

Are You Mad at God? This John 1:12 Shift May Help

Life happens ... although not always the way we want it to.

Sometimes we're surprised by amazing events beyond our wildest expectations. Other times, we're blindsided by our worst nightmares come true.

When that happens, do you get mad at God?

After all, He's sovereign, right? He's in control.

God is omniscient. Nothing surprises Him.

And He is omnipotent—He is all-powerful.

So if something horrible is heading toward one of His children and He doesn't stop it, shouldn't we be mad at Him?

And if we should not be mad at God, why not?

If you're a Christian—a child of God, according to John 1:12—isn't God supposed to be loving and merciful and compassionate to you?

Yes, God is love. He is merciful and compassionate. But where did we ever get the idea that we should be protected from suffering?

We live in a broken, sin-sick world. A world that needs a Savior. And that Savior suffered to bring us a restored relationship with the Father. So if Jesus suffered, why do we think we should be exempt?

Perspective

When we do experience suffering, perspective makes all the difference.

If I think I don't deserve suffering, my perspective is governed by comfort and convenience. If I understand life is not about me, but rather glorifying the God who loves me, my focus changes. It will be less about running from suffering and more about using that suffering as a means to point others to the God who loves them, too.

It's not easy. But God never promised it would be. Still, it all comes back to perspective.

When my husband was first diagnosed with terminal cancer, I attended a workshop on suffering. The presenter, a gentleman by the name of Mike Gaynor, told the story of how his son, who had Downs Syndrome, was killed in a car accident. A reporter wanted to interview him, but he declined the interview. Her response? "I understand. You're probably mad at God right now."

But he could not leave her with that impression, so he said:

"Mad at God? How could I be mad at the God who just ushered my son into the glories of heaven, giving him a completely healed body and placing my son in His presence for all eternity? Mad at God? No!"

My Choice

And so, now that my husband's earthly life painfully ended due to pancreatic cancer, I have a choice. I could be mad at God. Or I could say:

"Mad at God? How could I be mad at the God who just ushered my husband into the glories of heaven, giving him a completely healed body—no more cancer, no more pain—and placing my husband in His presence for all eternity? Mad at God? No!"

That's the perspective I choose. It's not all about me. It never was.

Am I sad? Yes.

Do I miss him? Absolutely.

But God can use even my sadness for His glory:

- For with the comfort He comforts me, I can comfort others, because I've walked the path they walk (2 Cor. 1:3-4).
- And with the peace He provides, those around me can see the presence of the Holy Spirit is real, in a way they would never notice if suffering were absent from my life (Phil. 4:7).
- Even as I grieve, I grieve not as one who has no hope. So I'm able to affirm the assurance of heaven through faith in Jesus Christ to those who desperately need that hope (1 Thess. 4:13).
- Finally, if I never experienced suffering, how would I ever experience God as my refuge, provider and heavenly Father?

Are you struggling with pain and suffering or perhaps watching a loved one suffer? Instead of being mad at God, consider changing your perspective. Start with a personal relationship with the God who loves you more than you'll even know. Your life will never be the same. {eoa}

Ava Pennington *is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 Chicken Soup for the Soul books. She also authored Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at .*

This article originally appeared at .

After Carr Fire, God Brings Miracle 'Beauty From Ashes' for Bethel Staffer, Husband

Editor's Note: If you want to help those affected by the fires, you can give through Charisma's nonprofit partner, Christian Life Missions. One hundred percent of your donation will go to those affected. We have already sent \$5,000 to Bill Johnson and Bethel Church since they know where the needs are. Send a check to Fire Disaster Fund, Christian Life Missions, 600 Rinehart Rd. Lake Mary, Florida 32746. Or give through PayPal at . or call 407-333-0600 during business hours to give by phone.

Kristine Coffman and her husband, Drew, lost their home and nearly all their other possessions in Redding, California's recent Carr Fire. Not long afterward, the Bethel staffer posted on her blog, later featured on , "While I have felt fear, there has been this unshakable hope that the story is not quite over, but just beginning."

Only a few weeks after the devastating fire, that word came to life as friends from Bethel helped the Coffmans "ash out" (sift through the ashes) of their home. Kristine's recent Facebook post describes God's miraculous gift:

Getting ready to get on a plane and have a much needed get away with my hubs. While most the week I was excited for my trip today as I got ready to leave I was surprised to find myself overwhelmed with grief. It'll be the first time we leave on a trip and will be coming back to our city but not going back to our home. The reality is still so shocking. While I may have shared a few tears today ... ok, a lot of tears.

