

When Advice Is Built on Assumption

In Job 22, Eliphaz speaks for the third and final time. His tone is harsher now. No longer just suggesting Job might be guilty, he now boldly accuses Job of cruelty, greed, and irreverence. He paints Job as someone who has oppressed the poor, ignored widows, and turned from God.

But none of these things are true. Eliphaz speaks confidently but without evidence. His theology—like that of the other friends—is based on a shallow worldview: *“Suffering equals sin. Prosperity equals righteousness.”* Job’s protests and integrity mean nothing to him, because he has already decided what God must be doing.

This chapter warns us not only against bad theology, but also against using truth as a weapon when we lack understanding.

Verses 1–4 – “Can You Profit God?”

“Can a man be profitable to God... Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous... Will He reprove you because you fear Him?” (vv.1–4)

Eliphaz begins by minimizing human righteousness. He argues that Job’s goodness doesn’t benefit God—so Job shouldn’t think his suffering is undeserved.

This is a partial truth twisted into a weapon. It’s true that God is self-sufficient and not dependent on humans. But it’s false to say that our righteousness means nothing to Him. Throughout Scripture, God is shown to delight in those who walk with integrity (Psalm 147:11, Micah 6:8).

Personal Application:

Be careful with theology that’s technically correct but spiritually cold. God may not *need* us—but He *loves* us, and He values a heart that seeks Him. You matter to God—not because you benefit Him, but because He created you to reflect His image and walk in fellowship with Him.

Verses 5–11 – “Accusations Without Evidence”

“Is not your wickedness great... For you have taken pledges... withheld bread... sent widows away... broken the arms of the fatherless...” (vv.5–9)

Here, Eliphaz makes direct accusations:

- Job exploited the poor
- Job hoarded wealth
- Job failed to help the weak
- Job dishonored widows and orphans

But there’s a major problem: none of this is true. These are fabrications rooted in assumption. Eliphaz sees Job suffering, and therefore assumes he must have committed hidden crimes.

Personal Application:

Don't accuse based on appearances. We do tremendous damage when we interpret someone's pain as proof of their guilt. Sometimes the most faithful believers go through the deepest trials—not because of sin, but because of God's purpose. When we see someone suffering, our first instinct should be to listen and love, not analyze and accuse.

Verses 12–20 – “Misrepresenting God and Twisting History”

“Is not God in the height of heaven?... Thick clouds cover Him, so that He cannot see... Will you keep to the old path that evil men have trod?” (vv.12–15)

Eliphaz imagines Job saying, “*God can't see me*”—but Job never said that. He's putting words into Job's mouth and then condemning him for them. He also compares Job to ancient wicked people who were judged by God.

In verse 18, Eliphaz even admits, “Yet He filled their houses with good things”—but brushes it off as an exception. He is committed to a theology that says, “God only blesses the righteous and judges the wicked quickly,” even when the evidence contradicts it.

Personal Application:

Beware of confirmation bias in theology. If we start with a rigid idea of how God “must” act, we may twist Scripture and ignore reality to protect our view. That's what Eliphaz does—he defends his tradition rather than seeking the truth. We must let Scripture, compassion, and humility guide our view of God and others.

Verses 21–30 – “The Call to Repent—But Misapplied”

“Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace... Receive instruction... If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up...” (vv.21–23)

This section is *Eliphaz's appeal*. He tells Job to repent, return to God, and receive blessing again. He even offers some beautiful truths:

- Seek God and be at peace
- Treasure His Word
- Delight in Him and pray freely
- God hears and restores

But here's the problem: Eliphaz is offering the right advice to the wrong person for the wrong reason. He assumes Job is far from God when in reality Job is suffering *because* he is faithful, not because he is rebellious.

Personal Application:

Sometimes people give good advice out of bad assumptions. Even Eliphaz's words—“acquaint yourself with God and be at peace”—are wise when shared with humility. But when delivered from a

platform of pride, truth becomes toxic. If someone is walking with God through pain, what they need is not a command to "repent" but encouragement to *persevere*.

Key Lessons from Job 22

1. False Assumptions Lead to False Accusations

Eliphaz assumes Job's suffering must mean sin. He doesn't know the backstory (see Job 1–2), so he rushes to judgment. We must be slow to interpret what we cannot see.

2. Not All Advice—Even Biblical Advice—is Spiritually Wise

Much of what Eliphaz says sounds right. But it's misapplied, mistimed, and misguided. Right theology must be delivered with right timing, love, and discernment.

3. Helping the Poor Matters Deeply to God

Though Eliphaz falsely accuses Job, the seriousness of neglecting the poor is real. Scripture consistently affirms that neglecting the needy is offensive to God (Isaiah 58:6–10; James 2:14–17; 1 John 3:17–18). We should be generous not to earn God's favor, but because we reflect His heart.

4. God Desires Relationship More Than Rigid Religion

Eliphaz says, "*Lay up His words in your heart.*" That's good advice—for the right heart. God isn't looking for behavior management—He wants surrender, love, and trust. Knowing God is better than fixing circumstances.

Final Reflection: Are You an Eliphaz or a Friend?

Eliphaz's greatest error wasn't his doctrine—it was his lack of compassion. He saw suffering and assumed sin. He gave lectures when Job needed love. He quoted truth, but forgot mercy.

When someone is hurting, be present before you are persuasive. Pray before you preach. Sit with them before you speak at them.

Prayer

Lord, protect us from the pride of assumption. Help us not to speak when we should be silent, and not to judge when we should extend compassion. Give us wisdom to know when to comfort and when to confront. And teach us to reflect Your heart—full of truth, full of mercy, and full of grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.