



## God Only Wise

Behold Our God! – Read the Bible for Life Series #5

Job 28

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I invite you to turn in your Bible to Job chapter one. Our text for this morning is going to come from Job 28 but we need to begin in Job chapter one in order to get the understanding of the book. It's hard to talk about Job without talking about the book as a whole package, because there is a beginning, middle and end—a whole story that happens there. It's one unit.

The book of Job belongs to a category of Biblical literature known as "Wisdom Literature." We have a number of poetic-type of books in the Bible like Psalms, Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes that have versification in poetic form, but within that larger category, there's a smaller category known as "Wisdom Literature."

We are talking about types of books of the Bible, types of literature and how to read and benefit from them. If you haven't had a chance to be part of the adult or youth Sunday morning classes that meet at 8:45 and again at 10:30, that is the topic of these classes and I would commend them to you. It's a great way to enhance your Bible reading by better understanding the different types of Biblical literature and how God communicates His Word in its different forms.

### Wisdom Literature

Job belongs to this category called "Wisdom Literature." As I thought about that in preparing for this message, I wondered, "Do we really get Wisdom Literature? Do we see a need for wisdom?" If I went to Barnes and Noble (I did go

to their website because I was curious), would there be a category or section marked “Wisdom?” Guess what; there’s not. There’s religion, spirituality, self-help, psychology and how-to, but there’s no category called “Wisdom.” I don’t think we naturally have a sense of our need for wisdom. But if we’re going to come to a portion of Scripture or other portions of Scripture in the Bible that belong to this category called Wisdom Literature, we need to understand what wisdom is about and we need to understand why we would even need this—why wisdom is important.

If we think about wisdom in the Bible, we think about the book of Proverbs, right? A proverb is sort of a wise saying that usually begins with “The fool does this and the wise person does that.” It’s very practical—these little aphorisms. “Don’t do this. Do that.” We think about practical little help (knowledge) we can apply to life. That’s definitely an aspect of Wisdom Literature.

Wisdom literature is a much broader and more wonderful category. Often the truth of Wisdom Literature is more subtle—you come to it from around the side. I think the book of Job, in terms of truths about wisdom, is revealed to us more in this subtle way. If we’re going to understand why it’s important for us to get wisdom, we will have to go to Job first and figure out why it was important for Job. Job was seeking after wisdom. He was looking for wisdom from God.

If you go to Job chapter one and begin to look at the story as it unfolds, you’ll notice that the first couple of pages have text in paragraph form. It’s a story. It’s telling you who Job is. Most of the rest of the book (until you get to the last chapter) is all this versification of dialogue—discussions between Job and his friends and between Job and God. In the first section in chapters one and two, we get the setting for the book of Job.

By the way, the reason we’re working through Job right now—after we just finished Genesis—is that our read-through-the Bible and preach-through-the-Bible plans are chronological. We know Job doesn’t come right after Genesis in the Bible but in terms of the setting and when Job’s story might have happened, it seems like it fits well in what we might call the Patriarchal Age—the time of Abraham,

Isaac and Jacob. Maybe even a little bit before Abraham. We can see that it's not in the context of God's Covenant people. It's in the larger Middle East, but outside of that covenant context. Apparently God had revealed Himself to other people outside of Abraham like this guy named Job. But the setting looks like the same type of context that Job is living in.

You'll note that like Abraham, Job in chapter one is a very wealthy man. It lists all his stuff there. You'll also notice that the first thing that the author says in verse one about Job is that he was a blameless and upright man, one who feared God and turned away from evil. Maybe you know how the story goes. Satan has a dialogue with God and says, "Hey Satan, have you considered my servant, Job? He's upright." Satan says, "Yeah, I know why he's upright. It's because You do good things for him. You've blessed him materially so he honors You. But if You take away his stuff, he'll curse You." So God says, "Okay, Satan, I will allow you to destroy Job's stuff."

