

The Life of Job: Tragedy, Reality and Theodicy

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The Life of Job: Tragedy – Reality – Theodicy

Introduction

I see the story of Job as notably one of the more well known in the entire Bible. Ironically, I also see it as one of the least understood stories in the entire Bible. There is no book in the Scripture that is filled with more mystery than the troubling real life events of a man named Job who lived and died in the ancient Hebrew world. Winston Churchill once described the Soviet Union, “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.” Paradoxical and troubling, the poetic lines of Job’s story are also veiled with the deep perplexing issues of life’s harshest reality and the internal questions that result from living through that harsh reality. Profoundly provocative and polarizing to the human mind, Job is a journey into the unexplainable and unknowable ways of God.

The key conversations in this book force the reader to wrestle with and sort through issues such as:

- **Why do good and undeserving people suffer?**
- **Where is God when tragedies happen?**
- **What happens to our closest friends when tragedies happen?**
- **If God is love, how can he allow human suffering? How is that love?**

- **Why does a good God allow tragedy to come to His followers?**
- **Is God worthy of loyalty and worship when devastating loss and unexplainable circumstances destroy lives?**
- **Isn't God just manipulating His worshippers with blessings?**

These are deeply difficult questions. Consequently, Job is a difficult book to wrap our brain around. The reality is that most Christians have heard about troubles, trials, and triumph of Job and many have even read about him, but few actually understand what those troubles and trials were all about, or why they have any relevance to their personal lives. And, fewer have any clue as to what God was seeking to accomplish through the tragedy and triumph of what I call Job's original reality show. **So what is this unexplainable and unknowable book about?**

Good question... Job is the true account of a godly, powerful, wealthy and influential man, who in a matter of what appears to to only moments of his life, lost all of his wealth and material possessions, his ten children, and his personal health. His loving wife then told him to curse God and die. To add to this pain, his friends used the devastating ordeal to judge and condemn him rather than to comfort him. It got worse. Above everyone and everything Job loved and had been faithful to God, and yet God remained silent throughout this personal disaster. God did not answer Job until Job seemed to have come to the end of himself.

What makes this story so hard to hear is that Job was (in his day) the most righteous man on the earth, probably the one man who least deserved such tragedy and affliction. This takes us back to one of our original questions: **Why do bad things happen to good and undeserving people?** This actually is (to most) the most troubling part of Job's story. The fact that God was the one who allowed this entire personal disaster for Job. This raises yet another one of our questions: **Why does a good God allow tragedy to come to his followers?** It was God who removed His blessing and protection from around Job, giving Satan virtually unlimited access into his life to bring soul-devastating destruction. **Why would God be the initiator of this kind of darkness and despair in Job's soul?** It seems that Satan was the circumstantial cause of Job's troubles, but it was God who allowed the trouble, and ultimately gave His permission. Throughout this entire trial, no matter how he processed or confessed it Job never did fully understand why he was suffering. There were no explanations from God. That was it - just unknowable and unexplainable - no revelation or wisdom to help strengthen or validate Job's faith. Instead, there was silence, and Job the iconic patriarch was forced to persevere with no answers. In the absence of any God-given insight, Job's faith was stretched to its limits.

Afflicted with pain of every kind imaginable, Job was forced to simply trust God for who He is, and not for what He does.

This exercise in persevering faith came held Job together at first, but became increasingly more difficult with each passing day. In the futile emptiness of his soul, not knowing why such trouble had come, Job was brought to the place where he became critical toward God. With no explanations and no relief in sight, Job was put in the difficult position of having to trust in the unknowable and unexplainable mystery of God. And that is where we begin.

Job's Window Terms - Context Definitions

Tragedy - To experience through no personal fault, an event or circumstances causing human suffering, physical affliction, and emotional distress.

Reality - To see and experience the world or the state of things through the lens and circumstances of unfiltered and actual truth, as opposed to a twisted or personal preference of how one wants or believes things to be.

Theodicy – To speak justly and to believe fully in who God is, in the face of human suffering that causes doubt and disbelief.

6.19.16 Historical Context

Author:

The Book of Job does not specifically name its author. I personally believe that Job himself or perhaps Elihu wrote the book because of the many patriarchal age references and characterizations. If so, that be put the writing of Job shortly after the recorded events occurred - during Job's lifetime. This would then make Job the most ancient book in the Bible, predating the writing of the Pentateuch. However, some scholars (smarter than I) believe that Moses possibly wrote Job, or because of the poetic-prose writing style that Solomon might have been the author.

Date of Writing:

The date of the authorship of the Book of Job would be determined by the author of the Book of Job. If Moses was the author, the date would be around 1440 B.C. If Solomon was the author, the date would be around 950 B.C. Because we don't know for certain the author, we can only speculate the date of its writing.

Unique Distinctions from the Book of Job:

- Job contains the longest place (four lengthy chapters) in the Bible where God himself speaks (Job 38-41).
- Job contains the longest place in the Bible where Satan

speaks (Job 1-2).

- Job provides a rare insight into heaven, an otherwise unseen world, revealing a conversation between God and Satan before the angels around the divine throne.
- Job may have been the first inspired book of Scripture written, that is, if Job or a contemporary wrote the book.
- Job uses more Hebrew words not found anywhere else in the Bible, providing a rich diversity of language.
- Job involves a unique literary structure, the mixture of prose and poetry, monologue and dialogue. Thus, it is not classified in any single genre of literature. It is a sui generis—its own unique type of literature.

Job Was a Real Person:

Not a fictitious character or the figment of a playwright's imagination, Job was a real person. He was an actual historical figure, a real-life man who was married, father of ten, and a prominent businessman. He suffered one of the most devastating trials anyone has ever been called to face. The following are some substantive reasons which support this claim: The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel spoke of Job as a historical figure, just as real as Noah and Daniel (Ezekiel. 14:14,20).

New Testament writers speak of Job as a real person. James, the half-brother of Jesus, identified Job as a literal historical figure who

was severely tested by God (James. 5:11). The apostle Paul quoted two times from the Book of Job—in Romans 11:35 (Job 41:11) and in 1 Corinthians 3:19 (Job 5:13). Thus, he gave credibility to the authenticity of this man Job and the account in which he is found. Unmistakably, the early apostles and disciples considered Job to be a real person.

All the many historical details of this book give every reason to believe that Job was a real individual. He lived in the land of “Uz, a real place, and suffered real losses in his family, wealth, and health. The losses were carried out by a real foe, Satan, using real forces, the Sabceans and Chaldeans. Soon Job was comforted by three real people from real places and real, identifiable and traceable tribes. Clearly, Job was a real man, not a mythical character.

Job Lived in Uz:

Where did the unique events and suffering of Job take place? It is believed that Job lived in the desert lands of modern-day Arabia. The following can be concluded with certainty:

The first verse of the book identifies the home of Job as the land of Uz (Job 1:1), a large territory east of the Jordan River which included Edom in the south (Genesis. 36:28) and the Aramean lands in the north (Genesis. 10:23; 22:21). This was an area southeast of the Dead Sea.

In Lamentations 4:21, Uz is also referred to as the same territory as Edom. More specifically, this area is the region of northern Arabia near Midian where Moses spent the second forty years of his life. This would be consistent with the attacks by the Sabeans (Job 1:15), nomadic Bedouins who lived in the area of Uz and to the south, as well as by the Chaldeans (Job 1:17) who also lived in the surrounding area.

Furthermore, Job's friends came from nearby countries. Eliphaz the Temanite most likely came from Teman, a city of Edom, east of the Jordan River. Bildad the Shuhite may suggest a relationship to Shuah, Abraham's youngest son. Zophar the Naamathite was a resident in a location probably in Edom of Arabia.

The Age and Wealth of Job:

Many of the details and events described in the book indicate that Job lived during the patriarchal age. This would place the events of the book some time around 2000 B.C., or the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There are several internal clues within the Book of Job that indicate this early time track. Some of these evidences are:

Job lived to be well over 100 years old, a length that fits the patriarchal period. After his calamities he lived another 140 years (Job 42:16), this being after his children were fully grown (Job 1:4-5, 13-19). Adding this together, Job lived to be about 200 years old, a

duration of days that compares with Terah, Abraham's father, who lived to be 205; Abraham who died at 175; Isaac, who was 180 when he died; and Jacob, who lived to be 147. Obviously, the life span of people since then has been much shorter.

Job's wealth was measured in livestock (Job 1:3; 42:12), a practice that corresponds to the time of Abraham (Gen. 12:16; 13:2) and Jacob (Gen. 30:43; 32:5). And by that measure he would be considered a billionaire by today's standards.

Job's leadership at home reveals he acted as the priest of his family, an indication that the Aaronic old covenant priesthood had not yet been established. *The attacks by Job's adversaries*, the Sabeans and Chaldeans (Job 1:5,17), occurred while they were nomads, a practice that would not be true of them in later years when they were more settled and civilized.

The musical instruments mentioned in this book (i.e., the tambourine, lyre, and flute; Job 21:12; 30:31) are also listed in Genesis (4:21; 31:27) during the patriarchal period.

The Hebrew term for money coinage (Job 42:11) is used elsewhere in the Bible only in reference to Jacob, who was a patriarch (Genesis. 33:19; Joshua. 24:32).

The heirs of Job's estate included his three daughters, not only his seven sons (Job 42:15), a practice not permitted under the Mosaic Law (Numbers. 27:8). This would indicate that Job lived before the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai in 1445 B.C.

The divine name Shaddai, or God Almighty, a name familiar to the patriarchs (Genesis. 17:1; Exodus. 6:3), is used thirty-one times in Job. However, this proper name for God is used only seventeen times in the rest of the entire Old Testament. Thus, it was a name used much in the early patriarchal, prelaw period, suggesting that Job probably belonged to this time.

Many of the individual and geographical names in the book were also used during the patriarchal period (Sheba and the Sabeans; Job 1:15; 6:19; Genesis. 25:3), Tema (Job 5:19; Genesis. 25:15), Eliphaz (Job 2:11; Genesis. 36:4), and Uz (Job 1:1; Genesis. 22:21).

The book of Job contains no mention of institutions begun under the Mosaic Law (i.e., priesthood, laws, tabernacle, special religious days, etc.).

Purpose of Writing:

The Book of Job helps us to understand the following: Satan cannot bring financial and physical destruction upon us unless it is by God's permission. God has power over what Satan can and cannot do. It is

beyond our human ability to understand the "why's" behind all the suffering in the world. The wicked will receive their just dues. We cannot always blame suffering and sin on our lifestyles. Suffering may sometimes be allowed in our lives to purify, test, teach, strengthen or reason with the soul. Who God is remains enough, and He deserves and requests our love and praise in all circumstances of life.

