such powerful phenomenon (Job 36:22-37:24). Yet now we hear God Himself speak to Job.

ii. God will indeed settle this dispute, but He will do it *His way*. Job wanted God to settle it by proving *him* right and explaining the reason for all his afflictions; Job's friends wanted God to prove *them* right and for Job to recognize his error. God will not satisfy either one of these expectations. Significantly, *God did not obviously answer Job's questions*.

iii. "At least, on first inspection, they do not seem to have anything to do with the central issue of why Job has suffered so severely when he has done everything humanly possible to maintain a good relationship with God. The Lord apparently says nothing about this."

b. **The LORD answered Job:** Significantly, God *did not* immediately or directly answer Job's friends; not the older friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, or Zophar) and not the young friend (Elihu). God **answered Job**.

i. Perhaps this was because Job was the one wrongly accused and though he was wrong, he was *more right* than any of his friends.

ii. Perhaps this was because Job was the only one of the group to actively cry out to God and pray through the ordeal. Only Job talked to God; now the LORD will only speak to Job.

c. **The LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:** Elihu saw an approaching storm and described it as an example of the power of God (Job 36:26-37:24). When he described the clearing of the storm, he probably spoke *before* the storm actually had cleared; now in this same storm God speaks to Job.

i. "Doubtless, it refers to the storm which Elihu seems to see approaching (Job 37:15-24). The article refers to something known or already intimated to the reader."

ii. Repeatedly, the **whirlwind** is associated with the divine presence. It speaks to us of the powerful, unmanageable nature of God; that He is like a tornado that cannot be controlled or opposed.

- God brought Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1-11)
- God's presence is in the whirlwind (Psalm 77:18; Nahum 1:3)
- God's coming is like a whirlwind (Isaiah 66:15; Jeremiah 4:13 and 23:19)
- God appeared to Ezekiel in a whirlwind (Ezekiel 1:4)

iii. "Job's troubles began when a great wind killed his children (Job 1:19). The Lord was in that storm, and now He speaks from the tempest." (Andersen)

2. (2-3) God calls Job to account.

"Who *is* this who darkens counsel
By words without knowledge?"

Now prepare yourself like a man;
I will question you, and you shall answer Me.”

a. **Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?** We may justly wonder to whom God asked this question. It might have been mainly directed to Elihu, who was the previous speaker interrupted this word from the LORD, and who claimed to speak for God (Job 36:1-4).

- i. “This has been variously interpreted as applying to Job, or to Elihu.
- ii. Yet we can rightly say that all the characters in this drama did darken **counsel by words without knowledge**. Each one of them – Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu – spoke without accurate knowledge of what the reader knows from Job chapters 1 and 2.
- iii. We shouldn’t think that God expected them to know what they could not know; rather, He expected them to appreciate that there were aspects to the matter known to God but hidden to man, and these aspects made sense of what seemed to make no sense.

b. **Now prepare yourself like a man:** Job had previously complained that God was battling against him in a great contest (Job 16:7-14 is one example). We might say that Job, without knowing, was really battling against Satan. Now he would indeed wrestle with God, and God challenged him to **prepare yourself like a man**.

- i. “When a man acts like a man, God can speak to him, and he to God. That is a declaration of dignity.” (Morgan)

c. **I will question you, and you shall answer Me:** Job had insisted that God bring answers to him. God turned the matter around and told Job that before He would answer questions for Job, Job had some questions to answer before God.

The questions God had for Job were simply unanswerable and were meant to show Job that he really had no place to demand answers from God. Yet to see this appearance of God to Job only as a rebuke is a grave mistake. *God has now appeared to Job*. Job’s greatest agony was that he felt God had abandoned him, and now he knew he was not abandoned. Like any true revelation of God there were plenty of elements that would make Job feel small before the greatness of God; yet it could not take away from the massive comfort Job felt in simply being once again consciously in the presence of God.

“Job learned that God had not abandoned him. And it gradually dawned on Job that without knowing why he was suffering he could face it, as long as he was

assured that God was his friend.”

“That God speaks at all is enough for Job. All he needs to know is that everything is still all right between himself and God. . . . To that extent it does not matter much what they talk about. Any topic will do for a satisfying conversation between friends. It is each other they are enjoying.”

B. God questions Job regarding what he doesn't know.

1. (4-7) Do you know the secrets of the creation of the world?

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?

Tell *Me*, if you have understanding,
Who determined its measurements?
Surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
To what were its foundations fastened?
Or who laid its cornerstone,
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

a. **Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?** The intention of this question is obvious. Job was nowhere to be found when God **laid the foundations of the earth**. God was ancient in His power, wisdom, and might and Job could never be considered to be on the same level as God.

“Job was simply overwhelmed with mysteries and paradoxes for which he had no answers; but in the midst of it all he came to understand what was too good to be told, that God knows what he is doing in his universe.”
<http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/1838.htm>

These questions also served the purpose of reminding Job that there were *many* things that he did not know.