Notice that God is sovereign over Satan. Satan is on a leash. He is not going to do anything that God is not going to allow him to do. But God lets him do this and Satan wipes out Job's stuff and his kids. Yet after all of this has happened—Satan has taken Job's property and children—we read at the end of chapter one in verse 21, Job says, "*Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.*" We sing that here, don't we? Blessed be the name of the Lord! Lord, You gave and You took away.

Notice the last verse of chapter one, "*In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.*" God had allowed evil to happen to Job but God had not done moral evil and Job didn't accuse Him of doing moral evil toward him. But Satan doesn't let up. [Pretty characteristic of Satan, isn't it?] He comes back to God and says, "Listen, I took away Job's stuff but he still has his health. [We say that, don't we? You still have your health.] Touch his body, make him physically suffer and he will curse You." So God says, "I will allow it." And it happens.

Job is physically attacked and he's sitting there in an ash heap with sores

and boils all over his body. His wife says, “Why don’t you just get it over with? *Curse God and die!*” (Job 2:9). Job says in chapter two, verse 10: “*But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.*”

Job is in great physical pain. He’s in great mental anguish. He’s suffering intensely. Then his three friends show up and later a fourth friend. They don’t seem to help the situation very much, do they? They have a philosophy and basically Job is working from the same philosophy or world view which goes something like this: “If good stuff has happened to you, it’s because you are pleasing to God. So, do good stuff; please God and you will get stuff. Please God, honor God and He will materially bless you.” Have you heard that recently? That’s not what this message is about but it’s nothing new under the sun. So, “honor God and He will bless you materially.”

The reverse is also part of their philosophy then. “If there’s a decrease in your life, it’s because you must have sinned against God.” We go back and forth with these dialogues.

“Job, all you have to do is confess your sin to God, come clean and you will be restored.”

Job says, “I can’t do that because I know in my heart of hearts I have not sinned against God. I have not accused God of evil. I haven’t been sexually immoral, I haven’t cheated the widow. I haven’t done these things.”

Job is wrestling in his own heart because he’s wondering, “Why is this happening to me? Why does the pain continue? Why does the suffering continue?” He’s perplexed, yet he’s going to God. He’s asking the questions to God because he knows God is wise and has understanding and even if he can’t understand it, maybe God can.

Job was seeking wisdom because he was perplexed. He didn’t understand his suffering. I think that is the purpose of Biblical wisdom—to help us make sense of the universe. I think we have this God-given desire to make sense of things. We want things to fit. We want to understand how it all works together.

But when the circumstances of our lives don't make sense, when there's great perplexity, then we have this anguish inside—this anxiety—and we need wisdom. Wisdom is the antidote for perplexity. Wisdom is the answer for our lack of understanding. Perplexity by its very definition is a lack of understanding. Wisdom by its definition is understanding.

When do we sense our need for wisdom in this way? Isn't it when we're facing a problem and we don't have a clear solution? Or when there's just not a clear way forward in our lives? Or when we have a trying situation that has little hope of resolution? When we're involved in a difficult relationship where we feel we have little or no control? Or when, like Job, suffering continues and no end seems to be in sight? It's in these times we sense we have a need for wisdom.

Where do we find wisdom? Where do we find wisdom in the midst of our anguish and uncertainty? Let's go with Job to chapter 28 because there is wisdom here in this book—in God's Word—for us this morning. We want to follow along with Job as he discovers it and we want to apply it to our own lives.