As we drive to the airport I'm reminded by this beautiful

cross. When Bethel came and did an ash out (basically digging through our house to see if anything made it through the fire) one of the only things that was left was this cross. The crazy thing about it is that as someone who cares about interior design, I'm conscious of every decorative piece in my house and I'm 1,000 % sure that I never owned this cross and nobody knows where it came from. The wind could've flown it into our house ... the house itself could've melted into this perfect shape ... I'm not sure I'll ever know where it came from. Although my heart is heavy and grieving I'm filled with such hope that this story isn't over and that God will make beauty out of these ashes.

The dangers of the Carr Fire may be past, but the cleanup and rebuilding have barely begun. Please continue to pray for the Coffmans and others affected by this tragedy and ask the Lord to continue to reveal Himself in fresh ways. {eoa}

If God leads you to support this family in their rebuilding efforts, check out their GoFundMe page, created by a friend:

The Girl Inside Me

There was a girl inside me

Who wondered who she would be.

Teacher, lawyer, author or

Missionary to the poor?

Take charge, get 'er done planner,

Achiever and crazy dreamer.

Artist, storyteller, too.
Any and all, she could do.
Of her gifts, one she held dear.
It was in her heart most near.
Words flowed from her hand
To help others understand.
I watched the girl go to school.
I watched her become a jewel.
She listened to God above
Walked in light of His pure love.
Flying free, she faced the world
Of finances, jobs, stresses and crud.
It was then, the little girl hid.
Despite pleas, she shut the lid.
Though her talent she still plied,
Life overwhelmed her as she tried,
To share words from her abode,
In the garbage by the road.
Though many tried to help me
Find the girl who used to be,
She was scared to come out now.
Junk food became home somehow.

It kept emotions at bay
So angry words she wouldn't say.
She was stuck in her own box
With the key still in the lock.
She could get free any time
And return to God's design,
But sugary treats were king
And that thought, sadness did bring.
It was time to make a choice.
She really did still have a voice.
She needn't hide in the garbage bin.
She gave in and turned from sin.
She slowly lifted the lid
To the old box where she hid.
And carefully taking His hand,
She smiled as He helped her stand.
Spinning her slowly around
As her gifts fell to the ground.
She laughed in delight and glee.
Now she knew who she would be. {eoa}

Teresa Shields Parker *is the author of seven books, all available on Amazon. Her latest book, Sweet Hunger: Developing an Appetite for God, is available now, and Sweet Grace: How I*

Lost 250 Pounds is the No. 1 Christian weight-loss memoir. She is also a writing and weight-loss coach, blogger, speaker, wife and mother. Visit her online at to find her books, coaching programs and free gifts.

This article originally appeared at .

God's Deep Desire to Heal You

How many times have I heard that it is not always God's will to heal people? Or that He chooses to heal some, but not all? Comments like these are like fingernails scratching on a chalkboard. They cause my spirit to cringe within me, and they should cause yours to cringe as well. Let's turn to the Scriptures to discover the truth about God's will to heal you and me.

Jesus had to deal with this issue as well. One such time is recorded in the book of Luke in chapter 5, verses 12-13 (NKJV). It says, "And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately the leprosy left him."

Let's study these verses out a bit more to see the depth of the desire He has to heal us. The leprous man calls out, "If You are willing, ...". This word "willing" in Greek is *thelō* from the Strong's Concordance, G2309, and it means to will, to have in mind, to intend, to be resolved, to be determined, to purpose, to desire, to wish, to love or to like to do a thing. This man is inquiring Jesus, "Do You desire to heal me? Is it Your purpose or intent to heal me? Would You love to heal me?"

Perhaps you desire to understand the intent of Jesus concerning healing. And you, like this man, want to know, "Is it His will to heal me?"

Shall we continue to find out what is His will in this matter? Not only does this man want to know if Jesus is willing, but he wants to know if He can heal him. The word "can" in Greek is *dynamai*, Strong's G1410, and it means "able, powerful and strong." The man wants to put an end to his doubt and find out if Jesus possesses the ability to heal, because in the natural, his situation is labeled impossible and carries the power of death and suffering. This man's life depends upon a miracle, and is Jesus the one who is strong and powerful and able and willing to give him this much-needed miracle?