Key Verses of the Book of Job:

1:1, "In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil."

1:21, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

38:1-2, "Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said, 'Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?'"

42:5-6, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

First Summary of Job:

The book of Job opens with a scene in heaven where Satan comes to accuse Job before God. He insists Job only serves God because God protects him and seeks God's permission to test Job's faith and loyalty. God grants His permission, only within certain boundaries.

Why do the righteous suffer? This is the question raised after Job loses his family, his wealth, and his health. Job's three friends *Eliphaz*, *Bildad* and *Zophar*, come to "comfort" him and to discuss his crushing series of tragedies. They insist his suffering is punishment for sin in his life. Job, though, remains devoted to God through all of this and contends that his life has not been one of sin. A fourth man, *Elihu*, tells Job he needs to humble himself and submit to God's use of trials to purify his life. Finally, Job questions God Himself and learns valuable lessons about the sovereignty of God and his need to totally trust in the Lord. Job is then restored to health, happiness and prosperity beyond his earlier state.

The Three Questions of Job - The Harbinger of Christ

Job's First Question, (verse 4), Job asks, "Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!?" Job's question comes from a heart that recognizes it cannot possibly please God or become justified in His sight. God is holy; we are not. Therefore, a great gulf exists between man and God, caused by sin. But the answer to Job's anguished

question is found in Jesus Christ. He has paid the penalty for our sin and has exchanged it for His righteousness, thereby making us acceptable in God's sight (Hebrews 10:14; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Job's Second Question (verse 10), "But man dies and lies prostrate; Man expires, and where is he?" This is another question about eternity and life and death that is answered only in Christ. With Christ, the answer to 'where is he?' is eternal life in heaven. Without Christ, the answer is an eternity in "outer darkness" where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).

Job's Third Question (verse 14), is "If a man dies, will he live again?" Once again, the answer is found in Christ. We do indeed live again if we are in Him. "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55).

Pre-Series Practical Applications:

The Book of Job reminds us that there is a "cosmic conflict" going on behind the scenes that we usually know nothing about. Often we wonder why God allows something, and so we question or doubt God's goodness, love and judgment. But we do this without the

ability to see or understand the full picture, or what I would describe as **God's reality**. So we are placed in a position of needing to trust God - and if we do not, then our reality and God's reality are not the same thing. The Book of Job teaches us to trust God in all settings and under all circumstances. We must trust God, not only WHEN we do not understand, but precisely **because** we do not understand. The psalmist tells us,

Psalm 18:30

“As for God, His way is perfect”

Well, if God's ways are **“perfect,”** then we can trust that whatever God does—and whatever God allows—is also perfect. **This may not seem possible to our finite consciousness, but remember that in God's reality all things are possible.** It is true that we can't expect to understand His mind perfectly, as He reminds us...

Isaiah 55:8-9

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”

Nevertheless, our responsibility to God is to obey Him, to trust Him and to submit to His will, whether we understand it or not.

Window Terms for Life of Job - Context Definitions

Tragedy - To experience through no personal fault, an event causing great suffering, affliction, destruction, and distress, such as a serious accident, crime, or natural catastrophe.

Reality - To see the world or the state of things as they actually exist, seeing through the lens of unfiltered absolute truth as opposed to an idealistic or preferred idea of them.

Theodicy – To embrace the truth of who God is, and to speak justly about Him in the face of circumstances that cause human suffering. To doubt Him because of what you perceive He should do.

Reality

Evil has two forms, sin and suffering. Good has only one - God. But critics challenge by pointing out what seems to be the obvious contradiction. Why does a good God allow both sin and suffering? I'm always wondering is that really the right question? How about this... Is a God who allows sin and suffering really a contradiction, or is the allowance of sin and suffering just the unknown-unwanted reality of a sovereign God's? A sovereignty that humanity either chooses to deny or resent.

Most good people don't really want to sin, and none of the people who sin want to suffer for it. But that doesn't make it reality. Truth is that we all end up doing some things we don't want to do - and if those things we do are bad, the reality is that someone will suffer for it.

7.2.16 Conversations with Job's Friends

We have all had our mother tell us... “Bad company corrupts good morals.” She was right - we didn't like it, but we all knew it was true. She did not make that stuff up - it was the apostle Paul who made it up as the Holy Spirit inspired him to write profound and eternal truth. The whole concept of friends who are a bad influence to our character and who pose a threat to our better judgment is real and biblical. In fact in Job's case it would turn out to be his biggest stumbling-block and nearly his spiritual downfall. Job would suffer the influence and consequences from bad company in the form of his three friends, who would each have a negative effect on his faith in God. What Satan could not do by taking away Job's wealth, destroying his family, and assaulting his health, he would accomplish through these so-called “counselors.” While Job withstood the collapse of his business, the death of his children, and the infliction of disease, what came closest to defeating him was the adverse influence of his friends. These three—*Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar*—were Satan's pawns. They beat Job down and wore him out. You and I should never underestimate or ignore the power and pull of bad company.

The story of Job features lengthy conversations between Job and his three friends that lasts for nearly two-thirds of the book (chapters 4–26). Each friend speaks in three consecutive cycles, the only

exception being the third friend, Zophar, who remains silent in the third round. In response to each discourse, Job himself speaks in return each time. Throughout their conversations, these three counselors say the same thing - **that all suffering is punishment for sin - Job's sin**. They see a direct cause-and-effect relationship between sin and suffering. Each round becomes increasingly intense. In round one Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar hint at Job's sin. In round two they insinuate Job's sin. But in round three they call out Job's sin. Through all of their accusation and assumptions Job is defensive about his innocence, which in return causes him to become demanding in his relationship with God. That is an unhealthy process (for Job, or us). The result is Job's faith weakens, and his attitude gets ugly, angry, hostile, and bitter.

Eliphaz the Temmanite

PRIMARY OPINION: Eliphaz attributes Job's affliction to hidden sins, and he bases this on what he has heard and seen in life.

STRATEGIC OPENING: Eliphaz begins his discourse with Job by making a positive, affirming statement in an attempt to connect with him.

RECOMMENDATION ONE: Eliphaz believes Job has sinned against God and should confess his sin if he is to be restored.

RECOMMENDATION TWO: Eliphaz claims to have received his knowledge from a spirit in the middle of the night, one who argues that humans cannot be trusted because of their sin.

4:1–2

Then Eliphaz the Temanite —probably the eldest of these three friends, certainly the most sympathetic—replied. He was the first to speak to Job and break their weeklong silence. In sympathy with Job's miserable state, Eliphaz began by asking Job if he would become impatient. He asked that Job not blow up if he offered words of counsel. But who can keep from speaking? He could not prevent himself from offering help to Job, his hurting friend.

4:3

Eliphaz began with a positive commendation, Think how you have instructed many, but for a subtle reason. Now the roles had been reversed, and Job needed to be counseled with the words of Eliphaz. You have strengthened feeble hands. Job had helped many people throughout his life with his wise words. But now the tables were turned. He needed to receive counsel from Eliphaz.

4:4

Your words have supported those who stumbled. Eliphaz sounded so encouraging here, but it was to build Job up only to tear him down. You have strengthened faltering knees. Job had been a great

encourager of many people. Those who staggered under the heavy blows of life were those whom Job had strengthened with his words.

4:5

But now Job was in need of instruction. He must now accept their counsel. Job, Eliphaz insisted, needed a dose of his own medicine. His diagnosis of Job was, you are discouraged. His countenance was crestfallen, and his heart was low. Trouble, Eliphaz noted, was devastating Job's life. Here is the same word Satan used to bait God to touch Job's life (Job 1:11; 2:5). "And you are dismayed," Eliphaz said, meaning Job was full of despair. All this resulted from the sudden, cataclysmic nature of his troubles and the bewilderment of unanswered questions about this tragedy.

4:6

Should not your piety be your confidence? Eliphaz was insisting that Job's own spirituality would count with God. If Job was living in personal integrity, then he could be sure a successful future awaited him. Further, Job's blameless ways would be his hope. In other words, Job had nothing to worry about if he were truly right with God.

4:7

Consider now: Who, being innocent has ever perished? The expected answer is no one. With this broad, sweeping statement, Eliphaz left no room for doubt about Job's guilt. The implication was

that if Job were perishing, then he was surely not innocent. Eliphaz's theory was that Job must be suffering because he had sinned against God. Where were the upright ever destroyed? If Job was truly innocent, he would not be struck down like this.

4:8

Eliphaz's life philosophy was as I have observed. He had noticed that those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it. He had a direct cause-and-effect theory of life—that integrity always produces prosperity and sin inevitably produces adversity. Since Job was undergoing destruction, Eliphaz reasoned, he must be one of those who sow trouble and reap it. Eliphaz believed Job had sown his wild oats and was reaping a bitter harvest (cp. Prov. 22:8).

4:9

Eliphaz declared that those who lived in sinful rebellion would be destroyed and perish by the breath of God and the blast of his anger. He used strong imagery here to depict God's disciplinary judgment and wrathful vengeance “against the stubborn who refused to repent. Eliphaz implied that Job was one such person.

4:10

Eliphaz believed Job was irresponsible and had not protected his children. The phrase the lions may roar and growl is an allusion to Job's loud wailing, yet the teeth of the great lions are broken. This

devastation had come to Job, according to Eliphaz, because he had failed “to care for his family.”

4:11

The lion, no matter how strong he might be, perishes for lack of prey, eventually coming to an end. In this weakened state, the cubs of the lioness are scattered. This is a clear allusion to Job's failure to guard his children, who had been killed in these tragedies (Job 1:18–19). Because of Job's irresponsibility, his family had perished under God's judgment on his sin.

4:12

Eliphaz asserted, a word was secretly brought to me in the middle of the night. This is an apparent claim to the reception of special revelation. His ears caught a whisper of it as words were spoken which no one else could hear. In other words, Eliphaz had received a message that was delivered to him alone.

4:13–14

Amid many disquieting dreams in the night, Eliphaz claimed to have received a divine oracle or mysterious vision when deep sleep falls on men (i.e., at night). This was for Eliphaz a very disturbing event. As this eerie dream came, fear and trembling seized Eliphaz, making all his bones shake with fear. This strange encounter was unsettling! It

was no ordinary dream or even a nightmare but a supernatural visit by an unidentified spirit.

4:15–16

A spirit with an indiscernible form glided past his face in spine-tingling fashion. The hair on his body stood on end. This hair-raising experience was mystical and supernatural, as it was mediated through an unknown mysterious messenger. It stopped, but I could not tell what it was, he declared. Appearing immediately before Eliphaz, this midnight messenger lingered in the air and remained unidentified by him. A form stood before Eliphaz's eyes, but it was not like that of a man. When it spoke, it sounded with a hushed voice.