*<sup>1</sup>Surely there is a mine for silver,  
and a place for gold that they refine.*

*<sup>2</sup>Iron is taken out of the earth,  
and copper is smelted from the ore.*

*<sup>3</sup>Man puts an end to darkness  
and searches out to the farthest limit  
the ore in gloom and deep darkness.*

*<sup>4</sup>He opens shafts in a valley away from where anyone lives;  
they are forgotten by travelers;  
they hang in the air, far away from mankind; they swing to and fro.*

*<sup>5</sup>As for the earth, out of it comes bread,  
but underneath it is turned up as by fire.*

*<sup>6</sup>Its stones are the place of sapphires,  
and it has dust of gold.*

*<sup>7</sup>That path no bird of prey knows,  
and the falcon's eye has not seen it.*

*<sup>8</sup>The proud beasts have not trodden it;  
the lion has not passed over it.*

*<sup>9</sup>Man puts his hand to the flinty rock  
and overturns mountains by the roots.*

*<sup>10</sup>He cuts out channels in the rocks,  
and his eye sees every precious thing.*

*<sup>11</sup>He dams up the streams so that they do not trickle,  
and the thing that is hidden he brings out to light.*

Job is saying, “Listen, human beings are very ingenious. If we think there’s something precious and valuable in the earth, we’ll find a way to dig up the earth and go as deep as we can and we’ll mine it and get it out of there because we want it.” But then he asks a question beginning in verse 12.

*<sup>12</sup> "But where shall wisdom be found?  
And where is the place of understanding?  
<sup>13</sup>Man does not know its worth,  
and it is not found in the land of the living.  
<sup>14</sup> The deep says, 'It is not in me,'  
and the sea says, 'It is not with me.'  
<sup>15</sup>It cannot be bought for gold,  
and silver cannot be weighed as its price.  
<sup>16</sup>It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir,  
in precious onyx or sapphire.  
<sup>17</sup>Gold and glass cannot equal it,  
nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold.  
<sup>18</sup>No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal;  
the price of wisdom is above pearls.  
<sup>19</sup> The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it,  
nor can it be valued in pure gold.  
<sup>20</sup>"From where, then, does wisdom come?*

You can’t buy it. You can pile up all the money in the world, but you can’t buy wisdom. You can’t dig it up. You can’t buy it.

*<sup>20</sup>"From where, then, does wisdom come?  
And where is the place of understanding?  
<sup>21</sup>It is hidden from the eyes of all living  
and concealed from the birds of the air.  
<sup>22</sup> Abaddon and Death say,  
'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.'  
  
<sup>23</sup> "God understands the way to it,  
and he knows its place.  
<sup>24</sup>For he looks to the ends of the earth  
and sees everything under the heavens.  
<sup>25</sup>When he gave to the wind its weight  
and apportioned the waters by measure,  
<sup>26</sup>when he made a decree for the rain  
and a way for the lightning of the thunder,  
<sup>27</sup>then he saw it and declared it;  
he established it, and searched it out.*

*<sup>28</sup>And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'*

Where is wisdom found? Who knows where it is? We can't find it in the earth. We can't buy it with all of the money that we have. Where is wisdom found? Wisdom is found in God and in Him alone. Look at verse 28: *"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding."* God alone is wise. Wisdom resides in Him alone because He is the very source of it. That's the big idea here this morning. That's the big heading over this chapter. That wisdom comes from God alone. Wisdom is not found in figuring things out, but wisdom is found in fearing God.

We're going to come to an end of our ability to figure things out eventually, so wisdom is not found in figuring things out. It's found in fearing God. Note that the text does not say wisdom is found or acquired *by* fearing God. *"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom..."* The fear of God *is* wisdom. To fear God *is* wisdom, which leads to the other half of the verse. *"...And to turn away from evil is understanding."* If you honor and reverence Him, you will turn away from evil. That is understanding.

The implication to this is that faith is absolutely essential for wisdom. If you're going to trust a God Who is wise then faith will be absolutely essential. Faith and reason go together. We have a reasonable faith but at some point we're going to have to bow our knees to the Lord and say, "God, I acknowledge that Your ways are higher than my ways." We're going to have to trust Him.

Before we go much further, I want to give a working **definition of wisdom**. What is wisdom, biblically speaking? Here's the definition we're going to work with this morning. "Wisdom is the skillful and worshipful application of eternal truth." It recognizes God as the One to be worshipped. "The skillful and worshipful application of eternal truth discovered through a relationship with the Living God."

