

May 2007

God is all-powerful. Who is a teacher like him?

–Job 36:22, NLT

Since the beginning of time, mankind has been asking God questions. Most of them begin with one word: Why?

And the majority have to do with the age-old dispute over pain and suffering. The book of Job provides several examples.

But when it comes to addressing questions about pain and suffering, some scholars believe the book of Job raises more questions than it answers. Interestingly, it is written in such a way that it probably contains more questions than any other book in the Bible. Maybe we're onto something here!

It is true that many of the questions found in the book never get answered. For instance, the question about Job's suffering: Was it deserved or undeserved?

That question is never answered either by Job's friends or by God. Of course, some of the questions in the book are merely rhetorical, so they don't require answers.

When God does address Job and his friends, His reply is unusual. Instead of answering Job's questions or offering solace, He asks more questions (see Job 38-41).

As Philip Yancey writes in *Disappointment With God*, "At least a brief explanation or a few compliments would have been in order!" But perhaps we have underestimated the power of inquiry.

Powerful, probing questions were the means God used to enlighten Job and release him from all his troubles. Somehow his encounter with God was so gratifying that none of Job's earlier questions seemed to matter. This shows the power of

probing questions and how important divine encounters with God are in our lives.

Is God currently asking you any questions?

When taken to heart, powerful questions can change and transform us. Unfortunately we're a generation that wants only answers—to be fixed, not challenged or stretched.

We don't like to probe too deep because we're afraid of what we might find. Powerful questions force us to live responsibly.

So what is the significance of a book that raises more questions than it answers? What can we learn from it? Among the many lessons it teaches is the power of meaningful conversations and probing questions.

It could be that we've neglected this power because we've been pressured by society to be tolerant and accepting. But we need to pay attention to the questions; God may be speaking through them.

John Chasteen is the assistant dean of Southwestern Christian University Graduate School in Bethany, Oklahoma. He writes a weekly blog at .