

1 Then Job replied to the LORD :
2 "I know that you can do all things;
no plan of yours can be thwarted.
3 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.
4 "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.'
5 My ears had heard of you
but now my eyes have seen you.
6 Therefore I despise myself
and repent in dust and ashes."

10 After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD made him
prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.
11 All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him
before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and
consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought upon
him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.
12 The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the
first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a
thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. 13 And he also
had seven sons and three daughters. 14 The first daughter he
named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch.
15 Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful
as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance
along with their brothers.
16 After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his
children and their children to the fourth generation. 17 And so he
died, old and full of years.

Growing up, I heard a lot about Job. Not actual text from the Bible, but rather just random references to a fellow named Job who I knew was someone from the Bible but—as Job is not often the content of children’s books or Sunday School lessons—I didn’t really get the gist of what was being said about him. But, as I learned about Job, I developed a better understanding of what people meant when they said, “Robin’s father has the patience of Job.” But what I never did understand was why my mom was part of an organization called “Job’s Daughters”. The more I learned about Job, the less I understood this organization. Why would anyone want to be part of an organization named after young women who, as a messenger in the Bible told their father in chapter 1 of the story, “were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house, and suddenly a great wind came across the desert, struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead.” Really, who came up with the name “Job’s Daughters” for an organization for

young women. It's not exactly marketable. Is it any wonder that the Girl Scouts thrive while Job's Daughters remain a mystery to most folks? After all, who in their right mind would buy a box of Tag Alongs from one of Job's daughters?

BUT, just like so many assumptions and rash judgments I make—like determining that this is a lousy name for an organization for young women—I didn't learn the rest of the story before jumping to my conclusions. And, isn't that so often the way it is for us—we think we know better, we know and in our vanity, we stop listening and hearing and fail to hear the rest of the story. Indeed, that happens throughout the book of Job. Now, just a quick synopsis of the story of Job.

Job is described as a blessed man who lives righteously. Satan, however, challenges Job's integrity, proposing to God that Job serves him simply because of the "hedge" with which God protects him. God progressively removes that protection, allowing Satan to take Job's wealth, his children, and his physical health and to thereby tempt Job to curse God. However, despite his desolation, [Job] does not curse God's name or accuse God of injustice but rather seeks an explanation or an account of his wrongdoing. The main portion of the text consists of the discourse of Job and his three friends concerning why Job was so tested, after which God steps in to answer Job and his friends. God invites Job

to "Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me."- After God's reply, Job is overwhelmed and says, " I am unworthy - how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth." Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning and he lived 140 years. ¹

Job and his friends are just as guilty of jumping to conclusions without knowing the full story as I am about the whole Job's Daughters thing. They think they've got the answers about God. For them, God is predictable and reasonable—if you do good things, God blesses you. If you do bad things, God curses you. And so these three “friends” of Job, Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad, are trying to help Job figure what he has done wrong that has caused him to lose his wealth, his children, and his health. Job insists that he has done nothing wrong and yet his friends continue to insist that he has, that he has sinned, and that he must repent. By chapter 16 Job is just sick of their platitudes and says, “I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are you all. Have windy words no limit? Or what provokes you that you keep talking?” And yet, they keep talking. For 20 more chapters they talk until finally the Lord answers Job out of the whirlwind and, in a word, puts him in his place. And the Lord said to Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the

¹ wikipedia

earth? Tell me, if you have understanding . . . Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place . . . Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the the hail . . . What is the way to the place where the light is distributed, or where the east wind is scattered upon the earth . . .” God’s response isn’t just to Job, but it’s a response to Job’s self-righteous friends and to all who need to hear—all of us who are like Job’s friends, trying to categorize, summarize, and keep God in a nice little box that fits into our purse or jacket pocket, a God that is controllable, predictable, presentable, and socially acceptable.

But our God, our *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty* is not interested in our least-common denominator God. God is not at all concerned about what our friends think about our God. In God’s address to Job, it is obvious that we do not know the rest of the story—only God does—and God will allow that story to unfold in God’s time. We can jump to conclusions, try to figure it out, judge God and others according to our standards, and offer ridiculous platitudes that are as predictable as they are useless but in the end, we are not the authors of this greatest story ever told, God is and we are God’s characters, loved, treasured, forgiven, and redeemed, but certainly not “in the know” as we would have ourselves to be.

Indeed, there are so many perceptions and understandings of God—one of the most helpful of which comes from the Shona people of Zimbabwe. One of the many names they use to describe God is “Chipindikure, which means ‘the One who turns things upside down.’ It comes from the word kupinduka, which means ‘to be uprooted.’” A longtime missionary to the Shona says, “What an amazing concept to explain God’s presence in the often unwanted and unplanned changes that happen to us throughout our lives.”² While many might be tempted to think that God is absent in the unwanted and unplanned changes in our lives, the Shona realize that even in these times, God is present, “the one who turns things upside down” is there, indeed, is here.

And that is certainly Job’s story. God turned Job’s life upside down. For centuries scholars have attempted to explain why. But all of the explanations in the world are just theories and no one knows for sure. And we don’t know because the story isn’t over. Well, Job’s story is over, and it has a happy ending—an ending that—had I just gotten over myself and finished reading the book of Job in spite of my discomfort with it—an ending that would have explained the whole Job’s Daughters thing. After Job was put into his place by

² Christian Century, October 20, 2009, pg. 8.

God, “The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first . . . he had seven sons and three daughters . . . Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.” Job’s daughters—nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job’s daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers—something that would have been unheard of in those times—leaving an inheritance to women. And yet, Job’s inheritance was for all his children just as God’s inheritance is for all of us—an inheritance of love, abundance, forgiveness, and grace. We often don’t understand it or why it happens or why it doesn’t happen but what we do know is that the God who turns things upside down, the God who laid the foundation of the earth, the God who commands the morning and has supplied the storehouses of snow and hail—this same God, this God is real, this God is here, this God is love. Thanks be to God.