I think the fear of the Lord indicates relationship. First of all, to fear God is to reverence Him—to bow before Him. It's not necessarily fear in the sense of being scared or frightened (though there is an appropriate fear because we know that our

God is a consuming fire so we don't trifle with Him). But the fear is an honor, worship and relationship. This term is used throughout the Old Testament, but the two times it's specifically mentioned in the New Testament are helpful for understanding the relational aspect of fearing God.

In Acts 9:31, Luke, the writer of Acts, has this method of making these little summary statements every once-in-a-while in the story line to say what's going on with the church and how God is multiplying the church and how the gospel is having success. And when he does that in Acts 9:31, he says that the gospel was having success as God's people were "*walking in the fear of the Lord.*" So there's this idea of walking with the Lord in a relationship with Him, in movement. The fear of the Lord isn't just this static thing but it's a way of life, a relationship with God.

It's also emphasized in 2 Corinthians 5:11 where Paul talks about "*knowing the fear of the Lord.*" When the Bible talks about "know," it's always talking about relationships. It's not just knowing facts about something, but it's also being in a knowing, intimate relationship. This fear of the Lord is a way of relating to God. It's a joyful submission. It's a posture of willingly putting ourselves under His authority. Job says that, in and of itself, is wisdom. If you pursue the fear of the Lord in your life, you will have wisdom. You will acquire the thing that money cannot buy.

In the rest of our time this morning, I want to talk about three implications of this truth. What does fearing the Lord look like? Each of these three implications is going to begin with this phrase: Because God is the source of wisdom...we ought to do what?

**1. Because God is the source of wisdom,  
we ought to seek to understand the world through His eyes.**

Job figured that out. Look back at chapter 28. As Job begins to give the answer to His question about where can wisdom come in verse 23, he says, "*God understands the way to it, and he knows its place.*" Why does God understand its



way? Why does God know its place? Because God is the Sovereign Creator. He looks over all creation (verse 24). *“For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.”* Why does He do that? Because He gave the wind its way. He created it. He apportioned the waters its measure. He said to the Pacific Ocean, “You will go this far and no farther.” He made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning and thunder. He saw it. He declared it. He established it. He searched it out. He is the sovereign and loving Creator of all things. If we’re going to understand anything of wisdom, we’re going to have to see reality through His eyes.

We can do that by looking at the created order—everything that God has made displays His wisdom. Theologically we call that “general revelation.” We can look at the created order, the natural world, and know much about God. Much, but not nearly everything! And not nearly the most important things we need to know. If we’re going to do that, we’re going to need to look at some specifics, some special revelation from God. If we’re going to know about God, if we’re going to see the world through His eyes, then we need to understand this book, His revelation, and the revelation of His Son through it.

The way to understand the world through God’s eyes, reality through His eyes, is to get to know Him by getting to know this book. That’s why we’re praying this month for a breakthrough in a love for God’s Word. It’s why we’re reading through the Bible and encouraging you to do that together in the coming year.

When we begin to know and see reality as God helps us to understand it through His Word, we more and more develop what we often call a Biblical worldview. It’s a lens through which to see all reality as God sees it. Then we can pursue truth as God would have us, taking *“every thought captive to obey Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:5).

There’s another benefit. When we see the world through God’s eyes, we won’t be shaken by the world’s lack of wisdom. I was talking earlier this week to Bob Learned who serves as our custodian. He does such a great job. He’s so conscientious of making this facility clean and beautiful. I encourage you to thank

him when you have the opportunity. Bob was talking about a friend of his who is a retired Brigadier General. This guy has lived in the Washington DC area for many years and has served in the highest places of government. Bob said, “The people in Washington are some of the most intelligent, well-educated people in the world, yet we have all these crises in our country. What’s the deal?” The Brigadier General said, “Yes, there is much intelligence, but there’s not much wisdom.”