4:17

The word that Eliphaz heard was: "Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?" The anticipated answer was no. No man is morally good enough to stand before God with divine acceptance (Romans 3:23). The message of this mysterious messenger was that man in his natural state is displeasing to God.

4:18–19

If God places no trust in his servants (i.e., his heavenly host, or angelic beings), then how can he trust sinful man? And if he charges his angels with error, how much more will he do the same with fallen

humanity? How much more will God charge those who live in houses of clay (i.e., earthly bodies with sin). Man's foundations are in the dust. He came from dust and will return to dust. Man is so fragile, crushed more readily than a moth (cp. Job 27:18). How then could fallen man ever stand before God in the judgment?

4:20

Between dawn and dusk (i.e., all day long) they are broken to pieces because of sin. Unnoticed, they perish forever. In his placated reasoning, Eliphaz proceeded to picture God as an uncaring, transcendent God.

4:21

Are not the cords of their tent pulled up? Their bodies are pictured as a temporary, tent-like home which folds up and collapses when it is time to move. So it is with sinful man in his death (2 Corinthians 5:1,4). Because of their self-centered existence, they die without wisdom, having rejected God. An entire lifetime is insufficient to grasp God's wisdom.

Conclusion

Our friends have an enormous influence on our lives, for either good or bad. The reality is that our peers may be used, by either God or Satan, to build us up or tear us down - count on it. In Job's

circumstance, his closest friends were the assets used by the devil with ingenious skill to pry open his heart for despair and despondency. This truth is taught throughout the Scripture. Solomon wrote, *"A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother"* (Proverbs 18:24).

We must choose our friends wisely because in the day of adversity, they will either lift us up or pull us down. A true and godly friend will stand with us in times of trouble and will be used by the Lord for our good. The scripture says, *"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity"* (Proverbs 17:17). When in the furnace of affliction, a genuine friend will provide much relief and strength. At the same time, *"Bad company corrupts good character"* (1 Corinthians 15:33). Rather than having character, a bad friend is a character. Know who your friends truly are and pray that God will surround you with true friends who, unlike Eliphaz, will genuinely love you and help you in your times of adversity.

Being a Godly Friend

How can we be a good friend to someone who is hurting? Chapter 4 of Job provides the very antithesis of what we should be. In other words, Eliphaz shows us by negative example what a friend should not be. By looking at him, we can determine the very opposite of what we should be to others. Here are some of the characteristics

believers should demonstrate when being a friend to someone who is suffering.

1. Be Sensitive. Eliphaz was there for Job physically but not emotionally. His heart and sympathy remained far away. He was present to make theological points rather than to comfort Job. In order to be a friend to someone who is hurting, we must come alongside that person to comfort and console, not to correct and chastise. We must come alongside someone in need to help, encourage, and comfort. We need to be a friend who will put a gentle arm around another rather than shake an accusing finger in his face.

2. Be Sympathetic. We should feel the pain of others, not inflict more. Eliphaz never did sympathize with Job. He failed to enter into his pain. “His approach was intellectual, theological, and analytical—bottom-line oriented. Aren't we supposed to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2)? This means to get under a brother's burden with him and help carry the weight of his hurt—not just sit across the room and explain what went wrong.

3. Be Supportive. Eliphaz took an adversarial role. He lost sight of the original goal, which was to comfort Job. He spent his time trying to pin Job down rather than to lift him up. He tried to criticize and

condemn Job and to document that Job was in sin. There was no comfort for Job from Eliphaz, only harassment.

7.10.16 Conversations with Job's Friends

Eliphaz the Temmanite

What Eliphaz said in confronting Job was the right thing to do. His emotional collapse in chapter three needed to be addressed by his friends. But Eliphaz's challenge was misapplied to Job, and it was even dangerous to his spiritual health. Eliphaz was a dangerous man because he only spoke part of the truth – the part that he either knew or liked best. He did not speak the whole truth, and knowing only part of the truth is dangerous because it is incomplete and without context. This actually makes it not true at all. The worst part of the advice and counsel of Eliphaz was the truth he did speak to Job was spoken at the wrong time in the wrong spirit. In Job chapter 5 we hear the rest of the counsel Eliphaz delivered to his hurting friend. This should quickly remind us how careful we need be in counseling others. It is critical that we are sensitive to the situation and setting, while making sure that we share complete and sound counsel to those who are desperately needing it.

PRIMARY OPINION: Eliphaz claims that God is humbling and correcting Job for his sin and urges him to bring his case before God, believing that God will restore him once he has punished him.

RECCOMENDATION ONE: Eliphaz says Job is suffering for his sin and should bring his case before God.

RECCOMENDATION TWO: Eliphaz challenges Job to trust God to heal and defend him after he has punished him.

5:1

Eliphaz's words became more direct and forthcoming. This counselor denied any possibility of intervention in Job's plight by asking, "Call if you will, but who will answer you?" The expected answer was that no one would be able to rescue Job from all this. To which of the holy ones will you turn? According to Eliphaz, not even the angels were able to deliver Job.

5:2

Resentment kills a fool. This is how Eliphaz interpreted Job's lament spoken irrationally earlier (Job 3). His bitterness would destroy his life. A fool is one who pays no attention to God. This is how Job had acted, like a person without God. And envy slays the simple. It is clear that Job was the being referred to here. All his emotional wailing would destroy him.

5:3–4

I myself have seen a fool taking root. Job was this foolish man who had been planted in the soil of prosperity and had begun growing. But suddenly his house was cursed. Now Job has suffered the loss of everything, proving himself to be a fool, according to Eliphaz. Job's unconfessed sins, Eliphaz believed, led to his ten children being crushed in court without a defender. This was a meritless indictment of Job, who was being charged as the responsible party for the death of his children.

5:5–6

Eliphaz said, “The hungry consume his harvest,” a reference to the raiding bands who depleted Job's wealth. The devastation of the barbarians was seen in the taking of his harvest (i.e., blessings by God) that was once protected by God. This great personal loss suffered by Job was seen as occurring because of unconfessed sin in his life. Eliphaz remarked, “For hardship does not spring from the soil, nor does trouble sprout from the ground.” Believing everything happens for a reason, Eliphaz asserted these afflictions did not appear from nowhere. They had been sown and cultivated by Job. He was reaping what he had sown.

5:7

As surely as sparks fly upward in a fire, so man is born to trouble. Man by his sin brings trouble on himself. Thus, it was inevitable that Job would suffer as he did, since trouble knows no exceptions.

5:8

Then in “shift, Eliphaz advised Job to appeal to God. But if it were I, I would appeal to God. Here the seed is first planted into Job's mind that he should present his case to God. “I would lay my cause before him,” remarked Eliphaz, believing God would grant Job's desire for an appearance in court.

5:9–10

Job should understand that God performs wonders so great that they cannot be fathomed. His works are so awesome that they defy human comprehension. These divine miracles are so numerous they cannot be counted. Highlighting some of these works of God, Eliphaz noted that he bestows rain, which, in turn, sends water upon the countryside. This is all God's gracious doing, sending rain and good things to everyone (Matt. 5:45).

5:11–12

By this divine sovereignty, the lowly he sets on high. God is opposed to the proud, but he gives grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5). Those who mourn are lifted to safety. Like the sending of the rain, this is

God's grace at work. He champions the cause of the helpless who cannot defend themselves. What is more, God thwarts the plans of the crafty those who scheme evil plans, and brings them to ruin. Those who exalt themselves, God humbles (Luke 18:14). This God does so that their hands achieve no success, at least not in an ultimate sense.

5:13–14

Further, God catches the wise in their craftiness as they plot against the righteous. They will not get away with their sin. The evil schemes of the wily are designed to harm others. But they are swept away by God himself. Their sinister plans will not succeed; they are doomed to failure. Darkness (i.e., God's judgment) comes upon them in the daytime, frustrating the conniving. At noon the wicked grope as in the night. This divine intervention suddenly strikes them, leaving them blind in broad daylight, unable to cope with life.

5:15

On the other hand, God saves the needy from the sword in the mouth of the evil. Although they are armed to the teeth, they are unable to succeed in their plots against the righteous because God saves them from the clutches of the powerful. Deliverance of the godly comes from the Lord.

5:16

So the poor who trust in God have hope. They have confidence in the future, knowing that injustice shuts its mouth. God will deliver the humble who cannot save themselves. God will punish the strong and render justice to the poor and needy. Eliphaz assumed that Job was one of the mighty who had sinned and had been brought low by God. He must repent in order to make everything right.

5:17

The long discourse that follows was given by Eliphaz to remind Job that blessed is the man whom God corrects. The sinner should be happy when divine chastisement corrects him because it eventually puts him in right standing with God. So Job should rejoice in this tragedy; God will use it to restore their broken relationship. Thus, do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. Job should not resist it but receive it as corrective chastening which would bring him back to God (Heb. 12:5–10).

5:18

Job's happiness would be built on this principal, that God wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal. Eliphaz declared that Job should cheer up because eventually God would relieve his pain and affliction. The problem with this advice is that it was based on the premise that Job's troubles had resulted from the

disciplinary actions of God. Then Eliphaz proceeded to walk Job through a list of blessings he would receive if he would confess his sin.

5:19

From six calamities he will rescue you. This is to be taken poetically, not literally, for “many” troubles. In seven (the number of completeness) no harm will befall you. This restoration depended on Job's repentance. Eliphaz assumed that Job was in great sin.

5:20–21

In famine, God will ransom you from death. If Job would turn away from a life of secret sin, God would rescue him. And in battle, God would deliver him, from the stroke of “the sword. All this divine blessing would come if Job would only repent. You will be protected from the lash of the tongue. That is, Job would escape the reproof of others, as well as their stern warnings, if he would only repent. Job need not fear when destruction comes because God would protect him from all harm. This divine deliverance would occur if Job would only confess his sin.

5:22

Job would laugh at destruction and famine because it would not harm him if he would become right with God. He need not fear the beasts of the earth because of God's supernatural defense, if only he would repent.

5:23

For you will have a covenant with the stones of the field. This was a figurative way of saying that the stones would be at peace with Job and not ruin his crops (cp. 2 Kgs. 3:19; Matt. 13:5). Further, even the wild animals would be at peace with Job, not causing him any harm. All these good things would happen if Job would only repent.

5:24

You will know that your tent is secure, that is, Job would have a great assurance “of peace and safety. You will take stock of your property and find nothing missing through all these previously mentioned potential threats. None of these, Eliphaz claimed, would come against Job, if he were walking rightly before God.