You may be wondering the same: *Is His strength and power greater than the disease attacking my body? And does He really possess the ability to make my body whole again?*

This man was seeking Jesus for deep truths about His credentials, "Can He make ...?" This word "make" in Greek is *katharizō* means to "cleanse, to purge and to purify" (Strong's G2511). This man is plagued with a curse of death and needs to be purged from it. To purge yourself from something is to be freed from something unwanted. This man needed to be completely free from leprosy; no residue of it could remain in his body if he were to be totally free and cleansed from it. Are you in this man's situation? Your body needs to be purged from the sickness or the disease; not a trace of it can remain.

In response to this man's plea for a miracle, Jesus does the unthinkable, what others are afraid to do, He reaches out and touches the man. Let's ponder upon the faith principles that are being activated at this point in time. Jesus is demonstrating how we are to be by His example on this earth in the form of a human being. He was operating in the principles of faith, and faith operates by love and love alone, and there

is no fear in faith.

- “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith which works through love” (Gal. 5:6, MEV).
- “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. Whoever fears is not perfect in love” (1 John 4:18).

And Jesus answers the man suffering with leprosy and says to him, “I am willing.” Meaning, “I desire to heal you. I would love to heal you. My intention is to heal, and not to harm you.” And this is what He is saying to you as well. {eoa}

Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the author of *DARE to Believe*, *Greater Than Magic* and *The Healing Creed*. Visit her at .

This article originally appeared at .

Christian Psychologist and Life Coach Responds to Celebrity Suicide

In this inspiring video, psychologist Dr. Barbara Lowe reflects on and responds to the tragic suicide of fashion icon Kate Spade. She reminds us that although we go through hard times, God has something so much more for us.

This Surprising Salve Will Soothe Your Family's Tension

We call it “one-on-one time” in our house.

My littlest coined the phrase a while back. It was her baby-talk way of asking me to spend “one-on-one time” with her. We laughed at the cute expression, but it stuck. Now we all use the term for our special Mommy-and-me times.

We started this practice of one-on-one time a few years ago during a particularly frustrating parenting season. My days were spent correcting and instructing, yet the negative behavior continued. My husband suggested that maybe our kids needed some focused alone time with me—just the two of us having fun together.

Sure enough, it made a world of difference. Contentment settled in. Each child seemed to come alive as I joined him or her in doing things they love to do.

Our kids need more than training and discipline. They need *us*. They need to be reminded that we love them, that we enjoy spending time with them, that we think they're really special—no matter how they behave.

Having fun together is a great way to help them remember.

Here are some tips for spending one-on-one time with our kids or grandkids:

- **Let Them Choose**

I don't particularly love Legos. I'm a bit clueless when it comes to creating masterpieces from tiny bricks. But all three of my kids love playing with them, so Lego building is a frequent choice for our times together. Sometimes we read books (my favorite). Other times we color or play a game. They

all love the chance to pick our one-on-one activity.

- **Unplug**

My phone is a frequent distraction. To eliminate the problem, it's helpful to put it somewhere away from our hangout spot. Text messages and notifications can wait. Putting our devices aside communicates to our kids that they are our priority.

- **Focus on the Relationship**

Whatever activity they choose, these alone times are a beautiful way to deepen our friendship with our kids. Ask open-ended questions. Talk about what's going on in their lives. Point out things you love about them.

As we invest in our kids through focused time together, we model the heart of our God who takes great delight in His kids. {eoa}

Meredith Mills is a wife and mother to three inquisitive, adventurous, fun-loving kids. She loves finding Jesus in the everyday and is passionate about helping others experience Him, too. She blogs at . Connect with her on Facebook at Dazzled By The Son and on Instagram and Twitter @DazzledByTheSon.

This article originally appeared at .

The Work You Should Really Celebrate This Labor Day

The Labor Day holiday is here. Ironically, it's a holiday we celebrate by avoiding what we're celebrating. We celebrate

labor by not working.

This holiday reminds us there's a time to work ... and a time not to work.

And that applies to our Christian life, too. There's a time to work and a time not to.

Our restored relationship with God is not dependent on any labor on our part. Consider Ephesians 2:8-9:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one should boast."

We can't take credit for our salvation. That's what makes it so amazing. Every other religion is based on humanity's efforts to work their way up to heaven. But Christianity is all about God reaching *down* to us. He did it all.

And it's a good thing He did. Because we don't have the ability to reach up to a holy God. Our sin separates us from Him—a chasm we couldn't breach even if we wanted to. If restoration is to occur, it must be initiated by Him.

Still, there's a place for our work. Because the next verse (Eph. 2:10) tells us:

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that we should walk in them."