I don’t say that so we can rail against politicians and blame them for all the problems. I mention this to say what should we expect of the world? If a person doesn’t have God’s wisdom—the wisdom from above—we shouldn’t expect there to be a great result. We shouldn’t be shaken. It shouldn’t stir us up when we see a lack of wisdom out there.

There are other benefits to seeing the world through God’s eyes. Psalm 119 talks about how we can be wiser—wiser than our enemies. Students, young people, I know you already think you’re wiser than your parents, but there’s a way to really be wiser than your parents. Listen to Psalm 119:98-102:

*Your commandment [God’s Word] makes me wiser than my enemies,  
[that’s not your parents] for it is ever with me.  
I have more understanding than all my teachers,  
for your testimonies are my meditation.  
I understand more than the aged, [that’s your parents]  
for I keep your precepts.  
I hold back my feet from every evil way,  
in order to keep your word.  
I do not turn aside from your rules,  
for you have taught me.*

You have taught me. There’s wisdom in God’s Word. We don’t have to be the smartest people on the planet, but by knowing God’s Word we can be the wisest.

## **2. Because God is the source of wisdom, seek to understand God Himself.**

We need to not only understand the world through His eyes, but also seek to understand God Himself. Follow hard after Him. If you read the dialogues in Job

and all the things his friends say—his miserable counselors—they say a lot of true things about God. They really do. A lot of doctrinally, theologically true things about God. But here’s the difference: Job’s friends are talking *about* God. Job, in all his perplexity and suffering, is talking *to* God. He is talking to God! There is a relationship going on here. He is saying, “God, I don’t get what’s going on now. But I’m talking to You and I know one thing; I’m not going to find an answer apart from You!”

We need to seek to understand God Himself because He is the source of wisdom. Again, wisdom is the skillful and worshipful application of eternal truth discovered in relationship with the living God. I would say in relationship with the living God as our Creator and as our Redeemer.

That’s how Job understands God—both as his Creator and his Redeemer. If you fast-forward to the end of the book, when God finally answers Job in chapter 38, God doesn’t give him all the answers to his questions, but He reveals more of whom He is to Job. Look at Job 38:4-7:

<sup>4</sup>*“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
Tell me, if you have understanding.  
<sup>5</sup>Who determined its measurements—surely you know!  
Or who stretched the line upon it?  
<sup>6</sup>On what were its bases sunk,  
or who laid its cornerstone,  
<sup>7</sup>when the morning stars sang together  
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”*

In other words, Job ends up embracing God and God reveals Himself to Job as the sovereign Creator of all things and the Sustainer of all things. And eventually Job says, “I spoke about things that I really had no business talking about. God, You are the sovereign, loving, good Creator of the universe and I bow before You.”

Job also knew God as his Redeemer. As you read through the book, notice how often Job is crying out for a mediator. “God, if there is someone out there that could mediate between You and me!” He has this sense inside of Him that there ought to be someone to go between him and this sovereign Lord. In chapter 19 verse 25, Job confesses his faith in a Redeemer. From his perspective living

maybe 4,000 years ago, he's looking ahead about 2,000 years to a Redeemer. He doesn't know the name Jesus Christ. He doesn't understand Bethlehem. He doesn't understand Calvary. But in an Old Testament, Old Covenant faith type of way, he's looking forward to a Redeemer.

In chapter 19 verse 25 he says (as we sang), *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth."* Job is following hard after God. He's torn up inside. He's suffering. He doesn't understand the beginning of the end, but he's embracing God as his Creator and as his Redeemer. He's following hard after God. He's knowing more and more of the fear of the Lord. I think there's an indication in the text that he's growing in the fear of the Lord. He fears the Lord at the beginning and it's very clear at the end of the story that he still fears the Lord. There's been a development of this relationship.

### **3. Because God is the source of wisdom, let's pursue His purposes for our trials.**

Because God is your source of wisdom, pursue His purposes in the midst of your trials. I need to trust that just because I can't understand a situation, it doesn't mean there isn't meaning there. It doesn't mean that God isn't up to something. You could just insert last week's message right here. Joseph said to his brothers, *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good"* (Genesis 50:20). Joseph had an idea of what that looked like, but we have no indication that Job in his lifetime ever understood the meaning of the evil and how that was for good.