5:25

In what had to be the most difficult statement of all for Job to hear, Eliphaz spouted off, “You will know that your children will be many.” This referred to Job's loss of his own children. Such a loss would not have occurred, Eliphaz contended, if he had been living in obedience to God. Job's descendants would be like the grass of the earth, if he were right with God. His children would have many children, and so on through future generations, if Job would only turn from his sin.

5:26

When it was time for Job to die at the end of life, Eliphaz said, he would come to the grave in full vigor, strong and healthy. He would be like sheaves gathered in season, a life in full harvest that would conclude in a state that was bountiful and fruitful. Such prosperity would happen to Job if he would only get right with God.

5:27

Eliphaz ended this long discourse by claiming its validity and truthfulness: We have examined this, and it is true. He conferred with Bildad and Zophar, and there was unanimous agreement among them about Job's plight and suffering. Eliphaz appealed for Job's response of obedience: So hear it and apply it to yourself. As this discourse concluded (Job 4–5), he called upon Job to turn from his sin against God and he would be restored.

Conclusion

It has been said that there are two kinds of people in the world—those who brighten the room when they enter it and those who brighten the room when they leave it. The converse is also true. There are those who darken a room when they walk into it. Eliphaz was this kind of man. He darkened Job's room and the personally intimate space in which he was suffering terribly. Although well meaning, Eliphaz was reckless and dangerous in what he spoke. In reality he

was used of the devil, as one sent to erode and weaken Job's faith in God. His arguments were well crafted, but they missed the mark with Job. All Eliphaz could think was, **“What had Job done to bring such crisis upon himself”? Apparently he never thought that maybe Job had done nothing wrong, and that he just needed to be comforted and cared for.**

In reality, Eliphaz knew nothing about the battle between God and Satan recorded in the opening chapters. Rather than being a friend who brightened Job's world, Eliphaz darkened it. Although he could not have known about the cosmic contest transpiring in heaven, he should have been a source of encouragement to Job's broken heart, not an agent of discouragement. May each of us be a friend who is a “merchant of hope” to others in their sorrow, not a person who afflicts others with sorrow.

Godly Help for a Hurting Friend

1. Be a Listener. In order to be a friend to one who is hurting, listen more than you talk. God gave us two ears and one mouth. We need to use them accordingly. Be quick to hear and slow to speak. People who are suffering do not need a lecture; they need love. They do not need a sermon; they need sympathy.

2. Be Humble. Do not try to explain everything. Eliphaz did not know what he was talking about. He believed he had all the divine mysteries figured out. He presumed to know why everything was going wrong in Job's life. But in reality he did not have a clue. Do not pretend to know and explain everything.

3. Be Hopeful. The flame of hope had been extinguished within Job's heart. He needed to have that fire rekindled. He needed to be told, "Job, there is a bright tomorrow out there. God is going to work through this. We're going to work through this together. God is going to work through this for good." But Eliphaz was so focused on the negative that he had nothing positive to say. No wonder Job remained without hope. Eliphaz could only see what he thought were Job's faults. He attacked Job's shortcomings, but he never did see his strengths. To be a friend to someone who is hurting, we must look beyond that person's faults to his needs.

4. Be Balanced. What was missing from all that Eliphaz said was God's love. All he saw was a God of strict justice, harsh judgment, swift discipline, and severe condemnation. He had a rigid view of God that allowed for no mercy or grace. Let us never fall into such a hole. If we are to help others who are hurting, we need to emphasize God's love, tenderness, and mercy. God is both a God of judgment and a God of love. But one without the other is not God. Half the

truth, when the whole truth is revealed, becomes no truth. There are people all around us who are going through difficult times. They need a friend just like you to help them through these days.

7.17.16 Conversations with Job's Friends

When Satan pries open a person's heart to sow discouragement, that person becomes an easy prey for all of Satan's other plans of destruction. What exactly is discouragement? It is the emotional state of being deprived of hope. It is being dejected, disheartened, and deflated to such an extent that one wants to give up on life. It is being despondent, despairing, and so dismayed that one loses all sense of rational perspective and sinks into an emotional black hole. This is exactly the direction in which Job was moving.

Although Job initially responded well to his trials (Job 1:20–22; 2:8–10), his friends had become the devil's tool of discouragement to pry open Job's heart. He would become easy prey for the devil's other devices and plans. What is most cunning by Satan is that this discouragement would stay under Job's spiritual radar, coming not from his enemies but from his friends.

PRIMARY RESPONSE: Job admits his discouragement because he feels he is suffering unjustly.

SUPPORTING IDEA ONE: Job believes he has not denied God's Word.

SUPPORTING IDEA TWO: Job accuses his friend of being undependable, unhelpful, undiscerning, and uncaring.

SUPPORTING IDEA THREE: Job asks his friends to tell him specifically where he has gone wrong.

SUPPORTING IDEA FOUR: Job denies Eliphaz's charges of wrongdoing, contending that his pain gives him a right to moan and lament as he does.

Job's Defense

6:1

Then Job replied to the unkind words that had been spoken to him by Eliphaz (Job 4–5). In reality he was speaking to all three friends, although Eliphaz had been the first to speak. This standard introduction will be repeated throughout the book (9:1; 12:1; 16:1; 19:1; 21:1; 23:1; 26:1).

6:2

Discouraged and in despair, Job lamented, If only my anguish could be weighed and all my misery be placed on the scales! His excruciating pain was incalculable, beyond measurement. He wanted his three friends to know how deeply he hurt. He appealed

for a sympathetic hearing with these friends whom he wanted to understand the depths of his sorrow.

6:3–4

For Job, his misery would surely outweigh the sand of the seas. His grief was greater than could be told. It was beyond his ability to calculate. No wonder my words have been impetuous, he declared. That is, such extreme suffering would be expected to produce such emotion-packed words as he had stated earlier (cp. Job 3). Job agreed with Eliphaz in that he, too, believed it was the Almighty who had shot him with poisoned arrows and marshaled terrors against him. The arrows of the Lord are symbolic of his judgment (Deuteronomy 32:23,42) or wrath (Psalm. 38:1–2). All this, Job believed, was directed at him by God.

6:5

Does a wild donkey bray when it has grass? The answer to this rhetorical question is no. When this animal is well fed, it does not bray. Neither would Job when his needs were met by God. Would an ox bellow when it has fodder? The answer is no. Again, neither would Job if he had not endured such pain from God. As it was, he claimed the right to bray and bellow.

6:6–7

Is tasteless food eaten without salt? Again the answer is no. Is there flavor in the white of an egg? This rhetorical question begs a negative answer. Job believed he had been wounded by God (v. 4) and, in response, had been given unseasoned words by his friends that were not palatable. Job's counselors' words should have been seasoned with salt. For Job, tasteless food made him ill. He was also upset by the words of his friends. I refuse to touch it, he declared."

6:8–9

Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for. What was this desire? He had wanted to die in order to escape his suffering (Job 3:20–21). An early death would release him from this ordeal. Job longed that God would be willing to crush him so he could escape this pain. Only death, he believed, would lead to relief. He desired for God to let loose his hand and cut him off from life itself.

6:10–11

Job's one consolation was that he had not denied the words of the Holy One. Unlike his wife, he knew he had remained true to God. Job had not cursed God or rejected his words, which, in essence, would have been a denial of the Lord. So he preferred to die now, knowing he had kept the faith. Job defended his emotional response by citing that he was at a loss for strength. Being at the end of human

resources, he was without hope and had lost all prospects to become patient in this painful and crushing ordeal.

6:12-13

Do I have the strength of stone? Job asked. The expected answer was no. He was greatly weakened by this trial. How could he continue in such a difficult state? Is my flesh bronze? Again the anticipated answer was no. His strength was not like stone or bronze. Job was now in a weakened condition. In desperation and misery, he declared that he was without power to help himself and that success had been driven from him. He saw himself as helpless to endure this trauma. This appears to be a reply to Eliphaz's opening words to him (Job 4:2–6).

Job's Disappointment (6:14–23)

6:14

Job addressed his disappointment with his friends by saying, A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends. Instead of encouraging Job, his friends were insensitive. Where was their support, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty? Even if Job had forsaken God, which he had not, they should have shown him love.

6:15

Job's brothers (i.e., his three friends), depicting their previous close relationship, were as undependable as intermittent streams. That “is, these counselors were like rivers that overflow in the winter when water is not needed but are dry when water is needed (Jeremiah 15:18; Amos 5:24). Some help!

6:16–17

In the early spring the rivers overflow their banks when darkened by thawing ice and swollen with melting snow. In like manner the words of Job's friends were at flood stage. He was drowning in their verbosity. But in the dry season, when water is most needed, they cease to flow. In the heat of the summer nights, these streams dry up and vanish from their channels. So it was with his so-called friends. They spoke when he needed silence and were silent when he needed them to speak.

6:18–19

Caravans turn aside from their routes when the dry seasons come, looking for water. But they can find none. They go up into the wasteland in order to find water, but they can find none. They go up into the wasteland in order to find water, but the wasteland in order to find water, but they perish for lack of it. So Job was unable to find comfort in their empty words. The caravans of Tema in the Arabian Desert looked for water but it was scarce, and the traveling

merchants of Sheba also searched for water in the south, but none was to be found. Although they looked in hope for water, they arrived at the riverbed “only to be disappointed” (Job 6:20). Likewise, these counselor's words were no help to Job.

6:20

These traveling caravans became distressed when they could find no water in the desolate desert. This dejection was multiplied because they had been confident of discovering water, only to lose hope and be disappointed. In similar fashion, Job was disappointed with his friends' poor counsel. They were only dry holes!

6:21

Like a dry river his friends had proved to be of no help. Job had hoped to receive help from them, but they offered nothing substantive. You see something dreadful and are afraid. This is a reference to Job's thin and emaciated frame. Their cowardice was shown in their failure to sympathize with Job in his suffering, perhaps because they feared to provoke God to bring the same discipline upon themselves.

6:22–23

Job then asked if he ever requested something of them on his behalf, such as a ransom from their wealth. The answer was no. He had only asked of them what cost no money and what should have

been easy to give: their love and support. Had he ever asked them to deliver him from the hand of the enemy or ransom him from the clutches of the ruthless? No, he had not. All he wanted from them was their supportive friendship.

Job's Demand (6:24–30)

6:24

Job then challenged his friends to teach him and show him where he had been wrong. Then he would be quiet and accept their correction. They had accused him of wrongdoing and had not been specific.