Yes, there's a time to work—not *for* our salvation, but *because* of it. We serve the Lord from a heart overflowing with gratitude because He restored us to Him.

But what about Philippians 2:12-13?

"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not

only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (NIV).

“Work out your salvation” or “It is God who works in you”? Which is it?

Both.

As Oswald Chambers explained:

“With focused attention and great care, you have to ‘work out’ what God ‘works in’ you—not work to accomplish or earn ‘your own salvation,’ but work it out so you will exhibit the evidence of a life based with determined, unshakable faith on the complete and perfect redemption of the Lord.”

But what about Labor Day? What about the work we do vocationally? The Bible has something to say about that, too, especially for Christians:

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. For you serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23-24).

So today, let’s celebrate labor. And as we celebrate, let’s remember that our salvation is the one area where God did it all, because there’s a time to work ... and a time not to. {eoa}

Ava Pennington is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books. She also authored *Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional*, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at [.](#)

This article originally appeared at [.](#)

Develop This Love Relationship if You Want to Thrive in Your Single Season

There are so many Scriptures God has released in the Bible to guide us in making wise choices, but do we listen? I have been in a process of transforming my understanding of His Word lately, and it has been amazing. I would love to share my learned lessons of dating. If you are single and you have been dating, this will be quite interesting to you.

If you have been dating and have found yourself drawing people to you who do not match your kingdom purpose, you will be inspired to surrender it all to God after reading this. It all starts with learning how much the Father loves you. In the book of 1 John, you will receive that impartation from Him. It has very clear instructions on what to look out for. If anyone is trying to pull you away from God, go the opposite direction. Don't be unequally yoked with anyone.

I had an experience twice in one month on two different occasions with two different guys. Guy No. 1 was of another faith. This guy believed Yeshua existed; he just didn't believe He was the Messiah or that He was the Son of God. In our conversation, he revealed that he will never believe Yeshua is a Redeemer, or that He is God in the flesh. This would be called an antichrist. Yes anti-Christ. Which is in opposition to the Father. God revealed this to me in 1 John 2.

Now, the second guy only wanted what he wanted of the flesh. It didn't matter my faith, what I wanted from the Father, as far as becoming more like Him. This guy didn't care at all

about my kingdom goals in Yeshua. This would also be considered as antichrist. Anti-Christ, in opposition to Christ. In 1 John 3 says, let no one lead you astray. Listen, I totally understand the desire for a family. I understand that being, doing and solving life's situations on your own gets lonely. But it doesn't have to be.

The more we learn about the Father's love and that He is love, the more we realize we will never be without anything. No matter what the need may be. The Father has our backs. He has it in full control. We just have to trust Him with absolutely everything.

Believe Him. No matter where we are in life and with everything we have accomplished in life, He does understand our responsibilities. His love is all we need. It is He who extends His love through people, things and situations the way He sees fit. Read the book of 1 John, and may He give you revelation of what true freedom really is. Your instructions await.{eoa}

Gina R. Prince is an apostle of the gospel of Jesus Christ. She has a podcast show called "The Keys Against the Enemy" on . Connect with Gina on Instagram and Twitter @ginarprince as well as Facebook at "The Keys Against the Enemy." Visit her website at .

How to Tell if Your Friendship Has Turned Toxic

We all have—or have had—a toxic friend in our life.

The friend who lives in constant drama or who is clingy and

manipulative. After hanging out with them, we feel wrung out, discouraged and drained of all emotional energy.

But sometimes we have toxic friendships, and we're not even aware they are toxic.

But slowly over time, it takes its toll. We grow insecure and critical ... we sometimes even turn into a mean girl.

It was inevitable.

I would walk away from a conversation happy and bubbly, but then the moment would hit.

Panic. Disappointment. Self-loathing.

"Why did you say that? What must they think of you! You always say such stupid things. They will probably tell everyone they know what an idiot you are!"

These horrible thoughts would flood my heart as the joy I had felt moments before slowly vanished in the thick cloud of depression that would settle over me.

To be sure, no one but me was to blame for my horrible insecurity. I would feed on these thoughts, send frantic text messages apologizing for whatever it was that I had said. I was a toxic friend.

However, there was another element in my life that contributed to this battle I waged in my mind.

Other toxic people I had allowed in my inner circle.

Toxic people often attract toxic people!

My inner circle was filled with people who fed this negativity with their own judgmental attitudes, pessimism and gossip. And I entertained it all.

I listened to their judgmental declarations, pessimistic

viewpoints and gossip, and then lived in fear that one day *I* would be the topic of conversation.