But Job is trusting God at the end of the story. This is where Job landed. He trusted God in the midst of his trials, in the midst of his uncertainty, with his perplexity. Each of us in this room has varying amounts of difficulty, varying amounts of trials, varying amounts of friction in our lives. And if you're like me, your natural reaction is to run away from the friction, avoid the trial, avoid the difficulty. We, by definition, want to avoid suffering. It's counter-intuitive for us

to embrace Christ in it. And yet, that's exactly what God is calling us to do—to embrace what God wants us to do in our trials.

I want to close by relating a little bit of something that David Sommer and I have been talking about with the Care Group leaders. We've been using the book entitled *How People Change* by Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp. They put it this way: "We tend to either maximize suffering or minimize suffering. We either minimize it or we maximize it."

Here's how we minimize suffering as Christians: "It's okay. God is sovereign. Just suck it up. Do better next time. God is in control." That's minimizing the trial.

On the other hand, we're often guilty of maximizing trials. In other words, the trial or something that has happened to us begins to define everything about who we are. Lane uses the example of someone who has gone through a horrific divorce and now everything about that person's life from his or her perspective is defined by that. They define themselves by that.

We tend to either minimize suffering or we maximize suffering. What we need to do is to be where Job is in his willingness to cry out to God as so many of the Psalmists are willing to do. Did you hear that in Psalm 71 as it was read earlier? "*O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me!*" (Psalm 71:12). Couldn't Job have said that? "God, you feel so far from me. Why don't You come and help me?"

Listen to these words from a Psalm that just cries out at the depth of suffering and pain. "*O LORD, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me?*" (Psalm 88:14). When we're in the midst of perplexity and suffering, we need to live in this place and be able to take it to God and speak this way to Him. We should not try to say that the suffering isn't real and minimize it. On the other hand, we also need to live in James 1 where James says to Christians, "You need to embrace trial, various different kinds of trials, and consider it joy because the testing of your faith is going to demonstrate perseverance and it must

have its full work in order for God to do the perfecting work in your life. It must have its full effect.”

We need to be right there between those—pursuing God’s purposes in our lives, living with one another, ministering to one another in those places. The best thing Job’s friends did was when they first got there to him in all his pain and suffering, they sat down with him in the dust and ashes and they said nothing for a week. They were just there with their friend. We need to do that for one another. We need to be there in the midst of it and not minimize it—know that it’s real.

We also want to not maximize it. We want to understand that God is working out His purposes. This is a hard truth: many of His purposes won’t be realized apart from the tension of that trial. But with Job, we can know that God’s redeeming purposes will be met.

Listen to these words from Isaiah 53 that demonstrate that God is absolutely committed to our good through suffering and trial.

*<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men;  
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;  
and as one from whom men hide their faces  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

*<sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*<sup>5</sup> But he was wounded for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
and with his stripes we are healed.*

*<sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned—every one—to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all...*

*<sup>10</sup> Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;  
he has put him to grief;  
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,  
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;  
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*

*<sup>11</sup> Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;*

*by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
make many to be accounted righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.*

<sup>12</sup> *Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,  
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
because he poured out his soul to death  
and was numbered with the transgressors;  
yet he bore the sin of many,  
and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

This is Jesus. This is the Redeemer whom Job looked forward to. This is the One about whom the Scriptures say, “*the power of God and the wisdom of God*” dwell in Him. It was God’s wise plan to abandon His Son as He hung on the cross, paying for your sin. But think of the benefits that accrue to you which are much greater than the riches that can be dug out of the deepest mine. Redemption was paid for. If you don’t know that this morning, then know that there is a God who is wise, who sent His Son to be an atoning sacrifice so all who put their trust in Him would know the redemption that His suffering brought. Your suffering can be redeemed as well. To His glory, Amen.

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