6:25

Job then retorted, “How painful are honest words!” Their words would be difficult to hear, but he wanted to hear them if they were true. But they had not been shown to be accurate. But what do your arguments prove? In other words, Job asked, which of your words actually indict me? Nothing said by the friends proved anything against Job.

6:26–27

Do you mean to correct what I say? Their words were meant to correct Job, yet they failed to do so. They treated his words as wind,

or as if they were empty. How could they challenge what he said if they did not hear him out? Job accused them of demonstrating cruelty. They would cast lots for the fatherless and barter away their friend. No wonder they treated him so ruthlessly. They were heartless and indifferent toward his suffering.

6:28

Then Job changed his tone, appealing to his companions to reconsider him. But now be so kind as to look at me. He was pleading for their sympathy in his time of greatest need, not their further scourging. Would I lie to your face? No, he would not distort or misrepresent the truth to them. He longed for their support, not more lectures. He appealed for their help in his desperate hour.

6:29–30

Relent means change your words toward me. Do not be unjust, Job declared, by accusing him of wrongdoing when such had not been the case. Job's integrity was at stake. They had made him out to be a wicked man when he knew he was not. Is there any wickedness on my lips? Job did not see anything wrong in what he had said in defending himself. Can my mouth not discern malice? Contrary to their charges, he claimed to be an innocent man who did not deserve God's judgments and their accusations.

8.7.16 Conclusion of Eliphaz

There is a legend that a man found the barn where Satan kept his seeds that were ready to be sown in human hearts. He discovered that the seeds marked “discouragement” were more numerous than all the others. When he questioned Satan, he learned that those seeds could be made to grow almost anywhere. But in spite of their abundance, the devil admitted there was one place where he could never get them to grow—in the heart of a grateful person. A thankful spirit is never overcome with despair. But Job had lost the virtue of thankfulness. And because of this, he was losing the war with Satan, at least at this point in his struggle. Discouragement was not just creeping in – it had blown a hole in through Job's heart.

C. S. Lewis once said, “If Satan's arsenal of weapons were restricted to a single one, it would be discouragement.” This weapon of darkness had certainly been used against Job with devastating results. He was weakening under its force. He was beginning to abandon hope that he would ever be restored to his former favor with God. A discouraged person loses all sense of perspective, choosing to believe the worst rather than the best. At the center of a discouraged heart is always an ungrateful spirit—one that has lost sight of God's blessings and focuses instead on the burdens. So it was with Job. And so it often is with us. May we learn to keep our hearts filled with gratitude, even in difficult days.

Navigating the Reality of Discouragement and Rejection

After Job's conversation with Eliphaz he is so discouraged that he finally begins to breakdown emotionally and then spiritually. He could no longer voice or feel grateful to God for anything. His discouragement took on the form of deep seeded rejection. The distance created through the misguided and untimely words of Eliphaz had finally pushed Job into an overwhelming sense of rejection not only from God but from humanity – he felt less than human. How can we overcome rejection and the painful and demoralizing feelings that come with it? Each one of us are touched by the discouragement and despondency of rejection at some point in life – it is reality. And when we do, we often feel less than human, or at least we believe that no human wants, loves, or cares for us. So, how do we navigate through such difficulty?

Rest in God's Greatness - No matter how great our trial or suffering may be, God remains greater still. As Jesus came walking on the waves to the disciples, so he comes to us as sovereign over our storms. Even in the midst of life's greatest struggles, God remains infinitely greater as Lord over all. Nothing is beyond his control.

Psalms 95:3-7

For the LORD is a great God, a great King above all gods. He holds in his hands the depths of the earth and the mightiest

mountains. The sea belongs to him, for he made it.

His hands formed the dry land, too. Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker, for he is our God.

Rest in God's Goodness - Faith must remain confident in God.

Confident in God who is always working for the good of his people. Knowing that God will never deviate from his eternal purpose. Even when times are tough and difficult, and when circumstances seem unexplainable, senseless, and unfair. During these times it is important that we remain steady in the assurance that God is working all things after the counsel of his own will.

Ephesians. 1:11

Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

No matter how threatening the circumstances or how painful our losses, God remains enthroned (overseeing with divine wisdom) in the heavens and is committed to working through our trials toward a positive end.

Psalms 25:8-10

The LORD is good and does what is right; he shows the proper path to those who go astray. He leads the humble in doing

right, teaching them his way. The LORD leads with unfailing love and faithfulness all who keep his covenant and obey his demands.

Rest in God's Grace - In the midst of life's threatening storms, know and believe that God gives a greater grace. In our weakness his strength is made perfect. It is when discouragement threatens to overwhelm us that God's grace is multiplied in lives that are yielded to him. No matter how great our disappointments, God's grace is greater still.

Psalms 84:11

For the Lord God is our sun and our shield.

He gives us grace and glory.

**The Lord will withhold no good thing
from those who do what is right.**

2 Corinthians 12:9

My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.

Key Words - Significant Meaning

Holy (*Hebrew. qodesh*) means; that which is consecrated, sacred, set apart, dedicated, or hallowed. In Leviticus 10:10 and Ezekiel 22:26, *qodesh* is set over against that which is "common". Like the

holy of holies (2 Chronicles. 3:8,10), the temple (Psalms. 20:2), and the holy tabernacle (Exodus. 35:19), the holy hill was holy because of God's intrinsic holiness (Isaiah. 6:3). The presence of God made the objects near him holy (Exodus. 3:5). Because God is holy, his people must be holy (Leviticus. 19:2; 1 Peter 1:16). In a secondary sense, holiness means that which is morally pure, sinless, and without moral or ethical blemish.

Hope (*Hebrew. qawa*) means; to wait. It does not refer to waiting to see if something will or will not occur but waiting with assurance that something will happen, to wait with expectation, to trust in the Lord (Genesis 49:18; Psalms. 130:5).

Good (*Hebrew. tob*); describes something or someone who is excellent, favorable, pleasant, lovely, or sound. In the Old Testament *tob* is used in a wide variety of ways to describe the abstract. Here, as in other passages (cp. Gen. 2:18; Deut. 6:24; 2 Sam. 16:12), good denotes a person's well-being.

Instruction (*Hebrew. tora*) meaning; to project or to teach, also refers to any direction or instruction flowing from the Word of God that points out or indicates God's will. It refers not only to the moral, civil, or ceremonial law but to the whole teaching, instruction, or doctrine of Scripture."

8.21.16

Bildad and Zophar (Conversations with Job's Friends)

Some of the deadliest snakes in the world include the *Indian Cobra*, the *Russell's Viper*, the *Indian Krait*, the *Ceylon Krait*, the *Tiger Snake* and the *African Mamba*. In South America alone, about forty-five hundred people die each year from bites with deadly reptiles such as these. The fangs of these venomous snakes consist of grooved or hollowed teeth that are connected with sacs of poison in the snake's cheeks. When it strikes, the snake uses a squeeze-bottle technique that squirts a stream of venom into its victim. In less than half a second, the reptile can strike, inject its venom, and return to normal stance. The venom of some species is so deadly, such as the *Inland Taipan* of Australia, that people have died in less than a minute after being bitten.

In his misery and suffering, Job did not realize he had been bitten repeatedly by the worst serpent of all. The devil's deadly poison had been injected into his soul through the untruths and accusations told to him by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. As each friend finished their final speech, they sank their fangs deep into Job's heart. They attacked and judged Job with a long litany of sins that he had not committed. With each accusation their strange anger progressed until it became hostile and accusatory.

Revelations 12:10-12

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short. ESV

1 Peter 5:6-11

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. ESV

We now know the accusations were not true, and that they only confused the issue, and broke Job's spirit. But as God Himself had predicted of Job none of his friends could convince him of his guilt, although they made every effort to do so. Under this heated attack, Job was certainly beaten down, and it obviously caused his focus to shift. Satan used each friend in his relentless attempt to subvert and break Job's faith. The devil's poison had been injected into Job's soul by his angry counselors. This poison would almost destroy Job's confidence in God.

Using Job's friends as an example this should make us more careful about what we say and how we say it to those who are discouraged. Clearly we can see that it is so very critical to be the support and encouragement that God wants us to be to those who are on the "edge" and suffering because of crisis, tragedy, and heartache. Here are a couple of reminders that we should consider.

Never Play the Role of God or Holy Spirit. A friend should never play the role of God or Holy Spirit. We can be used by God and His Spirit to bring hope and help but we *are not* God. Job's friends had tried to bring conviction to his heart by accusing him of sin. This is what Satan does - we do not. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar all went too far. They crossed the line with Job and went too far. As Martin Luther

once said, "I can only bring God's Word to the ear but can go no further. The Holy Spirit must take the Word from the ear to the heart." All three friends tried to do the latter, a work that only the Holy Spirit can do. It is the Holy Spirit who has come into the world to convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment—not us. Job's friends presumed to know Job's heart and assumed to know what he was thinking in the secret counsels of his mind. Worse, they speculated about what Job was thinking about God. Each attempted to put words into Job's mouth about his understanding of God.

Never Judge the Suffering of Others by Outward Appearance. Our role does not require or suggest judgment as our responsibility. We humans process and form opinions and judgments of others mostly by impressions, images, and feelings, and very seldom on actual knowledge and truth. This is not to say that discernment, concern, and care do not tell us something about a person - they do. But not enough for us to form life judgments, hurtful condemnations, and reckless opinions. There are circumstances and realities that we can never see or possibly know about one another through these limited careless means. God expects better - we can do better.

Samuel 16:7

Man looks on the outward appearance; only God looks on the heart.

The apostle Paul “refused to let others judge his heart. Standing up to the Corinthians' judgmental spirit about his life and ministry, he wrote,

1 Corinthians

I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.

This should tell us that we believers must be careful not to judge the motives of others. This is a task reserved only for God. Let's you and I not try to be “experts” on what others are thinking or feeling. Only God can see behind the veil of the flesh and discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

8.28.16 Conversations with Job's Friends

The Results of Conversations with Job's Friends

By the time Elphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are done with Job the only thing he can think of is to find God, and defend himself. The question was then... "Where is God"? So far, during Job's suffering he had not felt or heard from God in any of the ways and means that he had heard from Him in the past. Job's suffering, grief, and loss had taken their toll. Add to that the accusation, judgment, and condemnation of his friends and it is easy to see how Job could lose sight who he was personally, and who and where was God when he needed Him? So the result of conversations with Job's friends becomes Job asking - where is God?

