

“The Debate” - Job’s story reimagined  
Adapted from [Inspired by Rachel Held Evans](#)

*Cafeteria - Lunch hour. A long table, sparse and utilitarian, with nine seats--all empty, save one.*

*JOB sits alone at the center. He stares blankly at his food, shoulders slumped. His oxford and tweed fit the profile of a*

*professor--humanities,*

*judging by the absence of a tie--but his matted hair and three-day growth could get him mistaken for a hungover student.*

*ELI approaches the table with a tray in his hands and sits down cautiously next to Job. They are close in age, but Eli’s beard is obviously intentional. Eli takes Job in, starts to speak, but then thinks better of it.*

*BILL arrives with a paper bag lunch and takes a seat on the other side of Job. Bill has the wizened air of a longtime professor who has survived his fair share of inept administrations. He nods a greeting to Eli, who returns it, then to Job, who does not.*

*FATHER Z is the last to arrive, wearing a ministerial collar under his blazer and carrying a plastic container of mixed greens and a plastic fork. Before sitting, he rests his hand for a moment on Job’s shoulder, as if to offer a prayer. No reaction from Job. Father Z takes a seat next to Bill.*

*Finally, the silence becomes too much for Eli. He pulls a greeting card from his jacket. It says “With Sympathy” on the front. No envelope.*

*ELI: We got this for you, man. It’s not much, I know, but under the circumstances, we just... we wanted to do something.*



*Job wakes from his stupor, takes the card, and opens it.*

JOB: (reading the card, deadpan) “Remember, God will never give you more than you can handle.”

*He puts the card on the table and falls back into a daze. Eli seems satisfied, but Bill makes a face.*

ELI: (to Bill) What? What’s wrong with the card?

BILL: It’s a tad cliché, don’t you think? “God will never give you more than you can handle”? What’s that even mean?

ELI: It’s just a card, Bill. It’s not a theological statement.

BILL: Everything’s a theological statement. You of all people should know that.

ELI: (lowering his voice) Look, this obviously happened for a reason. We know God is in control and that there is some divine purpose at work here. We don’t need to spell that out for Job; he gets it. I figured a few words of comfort would encourage him to consider what he might learn from this time of discipline. “Blessed is the one whom God corrects, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal.”

BILL: Well, that would have been a much better way to put it.

ELI: Yeah, but you try finding a greeting card with that kind of wisdom...

*The friends fall silent for a moment. Until Bill can no longer keep his opinion to himself.*

BILL: Really, this should serve as a reminder that we’re all just one sin away from similar judgment. If anything, we ought to be urging Job to repent so God will show mercy. (To Job:) You know, if you seek God earnestly and plead with the Almighty, if you are pure and upright, even now he will step in on your behalf.

*Job doesn’t respond. Bill returns to his lunch, glad he got that off his chest.*

ELI: Of what should Job repent? Specific sins?

BILL: Aren't all sins specific?

ELI: Well, sure. I guess I'm asking if you think Job did something definitive to bring this on, or if it's more, like, a result of God's wrath on his general sinful state. You said it could happen to any of us...

BILL: Yeah, but it didn't happen to any of us. It happened to Job.

ELI: Right, but why?

BILL: Pride. Greed. Sloth.

ELI: I've not seen Job exhibit any of those qualities. I mean, we all know him to be a man of--

BILL: Porn.

ELI: Porn? Oh good grief, Bill. It always comes back to porn with you. You really think God's so enraged Job got a peek at some boobs online, he sends a rainstorm and a drunk driver to the very road where...

*An excruciating pause.*

ELI: (to Job) Oh, God. I'm sorry, dude. I'm so sorry.

BILL: (matter-of-fact) God rewards the righteous and punishes evildoers. The Writings are clear on that. Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right? Certainly not. Whatever the sin, it was severe enough to warrant correction. We have to trust that God is just.

*Eli knows he should let it go, but he just can't let Bill have the final word.*

ELI: I agree, Bill. But it doesn't have to be direct cause and effect. I think it's entirely possible this was a result of God's general anger toward sin, like with the earthquake a few weeks ago, or the famine over in Sudan, not necessarily a direct effect of Job's porn addiction.

FATHER Z: Job has a porn addiction?

ELI: According to Bill, everyone has a porn addiction.

BILL: Yep. I blame feminism.

ELI: (To Bill) All I'm saying is, I think it's entirely possible God did this to discipline Job's sins in general, not one sin in particular, which should sober us all. "Hardship does not spring from the soil, nor does trouble sprout from the ground. Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward."

FATHER Z: I don't think Job's convinced he guilty of anything.

*At this, everyone turns to Father Z, and then to Job. Job looks back at Father Z, as though suddenly seeing a stranger or trying to read a sign in a different language.*

JOB: What?

FATHER Z: Do you think you are blameless, Job?

JOB: I...I don't know...blameless? ... I ...

FATHER Z: Do you recognize this as an opportunity for repentance?

*Job struggles, then finally answers, tentatively.*

JOB: No, not really.

FATHER Z: Well, I'm sorry to hear that.

JOB: I don't think I've done anything wrong, Father.

FATHER Z: (In preacher mode!) Oh, how I wish that God would speak, that he would open his lips against you and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom! He has already overlooked so much of your sin, Job; how can you claim to be blameless? If God confines you in prison and convenes a court, who can oppose him? You must repent, brother, and turn your heart to him. Put away your sins, and God will work this out for good.

*Z pauses for dramatic effect.*

FATHER Z: ... Yes, even *this* can be redeemed for good.

*The group absorbs Father Z's sermon. Job puts his head in his hands. Bill, not to be outdone, tries one more point.*

BILL: I think we should consider that maybe this isn't just about Job's sins, but the sins of the ones actually in the accident.

*At this, Job lifts his head from his hands to look at Bill, and for the first time we catch a glimmer of emotion--utter anguish.*

*Suddenly, everything stops. Complete silence. The lights throb, glowing brighter and brighter. The professors, startled, squint and shield their eyes.*

*THE CAFETERIA LADY moves imposingly onto the scene. Hands on hips.*

CAFETERIA LADY: Enough! Enough with this! Stop lying about me, you fools. You think because you've got a bunch of fancy theology degrees, you can divine what I'm up to? Who keeps the earth spinning in her orbit and knows every dimension of the cosmos? Who formed galaxies out of dark matter and brought life out of the sea? Who knows every strand of DNA in every plant and every animal and every person in the world? And who is acquainted with every human sorrow, from the tears of a child to the groans of slaves? Who can fathom the depths of the ocean? Who can start or stop the rain? Who knows, intimately, the contents of every human heart?

*She waits.*

CAFETERIA LADY: That's right. NOT. YOU. So lay off my servant Job. He hasn't done anything wrong. He is blameless and upright, a man of kindness and integrity, which is more than I can say for the three of you.

*Stunned, the professors sit with mouths agape until Bill attempts to speak. He moves his mouth, but no sound comes out. Same with Eli and Father Z. The three enter into a frantic, soundless "conversation" as Job rises to his feet, tears streaming down his face.*

CAFETERIA LADY: Come on, Job, I know you've got some things to get off your chest.

*She walks off stage. Job follows with reckless abandon, nearly knocking over his chair in his haste.*

*The lights go back to normal, and the three professors continue arguing without voices, employing dramatic gestures to compensate. At the center of it all sits Job's empty chair.*