Through this ordeal, Job still stayed true to God

“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Job 13:15

Job's three friends

Then God rebuked Job's three friends saying,

I am angry at you because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." Job 42:7

After Job prayed for his friends, the Lord made Job prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. Job had more sons and daughters, his possessions grew larger than they were before, and he lived another 140 years.

Woe to him who striveth with his Maker!

As Isaiah warned:

"Woe to him who striveth with his Maker. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? Or shall thy work (that God has made) say, He hath no hands.

God says: I have made the earth and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens and all their host have I commanded.

"Turn unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: I am God, and there is none else.

"I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, **That unto Me, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear**" Isaiah 45:9-23 **"to the glory of God the Father."** (Phil 2:10,11)

If Job was such a "good" man, why did he have to go through all this trouble?

God is the Potter - - we are the clay. He is molding us into His likeness so we too can exhibit the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness (humility) and self control. (Gal 5:22,23)

One "fruit of the spirit" Job was clearly lacking. Job inadvertently tells us what that is in Chapter 29:

“Job continued his discourse: How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me, when His lamp shone upon my head and by his light I walked through darkness!

“Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God’s intimate friendship blessed my house, When the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me,

When my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil.

When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square, the young men saw me and stepped aside and the old men rose to their feet;

The chief men refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands: the voices of the nobles were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths.

Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help and the fatherless who had none to assist him.

The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow’s heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing: justice was my robe and my turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger.

I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth. I thought, I will die in my own house, my days as numerous as the grains of sand. My roots will reach to the water, and the dew will lie all night on my branches.

My glory will remain fresh in me, the bow ever new in my hand. Men listened to me expectantly, waiting in silence for my counsel. After I had spoken, they spoke no more; my words fell gently on their ears.

They waited for me as for showers and drank in my words as the spring rain. When I smiled at them, they scarcely believed it; the light of my face was precious to them.

I chose the way for them and sat as their chief; I dwelt as a king among his troops; I was like one who comforts mourners.

Chapter 30

But now they mock me, men younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs. . .

Haggard from want and hunger, they roamed the parched land in desolate wastelands at night. In the brush they gathered salt herbs, and their food was the root of the broom tree.

They were banished from their fellow men, shouted at as if they were thieves. They were forced to live in the dry stream beds, among the rocks and in holes in the ground. They brayed among the bushes and huddled in the undergrowth.

A base and nameless brood, they were driven out of the land.

And now their sons mock me in song; I have become a byword among them. They detest me and keep their distance; they do not hesitate to spit in my face.”

So which “fruit of the spirit” was Job lacking before his experience with God?

Humility!!

He had become addicted to his high position, with people bowing down to him, hanging on every word he spoke, treating him with great deference!

Now all that was gone. Those who previously respected him greatly, now mocked him.

Job WAS a “good” man. He reminds us in Chapter 31:

I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.

I have not denied the desires of the poor

I have not kept my bread to myself

I have not allowed anyone to perish for lack of clothing

I have not raised my hand against the fatherless

I have not put my trust in gold

I have not rejoiced at my enemy's misfortune

I have always opened my door to the stranger and the traveler

I have not concealed my sin as men do

“So Job's three friends stopped answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.” (Self-righteous?) Job 32:1

So through this ordeal, **Job had to learn humility** by being brought to the depths of degradation – sitting in the garbage dump, scraping the pus from his boils with a piece of old, broken pottery.

After the Lord spoke directly to Job, asking Job about 70 questions for which Job had no answer, after Job realized that God knows what He is doing, whether or not Job understands the process, Job said to the Lord:

I know that Thou canst do all things and that no plan of yours can be thwarted.

You asked, Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.

Then Job uttered the words that are the culmination of his whole despairing episode, when he finally understood the goal God had accomplished. Job said, in Job 42:5:

“My ears had heard of you – but now my eyes have seen you.”

Job had “heard” of God, like most Christians in the Organized Church have “heard of God” – but few really have “seen” God – have “seen” God's character. Finally Job's eyes were open to “see” God – to have a close personal relationship

with God.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall **see** God.” Matthew 5:8

Up until that time, Job – an upright and good man – had lived a “good life.” He had done all the “right things.” He had prayed and provided burnt offerings to God for the sake of his children, he and his friends had been a good “members of the church.” But neither Job, nor his friends, had known God – or God’s character.

Job **did** learn humility through his ordeal. But even then, after all that, neither Job nor his three friends understood God’s character of love. They all viewed Him as a punitive, arbitrary, fierce God whose ways were unable to be discerned – just as God is viewed today by the Organized Church – a God who will burn His children in hellfire if they don’t love Him!

That’s why Jesus – the visible form of the invisible God (Col 1:15) – had to come to earth - to Reveal to us God’s character of love toward ALL His children.

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who **TAKES AWAY the sin of the (whole) world.**” John 1:29

“**God is Love**” (1 John 4:8) and “**Love NEVER Fails.**” (1 Cor 13:8)