The truth about that had been lost in Job's misery and discouragement. There was a day that Job surely knew that God was everywhere. The omnipresence of God is one of the most basic truths of theology. It was a truth that Job knew. The Bible clearly teaches that there is no place where God is not present. This is a foundational truth which Job in his misery seems to have forgotten. He claimed not to be able to find God in order to present his case before him. But the truth is that God, a spirit being, is present everywhere. Job could have presented his case at any time to God, who was readily available and always accessible. What Job desired

was already a reality to him. The problem was not with God - but with Job.

The twenty-third chapter records Job's desperate desire to find God and to plead his case of innocence. But in his broken condition he could not find God. The long speeches of his friends had worn him down. Job was a devastated man as he spoke from the depths of a broken heart. This pained patriarch felt that he was suffering injustice with God for sins he had not committed. So he desired to take the Almighty God to court. He wanted to appear before God and argue his case. In an attempt to have the charges against him reversed. His desire to take God to court (in a manner of speaking) is the entire theme of Job 23.

In Job's case, he just wanted to have a private court appearance before God. Without any legal representation he wanted to present his own case before God and secure an acquittal. Like an adept lawyer, Job sought to present his arguments in what he believed to be an airtight case. Before the judge's bench, he would listen to God and give irrefutable answers. Then, Job believed, God would drop all charges against him.

But such was a vain hope. It was based on the supposition that God had made a mistake in handling Job's life. This was impossible. God, who is perfect, does all things well. In reality there was nothing Job

could have presented that would prove God to be in the wrong. He never mishandling Job's life. This was impossible. God, who is perfect, does all things well. In reality there was nothing Job could have presented that would prove God to be in the wrong. Unlike us... God never mishandles our lives.

Where is God and How Can We Find Him?

Job was anguished over not being able to find God in order to plead his case. Where can we find God? He doesn't make it hard. In fact, God comes to us. However, there are several spiritual truths that need to be kept in mind so we can recognize that God is with us.

God is in His Word. God primarily makes himself known in the pages of Scripture. The written Word of God is the chief place in which he has chosen to reveal himself to man. It is in his inerrant, infallible Word that God clearly speaks to us. It does not matter where we may be geographically if we are trying to meet with God. All that really matters is that we have his Word. This conveys to us the mind and presence of God.

God is in His Son. There is only one way to come before God, who is revealed in his Word, and that is through his Son, Jesus. Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). No one may come to God except through his Son, the only mediator

between God and man—Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5–6). Hebrews 4:14 tells us if we are to come before God's throne of grace and find acceptance with him, it necessitates coming by the one divinely prescribed way, and that is exclusively through Christ.

1 John 2:1

We have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ the Righteous One.

God is revealed by His Spirit. All spiritual truth about God must be revealed by his Spirit. Spiritual darkness veils all people from the ministry of God's Spirit. But by the Spirit there is spiritual enlightenment and illumination that opens the eyes of our hearts to the reality and presence of God. It is possible to read the Scripture and merely know about God yet still not know God. The ministry of the Holy Spirit makes God known to us and leads us to him. Only the Spirit can bring us to be connected with the Lord in a living relationship.

9.11.16

Friends Who Make a Difference Matter - Elihu

Among Job's remaining friends there was one man who had been silent but could no longer remain that way - he had heard enough. His name was Elihu, and he had listened and endured the entire dialogue between Job and the others. Elihu was disgusted and disappointed in what was said, and how it was said. He begins to speak to Job the words that he actually needed to hear. What he had to say covered six long chapters (Job 32–37). In these discourses his voice was the only one heard. Elihu spoke *real* truth, *deep* truth, and *hopeful* truth which shed true light and gave Job the kind of counsel and advice he desperately needed. The truthfulness of Elihu's words is later confirmed and validated by the fact that Job's other three friends were rebuked by God (Job 42:7–9) but Elihu's words escaped God's correction.

Elihu correctly reminded Job of the character of God.

Job... remember who God is.

Chapter 33 - God is Gracious and Caring

Chapter 34, 35 - God is Just and Fair

Chapter 36, 37 - God is Great and Sovereign

In his words to Job, Elihu applied a foundational **grid of truth** to Job's life.

Elihu's approach to Job's suffering was far different from that of the others. They had argued that Job needed to repent of sin that he surely had committed **before** his tragedy hit. Elihu, on the other hand, said that Job needed to repent of pride that developed **during** his suffering. **Job's three friends claimed that he was suffering because he had sinned. But Elihu reasoned that Job was sinning because he was suffering.**

Teachable Moment - How we respond to God during adversity tells everyone everything about how we really feel, and what we really know of who God is.

Elihu knew that Job was a good man. But He also could see that Job's suffering and pain had eventually created an attitude of self-righteous pride before God which caused him to question God's ways.

And what is worse (if you remember), that pride had led Job to challenge God to appear before his court to argue his case, thinking that somehow he would be put right before God. But Elihu's diagnosis was correct and cut to the heart and truth of the matter.

Sinful attitudes of self-righteousness had swelled up within Job that required him to personally repent and humble himself once again before God. By listening and waiting on God, Elihu nailed it - he got Job's attention and then God got Job's heart. Elihu said to Job that God was speaking through him - and God was. Without judgment, condemnation, or hostility Elihu tells Job that he should listen carefully. In reality, Elihu was the only true friend to Job.

Difference Making Discoveries

Friendship is Important to God

Friends (Hebrew; *Rea*) is used 187 times in the Old Testament and is used of both close, intimate friends and of casual acquaintances. In this context, it speaks of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, men who presented themselves as close friends within Job's inner circle of relationships. Abraham was called a friend of God - God calls us His friends (John 15:13-15). From our own relationship with God we clearly understand that friendship is important to Him.

Timing is Important to God

Fearful (Hebrew; *Zahal*) is a word used only three times in the Old Testament. *Zahal* means to draw back or to crawl away in a timed manner. In the two instances outside of Job, In Job, the context

indicates that Elihu approached Job cautiously and carefully. Carefully and cautiously wait on the Spirit of God to lead and guide you - not only with what to speak but when to speak to friends who are suffering and in crisis.

Attentiveness is Important to God

Attention (Hebrew; *Bin*) means to observe with *understanding* and *insight*. The most prominent usage of *bin* is in 1 Kings 3:9 where Solomon asked God to help him “discern between good and evil” (NASB). When we share good insight with good understanding it allows a person to use good judgment and make good choices in times of trouble and tragedy. This is a gift from God (Daniel 2:21).

How to Make a Difference for a Friend

Are there times when you find yourself with a friend who is hurting and feel that you must speak what needs to be said? Surely all us as believers find ourselves in such situations at times. God's people should remember that they are there by divine appointment to be God's representatives. If we are to be used by God, we must be willing to speak the truth in love. In these personal encounters believers should always convey divine wisdom to others.

One - Speak the Truth. It does require some personal courage to speak up to a friend. It is never a small thing to speak difficult and unchangeable truth to someone we love. If we truly love we will feel the sense of not wanting to say the wrong thing, or the risk of being rejected. That is why it is God's Spirit gives courage to those who love much. Remember, sometimes loving a friend in trouble is not always enough. But loving a friend enough to speak the truth into their suffering and sorrow captures the will and heart of God. In reality speaking the truth in the context of making a difference for a hurting, suffering friend is never about us – it is about the meeting the needs of the ones we say we love.

Two - Be a Helpful Counselor. To be a helpful counselor you must have genuine compassion, seeking the highest good and God's best as the outcome for the person in need. This has nothing to do with winning an argument, or convincing others that your way is the right way, but rather has everything to do with sharing the loving heart of Christ, and helping a hurting friend. To help means. To lead the hurting, and suffering people we know to the new or re-newer understanding that God has made a way for them, and that in spite of what they may see, and feel in their circumstances His way for them. Is the right way. Again, true Christians speak to pursue the highest good of the person loved - pointing to who God is becomes most helpful when circumstances cause doubt about what God does. Our silence is not helpful it is hurtful.

Three - Be a Wise Counselor. Helping a friend requires wise counsel. Merely speaking up is not enough. We must know what is appropriate to say, and how to appropriately say it. Having Godly wisdom is necessary if our words are to prevail and make a difference. It would be better not to speak at all than to speak unwise and foolish words. So, we must be people who have God's wisdom if we are to be used by God to point people to the right path when they find themselves in need of spiritual and personal direction.

9.18.16. – 9.25.16

God's Conversations with Job

(Situation and Sovereignty - Chapters 38-40)

Job 38:1-4

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. ESV

Situations and Sovereignty - Chapters 38-40

It started out innocently enough, until the last-minute testimony of a woman by the name of Anita Hill. Instantly, the focus shifted to the moral turpitude of Judge Clarence Thomas. One of the highest judges in the land suddenly found himself accused of sexual harassment. The charge was serious. The judge was being condemned as a person unfit to sit on the bench.

Having been nominated to sit as a justice on the highest court of the land, the Supreme Court, Thomas was undergoing an unparalleled character assassination with unsubstantiated innuendoes. This eleventh-hour attack threatened to ruin his life and

career while preventing him from sitting on the bench of the Supreme Court. The issue was critical. Did Thomas possess the personal character necessary to sit in judgment of others? As we know Judge Thomas was eventually cleared of all wrongdoing and found to be competent to serve on the highest court in the land.

The story of Job is one of high drama. Job had been accusing God, the Judge of "heaven and earth, of injustice and had demanded his day in court to present his case against God. Having charged God with being unfit to sit on his throne, the issue at stake was the God's competency to rule the universe. Is God qualified to preside over all creation? That was the issue (isn't it still?). The Creator had been charged with wrongdoing by one of his creatures and must defend his own glory and honor.

But near the end of the proceedings the case took an unexpected turn. Rather than God himself taking the witness stand as Job had hoped, God chose to put Job, the plaintiff, on the stand and examine him. No other witness was brought forward. No other evidence was submitted. No more cross-examination was needed. God himself was in control of this entire court scene. Job had asked for a hearing with God so he might present his case before him (Job 31:35). He wanted God to present a bill of indictment with specific charges, which he believed himself to be adequately prepared to

answer.

But when Job got what he wanted—a day in court with God—he did not want what he got – but he got it anyway...

God suddenly burst on the scene and spoke to Job out of a whirlwind, asking him over seventy questions. What follows is the longest conversation in the Bible in which God speaks. If you can learn about someone by his words, there is much for us to learn about the sovereignty of God here. The theophany, or appearance of God, that Job had asked for finally arrived. Job did not get what he wanted situation, but God did give him what he needed in his situation.

God Rules Over Job (38:1–3)

BIBLICAL REALITY: God confronts Job about his competency to call God into question.

God Rules Over the Earth (38:4–7)

BIBLICAL REALITY: God humbles Job by asking him an array of questions about His creation of the physical world, none of which Job can answer.