Those who gossip to you will eventually gossip about you.

The fear was so real that I could almost feel the condemnation in their eyes. This is what happens when we surround ourselves with toxic people.

And it is true that those who gossip to us will one day gossip about us.

So how can we know if we are a toxic friend or have toxic people in our lives and how do deal with those toxic people? Today I share with you nine traits of a toxic friendship, and in the next article we will look at how to deal with toxic people in our lives.

Here Are 9 Traits of a Toxic Friendship

1. Your friend demands your trust. Simply put, trust cannot be demanded: despite position or title. Trust must be earned. One can have respect for a position without respect for the person who fills that position, but this respect is still not considered trust. Trust is earned based on one's ability to be trustworthy, and a friend who demands your trust is not trustworthy. A healthy friend will never demand your trust.

2. You don't leave feeling encouraged and inspired. Does time with this friend make you feel depressed, pessimistic, defensive, belittled, used or inadequate? Do you often feel like you are treated like a child when you're around them? Healthy friendships should encourage and build us up. The type of behavior that leaves you with negative feelings should be an indicator that some boundaries are needed, and this person is not someone who should be allowed in your inner circle.

3. Your friend often mocks others. Mocking is a clear sign of toxicity. A person who mocks is simply not a healthy person to

be around. Sometimes mocking isn't always very clear, so pay attention to the way your friend talks about others. Is it with honor and respect, or do they put others down with little comments, slights or a laugh? If so, this person is not a person to be trusted.

4. Your friend is a gossip. Remember what I said earlier? Those who gossip to you will eventually gossip about you. Beware of a friendship that feeds on gossip because it will eventually self-destruct. Besides, the Bible calls gossip an abomination. If your friend betrays confidential conversations or shares with you information you know was not meant to be public, you can be 100 percent certain your friend is a toxic friend. A healthy person is a fierce protector of their other friendships—and of yours!

5. Your friend is jealous and controlling. There are some people who want to keep a friendship all to themselves because they fear that if you have other friends, you will eventually abandon them. Usually this fear will drive them to be jealous and controlling of the time you spend with others. While to some their jealousy may seem flattering at first, it will blossom until they smother you with exclusivity. Beware of a person who wants you to be their exclusive friend. A healthy person will encourage you to build friendships with those around you.

6. Your friend is defensive. The Bible says a true friendship is like iron sharpening iron. Now, this doesn't mean friendship should be based on confrontation. That's unhealthy. But in every friendship confrontation will eventually take place because no one is perfect. The blessing of a friendship-confrontation is that a healthy friend confronts in love and always has our best interest at heart. If "truth in love" is met with a defensive attitude—and consistently so—then this is not a healthy friendship. A healthy person is someone who is able to take confrontation and process it because they are humble enough to recognize their own imperfections. A toxic person is not willing to own up to their faults when

confronted.

The dichotomy here is that often a toxic person is self-loathing and will make a joke of their own faults because they are able to make themselves the butt of their own jokes, but the toxicity is evident when someone else brings up a fault and is met with a defensive attitude.

7. Your friend must always be right. If your friend leaves no room to for error, they are not a person you want to spend a significant amount of time around. We all know that no one can be right 100 percent of the time, but a toxic person leaves no room for error in their life, because being wrong will demand they admit that someone else is possibly better than they. This is not acceptable because a toxic person must always be best.

8 Your friend lies. Obviously you cannot trust someone who lies. And if your friend lies, they are not trustworthy. A toxic person will often lie so as not to appear to be imperfect; because as I said earlier, a toxic person must always be the best. So they will often cover up their failures with lies. This person has no place in your inner circle.

9. Your friend only talks about their own problems. If your friend has no interest in talking about you, or getting to know you, then he or she is not a person you want to make an investment in. A toxic person is always ready for someone to invest in them, their dreams, their visions, their ambitions, but when it comes time for them to invest in someone else, they are suddenly AWOL. If your friend either neglects reaching out to you or is suspiciously absent when it comes to investing in you, your dreams, your visions and your ambitions, it's time to rethink your friendship.

Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her hero. Together, they live with their two active boys in the country, where she enjoys

fruity candles and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. She holds an associate degree in practical theology and is passionate about discipling and encouraging women. Her passion for writing led her to author a number of books. She is the author of "A Little R & R," where she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. She can also be found at these other places on a regular basis. You may follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

This article originally appeared at .

3 Timely Tips From the Book of Job About Dealing With Difficult Circumstances

This is Part 2 of a two-part series. You can read Part 1 here: "How the Book of Job Can Help You Break Your Depression."

