

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? {eo}

*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 .