God Rules Over the Sea (38:8–11)

BIBLICAL REALITY: God questions Job about the creation of the sea with the purpose of revealing Job's lack of knowledge.

God Rules Over the Sun (38:12–15)

BIBLICAL REALITY: God continues to humiliate Job by interrogating him with questions he cannot answer about God's ways with the wicked.

God Rules Over the Deeps (38:16–18)

BIBLICAL REALITY: God challenges Job, asking if he knows the various enigmas surrounding death and the deep."

God Rules Over the Light (38:19–21))

BIBLICAL REALITY: God continues his cross-examination with probing questions designed to remind Job that God alone is the Creator and thus is superior to Job.

God Rules Over the Snow (38:22–23)

BIBLICAL REALITY: God continues to overload Job with questions,

reminding him that he is ignorant of both snow and hail.

God Rules Over the Rain and Lightning (38:24–28))

BIBLICAL REALITY: God interrogates Job with questions about lightning and rain.

God Rules Over the Planets (38:31–33)

BIBLICAL REALITY: God continues to pepper Job with questions, specifically asking if Job can manage the various celestial bodies and galaxies.

God Rules Over the Clouds (38:34–38)

BIBLICAL REALITY: God pushes Job to answer his questions that deal with the control of the meteorological forces.

Conclusion - Creator and Creation

Job had not answered one of God's questions—not one. The same would be true for each of us. None of us would have fared any better. All of us need God's grace in order to stand with acceptance before his throne. And what we need, God provides through his Son, Jesus Christ. Although we have all sinned and fallen

short of God's glory (Romans 3:23), Jesus causes us to stand sinless before God.

The assumptions Job made were came from a false perspective about the positions of God and man. Forgotten by Job was the truth that God was the Creator and he was the creation—not the other way around. Never must the righteous lose sight of the lofty, exalted position that God occupies. A loss of the heavenly perspective can lead to catastrophic results in the life of a believer. The prayer of Nehemiah reminds believers of God's high position as Creator: "You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything." (Nehemiah. 9:6). Only God created all there is, and He alone gives life.

By virtue of his position as Creator, God is Lord over all his creation. He has the divine right to do with it whatever He pleases. The Lord is the Potter; we are the clay. He is the Shepherd; we are the sheep. He is the Master; we are the slaves. He is the Father; we are His children. As followers of Jesus we should never lose sight of the position of God, as He reigns and rules in the heavens doing frankly, whatever He pleases. Don't get lost there... remember we are His Creation - this pleases Him.

Do we have a proper heavenly perspective? Do we submit to God as Creator and understand that we are a part of His creation? Only when you and I understand God's high and all-powerful position will we understand our humble position before Him. Then we will relate to our Creator in the right way as you see Him, and know Him as he truly is.

God's Conversations with Job

10.2.16 – 10.9.16

Surrender and Restoration

Whenever a person passes through the dark and difficult times of life or when he or she understands that God is behind the suffering, there is a possibility for that person to become embittered toward God. As we have learned this happened to Job for a short time and what he was feeling provoked him to contend with God. You and I face this same temptation - just on a different day. But as believers in God and followers of Jesus we need to carefully guard our hearts against such evil thoughts. When Paul wrote of the weighty matters about God's sovereignty, he asked, "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" (Romans 11:34). The implied answer is no one. God is not like man. He does not lack wisdom and knowledge. He does not stand in need of a counselor. He does not need helpers - yet He creates them.

For us as believers and people of faith to contend with God implies that God is in need of knowledge and wisdom. For any of us to question God demonstrates that we, and not God, lacks knowledge and wisdom. That of course is not fun to acknowledge -

nonetheless it needs to be put out there. Furthermore our contention and misguided questioning of God demonstrates that we are simply not trusting God and do not fully believe what we say we believe - that is a problem. If you or I are struggling with an embittered spirit, we must go to God, humble ourselves while repenting from unbelief, and petitioning for him to intervene and remove the bitterness from our heart and the attitude of pride and doubt in our spirit.

THIS IS CALLED - SURRENDER

"Let God have your life; He can do more with it than you can."

D.L. Moody

Honesty and openness before God about our feelings and frustrations is THE wise plan of action. God's lovingkindness will grant to his people a peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7). This peace, Paul assured believers, will guard and protect the hearts and minds of Christians.

Isaiah 57:15

For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the

spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite. ESV

For 100 Points - What is Behemoth or Leviathan?

In verse 15, of chapter 40 God introduces Job to the process of surrender and restoration through the image of *Behemoth*.

Behemoth is the transliteration of a Hebrew word that means “super-beast.” It is difficult to be certain about the exact identity of this creature in this context. Some scholars believe it may have been a dinosaur or an elephant, or possibly a hippopotamus. The description of the animal supports each of these limited views. Whatever it was, it was an imposing creature that man could not tame or defeat on his own.

Job was learning the terms of the unconditional surrender of his life to almighty God. Unfortunately, in his mounting frustration, he had become increasingly demanding toward God. With arrogance Job charged God with punishing him unjustly. He argued that the punishment did not fit the crime. Whatever the crime might be, Job did not know, but it could not merit such a harsh infliction of suffering upon him. Along the way of suffering Job had pitted himself against God with a self-righteous attitude. What God was calling for in Job's life was unconditional surrender so that He could restore Job.

In chapter 41, God asked Job if he could control the *leviathan* (verse 1). The word *leviathan* is basically a transliteration of the Hebrew word for "sea monster" or "sea serpent." Its exact identity is disputed. The traditional view is that it was the crocodile. The description of the *leviathan* begins as a detailed description of a formidable beast. But as the description unfolds, the *leviathan* "becomes a fire-breathing dragon. This term appears four other times in the Old Testament (Job 3:8; Psalm 74:14; 104:26; Isaiah. 27:1). In each text, *leviathan* refers to some mighty creature that can overwhelm man. But it is, obviously, no match for God. This creature lives in the sea among ships (Psalm 104:26). More than likely, a sea monster, or possibly a marine dinosaur, is intended here.

Could Job control such monsters? The answer is no. If Job could not stand against the behemoth or *leviathan*, what made him think he could contend with God? Job would be far better off fighting a sea monster or dinosaur than fighting against God. God created these terrifying creatures, which no man could control. If Job could not master the creation, why was he contending with the Creator?

God's point to Job was simply this. How can you call me into question when you cannot even answer the questions you have of your own self? God's usage of a beast or monster that man could

not conquer was intended for Job on many levels of understanding and revelation. None of the least being the spiritual implications that were critical to Job's survival and restoration.

What is God's point to us in this? What are the personal monsters and super-beasts that have taunted, haunted and controlled our own lives to the point of causing us to doubt and mistrust the Creator of all things? Those bad people, those disastrous events, and those dark places where horrific things have happened to us. Whatever Behemoth or Leviathan was for Job he finally understood what God was saying to him. **Our connection to Job becomes large in this moment.** What can we do about it? Well, we surrender so we can be restored. We surrender to the Creator so we can overcome the creature.

Conclusion

This is a spiritual lesson that Job had learned the hard way - it is a lesson that we must also learn. Throughout the course of this painful one-sided conversation, Job had been greatly humbled by God. His **heart was emptied of pride** before God. Yet it had been in this humbling process that Job's faith had been turned upward to God with a right heart and healthy attitude. Hearts full of God are always bent low before him in humility - but they are also raised by God to flourish again. Man is never more devoid of true grace than when

he is trying to elevate himself before or above God. Our teachable moment in this is that we are never more growing in grace than when we humble ourselves before the Lord.

That is exactly the place where Job had finally found himself. He was, at last, made a humble man, bent low before the throne of God with nowhere to look but up. Here is a strong truth - either we humble ourselves, or God will humble us. This had been a painful lesson for Job to learn - it is for us as well. Ever since his friends began accusing him of wrongdoing, he had been panic-stricken. But God put Job flat on his back, only to look up into the face of God. In that moment Job knew everything was going to be well with his soul. Job again saw God as the sovereign Creator of heaven and earth. With a new awareness beyond his previous understanding, he realized that God was greater than all his horrific trials and more powerful than his overwhelming circumstances. God was above and beyond his ability to grasp or understand - but not too big to reach His heart.

In all of this God still had not told Job why he was suffering. All Job knew was that God was there with him—and that God alone was sufficient. Job didn't have to know why. All he needed to know was who. Can you connect to this? I do. Are you going through a trial and struggling to see behind a curtain or a bigger picture? God

could explain everything to us about his workings behind the scenes of our trials. But we wouldn't be able to understand it. How can his **infinite** wisdom fit into our **finite** brains? All we need to know is that God is in control of our lives and that he loves us very much.

Maybe you need to come to that place in your life. If so, I urge you to stop your squirming and simply look up. Look up and see the face of God. When there are no answers, there is still comfort for your troubled heart. Peace is found in knowing the God who is there and who is sovereign. Strength is found in knowing the God who controls the universe. As we come to the end of the book, Job looks up and sees God in a new and fuller way. He realizes that God is perfectly orchestrating all the events of his life. He can trust God with his life. God is God. Job is finally brought to the end of himself. The end of ourselves is the beginning of God.

10.16.16 The Life of Job

Surrender and Restoration (Conclusion)

Job's Repentance (42:1–6)

42:1 Having been shown the divine power and majesty in creation by God himself (Chapters 38–41) and, being overwhelmed, Job rightfully replies to God. He repents and humbles himself before the Almighty and Sovereign God as a broken man who had been brought to the end of himself. He willingly responded to God with a new realization and appreciation of God's sovereignty.

42:2 Job confessed, "I know that you can do all things." He saw, at last, that God's purposes are supreme. God will do as he pleases, when he pleases, how he pleases, with whom he pleases. Furthermore, no plan of his can be thwarted. Job realized that all his sovereign purposes will be fully carried out. He came back to the single, most fundamental truth of theology—that God rules over all. Implied in this strong declaration by Job was a new submission to the God whose eternal purposes cannot be resisted or altered. Thus, it was insane for Job to question the Lord's verdicts or oppose his decrees. God is supreme, not Job.

42:3 Referring to God's words spoken to him earlier (Chapter 38:2),

Job said, "You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?'" By quoting these words of God, Job confessed his own guilt. Job had spoken wrongly about God and, thus, had covered over divine counsel with his foolish talk. "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand." That is, as Job had spoken of God and his purposes, he said things that in reality were beyond his ability to process and comprehend. These things were even too wonderful for him to know. Where previously the ways of God were disturbing to him, the knowledge of his sovereign ways was now wonderful to his soul.

