

3 Practical Ways Job Can Teach You to Respond in Tragedy

Perhaps you've heard the saying, "You can't have a testimony without a test." If anyone ever embodied that truth it was Job. He lost everything but his faith. His life was shaken to the core, but he didn't waver despite his extreme suffering. Job was a wealthy, influential man who had "a very great household" and was "the greatest of all the men of the east" (Job 1:3, KJV). His long lifespan (140 years plus—Job 42:16) suggests that he lived during the patriarchal period in the book of Genesis. The fact that he wasn't mentioned in connection with Israel and he offered his own sacrifices indicates that he probably predated Abraham and the Levitical priesthood.

Job's name appropriately means "One who turns," and that's exactly what he did. In the face of unimaginable tragedy, he turned to God. Tragedy has a way of causing people to either turn from God (by becoming bitter or blaming Him for their misfortunes) or to turn toward God (by seeking His help and discovering His purpose in their trials).

When God bragged on how uprightly Job lived, Satan complained that there was a divine hedge around him and his family. The devil argued that Job only served God because of the many blessings he enjoyed. So, to test him, God temporarily lifted that hedge and allowed calamity to invade his serene life. First, his 500 oxen and 500 donkeys were stolen by the Sabeans. Next, fire fell from heaven and consumed his flocks of 7,000 sheep. Then the Chaldeans came and stole his 3,000 camels and killed many of his servants. Finally, a wind storm struck his oldest son's house, killing all 10 of Job's children trapped inside. Overwhelmed with grief, Job tore his

clothes, shaved his head, fell on his face and somehow still managed to worship God.

Continuing his evil work, Satan persuaded God to allow him to afflict Job even further. Sore boils erupted all over Job's body. His friends didn't recognize him, and his wife suggested that he should curse God and die. "In all this Job did not sin, and he did not accuse God of wrongdoing" (Job 1:22, MEV). Several lessons emerge from this tragic tale. First, even believers suffer, and it's not always their fault. The reality that the righteous sometimes suffer and the evil sometimes prosper violates our sense of fairness. Jesus explained that God "makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45).

And God never guarantees exemption from all problems, either. Jesus never promised us trouble-free living. In fact, He predicted the opposite, "In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Psalm 34:19 provides a sobering reality check, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." Someone said, "Christians are like teabags—they're not good for much until they're in a lot of hot water!" As hot water flushes the flavor from a teabag, so the trials we face cause our faith to grow and the nature of Christ to be formed in us. Indeed, the good thing about trouble is that it forces us to pray.

My parents had a traumatic experience in the late 1950s before I was born. They were born-again, tithe-paying, choir-singing, active church members. Mom carried my brother, Kerry, to term, but he was born with a hole in his heart. Medical science was primitive then, and nothing could be done to save him. He died two days later. How do you explain the loss of a baby to a fine Christian couple? The same way you explain the calamity that overtook Job—we live in a fallen world and believers are not necessarily exempt from all tragedy. But through it all God is with us, He is faithful and He is still

in control!

Obviously God can, and often does, intervene supernaturally to shield us from danger and hardship. Sometimes He allows things to happen that we don't understand. None of the negative factors experienced in this life were in God's original blueprint for man. Disease, death, war, natural disasters, violence, abuse, sorrow, pain, divorce and more are all the tragic result of the fall of Adam. Not everything that happens to us is good, but God is a master at bringing good out of bad. If He can turn an ugly caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly, He can surely take our mess and produce a message for His glory. So, when things go wrong, don't go wrong with them!

It's been said that it's not what you face in life that determines who you are but how you react to it. Two people can face similar situations and one can be destroyed by it while the other can be benefitted. It all depends on how we respond. Notice the admirable way Job responded to his tragedy:

1. Job blessed God. He refused to curse God even when his own wife advised him to. He continued to bless God despite his adverse circumstances.
2. Job refused to blame God. Some people shake their fist at God and demand, "Why did You let this happen to me?" Others become bitter or turn to drugs, alcohol or self-destructive behavior to drown their sorrow and escape their pain. Job refused to play the blame game.
3. Job believed God. Job's two famous quotes still inspire us today, "I know that my Redeemer lives" (Job 19:25a) and "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15a). In other words, "I don't know why this has all happened to me, but somehow God is going to bring good out of bad and turn it around in my favor. I don't understand it, but I intend to serve Him no matter

what.”

Everybody likes a happy ending, and Job’s story delivers. “And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before ... Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning” (Job 42:10, 12). Now that’s what God can do! He can give you double for all your trouble in this life and in the next. {eoa}

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