The life of Job is truly epic: a rich man who loses almost everything, including his health, then endures a time of waiting and accusation from his friends, followed by eventual vindication and restoration from God.

Most of us won't experience suffering as dramatic as Job's (we pray), but his story can help us learn to deal with pain and suffering—both our own and that of our friends.

Using the examples of Job's three friends—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite—we will examine how to respond, or not respond, to people in difficult circumstances.

1. Silence Is Golden

Three friends of Job heard about all this evil that had come upon him, and each one came from his own place: ... They had agreed together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. They saw him from a distance and did not recognize him, so they wept aloud. Each one tore his robe, and they tossed dust into the air above their heads. Then they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights. Meanwhile, no one was speaking to him at all because they saw that his pain was severe (Job 2:11-13, emphasis added).

This is stunning! Job's friends heard of his troubles, came to mourn and comfort him, and didn't say *anything* for one week! Notice how they wept, tore their robes (as Job had done) and sat on the ground with him. They entered into his pain.

When people experience deep grief, just being with them can be a greater comfort than any words we could speak. Job's friends didn't originally come to solve his problems but simply to be with him.

We may not know what to say, but we can follow this part of their example by entering into people's pain, meeting them on their level and waiting silently until they're ready to talk. Silence is a lost art in our culture, and a powerful discipline. It's also scriptural: "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, [and] slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

2. Even Well-Meaning Friends Can Get It Wrong

Job's three friends came with good intentions, to comfort him and be with him in his pain. They started off well, sitting on the ground with Job, but then it went downhill—quite downhill.

Once his friends started talking, it unleashed 22 chapters of accusations and arguing—not exactly kingdom values. Each friend thought he had the answer to explain Job's suffering, but the reason wasn't with man but with God—who *alone* is all-knowing.

It's almost comical, and depressing, to look at their explanations: Eliphaz says that Job has sinned and is being chastened by God; but Job maintained his integrity. Bildad tells Job he should repent because it is the wicked that are punished; but Job was not wicked. And Zophar urges Job to confess any hidden sin, promising that "then . . . your life would be brighter than noonday . . . and you will look around and rest in safety" (Job 11:15-18).

While there is some general truth in what each one said, there was a huge problem: their words didn't reflect God's heart for Job, so they didn't apply to his situation. Truth, apart from the counsel of God, can be destructive.

These well-intentioned men did so much harm that God sent a younger man, Elihu, to rebuke them. God also rebuked them, and then God Himself answered Job, vindicating him. The Lord's response to these three friends brings us to our next point.

3. Forgiveness Brings Blessings

And so it was, that after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against you ... for you have not spoken of Me what is right (Job 42:7). And now, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job will pray for you. For him I will accept, lest I deal with you according to your folly, in that you have not spoken of Me the thing which is right like My servant Job" (Job 42:8).

Watch what happens next, because it may surprise you: the three friends "went and did as the Lord commanded them ... *and the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends, and also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before*" (Job 42:9-10, emphases added).

This is an amazing passage! Not only did Job's prayer for his

friends (who had wrongly accused him) help restore them to God, but his willingness to forgive them brought a double-portion blessing for himself!

We have no idea the blessings that are available for us in God's heart when we forgive. Job didn't know either, but he obeyed and prayed, and God showered down the blessings.

The Father's heart is to forgive and bless His children. When we enter into this by forgiving others, it unlocks reward in our lives and can even bring breakthrough in the lives of the people we forgive.

Let Job's example serve as a vivid reminder the next time you are struggling with whether to forgive someone who has wronged you. There's blessing in store for those who forgive, and great penalty for those who don't:

"But if you do not forgive men their sins, neither will your Father forgive your sins" (Jesus, in Matt 6:15).

Friendship with God trumps friendship with man. Let us be slow to speak, in tune with the Lord when we do, and ready to forgive (and be forgiven) when we get it wrong. This will bring healing to many who are suffering or in pain.

How can you help a friend in trouble? {eoa}

*A Detroit native who was raised in Vermont and Connecticut, **Adam Wittenberg** worked as a newspaper journalist until 2012, when he moved to Kansas City to complete the Intro to IHOPKC internship. Afterwards, he earned a four-year certificate in House of Prayer Leadership from IHOPU and is now on full-time staff in the Marketing department at IHOPKC. Adam is also active in evangelism and has a vision to reach people everywhere with the good news of Jesus Christ.*

This article originally appeared at .