42:4 Quoting God's earlier words to him (Chapters 38:3; 40:7), Job admitted that he had said, "Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you will answer me." By citing these previous words spoken by God, Job admitted that these divine words had been heard and heeded. He understood God's judicial authority as the supreme sovereign to demand answers from him. So Job did listen to God speak. Subdued and silenced, he had sat under the scrutiny of God's questions and now was ready to answer, not rebut. By quoting God's words verbatim, Job showed that he had carefully weighed the divine rebuke.

42:5 With deepening repentance, Job confided, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you." Through his ordeal

Job had been confronted with a deeper realization of God's wisdom, power, and providential care. What little Job had known about God was now eclipsed by a deeper understanding of his divine attributes. What his eyes had seen of God refers not to a physical vision, such as a theophany, but to spiritual insight. Job now had a greater understanding of God's awesome character than before his suffering began. In this sense his agonizing trial had been worth the suffering. His eternal, spiritual gain outweighed his temporal, physical loss.

42:6 As a result of this deepening knowledge of God, Job confessed, "Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." Self-denial and deep sorrow filled Job's life. He despised himself, hating the self-righteous attitude that had filled his heart. He renounced the reckless accusations that he had voiced against the flawless character of God. He was deeply grieved over his blatant sin. Having seen God in his holiness (Chapters 38–40; 42:5), Job finally saw himself in his unholiness. The sovereignty of God exposed the sinfulness of his heart. Job was a sorrowful, subdued, and submissive man, yielded to God with humility.

Conclusion

Broken and humbled, Job repents of his low view of God, repents of his temporary arrogance, acknowledging God's sovereignty and

power, all while confessing his ignorance and renewed sight of who God is. Finally, God restores to Job the great abundance of health, children, and possessions that he had before his tragedy. God blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first.

Job goes on to live after his repentance and restoration one hundred and forty years. Thus, he lived to be around 200 years old, or possibly 210 years—140 years after the tragedies and 60 to 70 before they happened. This long life span was not unusual for a patriarch of this time period. He saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. This was his blessing from the Lord. Great was Job's legacy on the earth.

Ultimately it was Job's surrender and repentance were the beginning of the restoration process in his life. The bible tells us that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. You and I cannot overlook this huge turning point in the life of Job without some very important takeaways for our own lives not to mention the lives of the people we love the most. In times of our own tragedies and despair we reach for truths of this magnitude to lead us through the difficulty.

10.23.16 The Life of Job

God's Conversations With Us - Tragedy

When tragedy strikes, believers must rely on certain biblically revealed truths about their relationship with God. Trusting him can enable us to go through the deep waters successfully without drowning. When tragedy comes (and it will) there are biblical responses and spiritual direction that we have learned from Job and other biblical situations like his. In tragic and overwhelming circumstances we should use these biblical responses and spiritual directions as our own. Based on what we have learned from Job's story here are some of those responses and directions for us to use.

Recognize God's Sovereignty: Have you come to realize God's sovereignty over your life? He chose to place you in the family in which you were born. He gave you the parents he desired "He had you born where it pleased him. He had you born with the gender, physical size, health, and appearance you have. The same is true of the circumstances in our lives. It is his divine right to make and mold us as he chooses. This is the first key in enduring any trial successfully.

Embrace God's complete sovereignty and use His strength as your strength.

Reassure Yourself in God's Mysteries and Unknowability: We must accept and believe in divine or supernatural mysteries in the Christian life and in the Christian Church. Let's face it, much of what occurs in our lives is beyond our understanding. The lines of God's divine sovereignty make sense someplace far above our heads. Paul the apostle came to this same conclusion when he wrote... "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?" (Romans 11:33–34). We need to be cautious of others who offer themselves as interpreters about the why and wherefore of all that is happening. Be wary of those who say, "God let this happen so you might learn such and such lesson." The truth is, we do not fully know what God is doing through a particular set of circumstances or events. Don't be shaken and fearful of what we don't know about God - be grateful. **Be grateful that our God is bigger than you or I can conceive, contrive or control.**

Reflect on God's Superiority: Suffering makes students of all believers. The brilliant preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, "The doorstep to the temple of wisdom is the knowledge of our own ignorance." In his brokenness and repentance Job was standing at the very threshold of restoration, ready to learn life's most important

lessons and receive God's greatest blessings. **In tragedy and trouble, rely completely on the wisdom, power, and plan of God wisdom, for your life - trouble will pass.**

Refocus on God's Intimacy: We are the vine - He is the branches - we abide in Him and He abides in us. Christianity is a personal, abiding relationship with God, in Christ Jesus (John 17:3). This is a communion in which we are to grow closer to him and know him more intimately. We walk with Him - and He walks with us. We do not simply meet up when either of us needs the other for something. This a "can't live without Him" relationship. Then when tragedy comes... we are in Him. That is precisely where we need to be.

Grow in our knowledge that in tragedy and suffering we can fully rest in God, exist within the peace of Christ.

Repent of All Sin: One mark of a right and godly person is not that he or she never sins. But when they do sin, he or she is unsettled, contrite, and broken over that sin. King David was a man after God's own heart not because he never sinned. He was a godly man because when he sinned he was deeply broken over it and chose to turn his heart back to God. That was the case with Job. Truth is that Job sinned against God with prideful rebellion. But once God confronted him and then revealed his sin to him, Job surrendered, and humbly and quickly repented.

Key Words

Seen (42:5) (Hebrew; *raa*) means to understand as if one would see intellectually what had not been previously understood; other definitions are; to behold, perceive, or view with right understanding. Here it in this context it means *to be made to see and understand with divine enlightenment that only God can give*.

Despise (42:6) (Hebrew; *maas*) means to disdain or reject. It is often used in reference to the Lord as men despise his Word. This word was also used to describe Israel's rejection of the Lord for a king.

Inheritance (42:15) (Hebrew; *nahala*) is a reference to that which is passed on by right. It was often used as it is here to designate an estate or portion that was inherited as a permanent possession.

"In our brokenness and repentance we are standing at the very doorstep of restoration, ready to learn life's most important lessons and receive God's greatest blessings."

11.13.16 The Life of Job

God's Conversations with Us - Reality and Theodicy

Happytown

everyone wants to live in Happytown.

no pain, no death, no hell.

everyone wants a house with a white picket fence.

no rain, no floods, no break-ins, no fire.

everyone wants a perfect little world.

no war, no dictators, no corrupt politicians, no bombs, no army.

every man wants a perfect woman.

no blemishes, blonde hair, blue eyes, nice tan.

every woman wants a perfect man.

nice job, new car, good money, strong face.

but no one ever wakes up in Happytown, because it doesn't
exist in this world.

down here its not so perfect. people bleed, people cry, people
breakdown.

yet everyone chases a vision - ignoring... always ignoring
the Only Perfection.

there is a town called Hope.

deep in the heart.

ruled by a King. open to all... the door is a Son.

the city is real.

Reality One - We Live in a Fallen World

With this reality quickly comes a second reality - both good and bad things happen, to both good and bad people. In our way of thinking this does not seem fair of course, but in our sovereign God's way of thinking, we just do not know - but it is critically important that we still believe. Remember, Jesus said...

Matthew 5:44-46

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ESV

Reality Two - We Live in a Fallen World with a Risen Savior

With this reality a second one also comes very quickly - in spite of the reality of both good and bad things happening, in Christ Jesus, good will always overcome bad. Jesus said...

John 16:33

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." ESV

Reality Three - God is Unsurpassably Good, God is Incomparably Powerful, Suffering and Evil Nonetheless Exist.

The first two realities are compared in this Third Reality. The problem is Reality One - the remedy is Reality Two. Yet that is not quite enough for the mind of mere humans like you and I. Looking at Reality Three we just can't understand that if God is unsurpassably good and incomparably powerful, then why does suffering and evil exist?

Romans 4:16-25

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against

hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be."

He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was "counted to him as righteousness." But the words "it was counted to him" were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

ESV

11.20.16

Theodicy as the Sovereign Reality

"With every feeling we have resulting from human reality, God has a sovereign reality for every human feeling."

Thomas Oden said, "Theodicy means to speak justly of God amidst the awesome fact of suffering."

As Christians and followers of Jesus, how well we navigate our own lives, and help those we love navigate theirs, is directly related to our understanding and daily practice of this term - theodicy. The key to how we teach, preach and process sickness, injustice, disappointment, depression, dying, grief, hatred, hostility, and poverty are all unlocked in this one word and its life-changing meaning. The truth of Who God Is must bring meaning to life's greatest difficulties and tragedies that both modify and change how and what we feel.

Three False Solutions

One - The failure to look truthfully at the reality of evil.

This is probably the most common default solution to the question of if God is good, and God is powerful, then why does evil still exist? Pretending that evil does not have psychological power, social influence, or durable reality does not help or minister to one who suffers and is facing tragedy and sorrow. This solution is shallow sentiment and is not true. It only intensifies the problem by avoidance.

Two - The temptation to give up on the affirmation of the goodness of God too quickly.

We are humans - all of us! We can become demoralized and worn down by the relentless force of sin, evil, and the endlessness of life's difficulties and afflictions. This too, is not true. The final answer and the ultimate reality is God's and not man's.

Three - The tendency to limit and marginalize God's power.

Admitting the good intentions of God amid the awesome power of evil, the hurried conclusion is that God tries hard to conquer evil, God struggles for the good, but He is without sovereign power to overcome it. "God loves us but... there are jus some things that He

cannot do." This my friends is completely untrue. With God all things are possible.

God's Conversations with Us - Reality and Theodicy

Theodicy Biblically Stated

Isaiah 55:6-8

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. ESV

Four Final Solutions

God Does Not Directly Will Suffering

Suffering is never directly willed by God, even though it happens as result of God's permission as a consequence to man's broken boundaries and choice to sin. We need to hear this correctly and as divine truth to navigate our lives with, and the lives of those we love. God is a giver of good to His creation. God's original desire and will for us unmitigated good. The evil that emerges is the result of sin, and the suffering that is caused by it. Yes, God permits this, so that our free will and human liberty is affirmed and made possible. But... this far from what God intended for us. God cares for us as a gardener cares for his garden - every growing thing is important to the gardener. However, the gardener has a wider view of the garden and its outcome than the wilted strawberry blossom. So, evil and suffering are not directly willed by God, but He has proven that He will forever respond to the conditions of sin and suffering with healing, wisdom, and deliverance. God gives us hope!

God's Sovereign Will - The Free Will of Man

When God chooses to give us the extraordinary gift of finite freedom, that of course allows for the possibility for abuse of that gift and freedom.

God Will Always Reveal Good From Out of Any Evil

Evil Never Limits God's Power