

Lessons for Life from the Book of Job, Part 2

Job

Elder Quentin Smith, June 26, 2022

Well good morning, everybody and welcome to Grace Fellowship again. I did not bring a flame thrower. But I do have a sword. We are in the middle of a series on Job.

We're looking at the book of Job and we're looking at some life lessons that we can learn from that book. Job was a righteous man, God called him blameless. But the great accuser of the brethren came before Him and he accused God of buying him out of blessing him to the point that of course he would believe. So God allowed Satan to have control over his possessions and his household and his family. He lost his wealth, he lost all 10 children, and then came his health. And the Old Testament book of Job outlines the incredible degree of his suffering. And we talked last week about the first two lessons. First two of nine lessons that I want to leave with you in the series, that it is possible to please God. Job was blameless, upright, fearing God, turning away from evil. But we talked about the things that please God, a broken and a contrite heart. That what we do comes from where we are with the Lord. We talked about faith being the great equalizer because everybody in this room can be pleasing to the Lord. And that journey begins with believing that He is and believing that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

And then we talked about the second lesson, and that is, that it is possible to suffer even if we are above reproach because First Peter one verse six says, "If necessary, you've been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith being more precious than gold, which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the return of Jesus Christ." We suffer because sometimes God deems it necessary. The Christian life is not a competition. It's not a competition in godliness, it's not a competition in ministry. It is a lifelong faithful walk along a narrow road, trusting that whatever He brings, He is wise and good. And even if we suffer, it gives us an opportunity to exalt Him, to respond, as Richard said, in the right way.

So today, I want to talk about life lessons three through five. I want to talk about how it's possible to feel desperate in our humanity during trial and find ourselves going places that we that would surprise us. I also want to talk about lesson number four, which says that suffering exposes whether we believe what we say we believe. And number five, sometimes we will receive bad counsel from good meaning people, well-meaning people, we have to recognize that.

So let's talk about number three. It's possible to feel desperate to know humanity during trial, and to find ourselves going places that surprised us, look at chapter three verse one. "Afterward, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth." The degree of suffering was so intense that he wished he hadn't been born. And I know that we can feel that desperation and we can feel feelings of hopelessness. I'm sure you've been there, whether it's, you know, the size of the trial over which we have no control, the consequences of which we cannot recover, from a trial that has permanent consequences. Or if sometimes it'll be because in our conflict with somebody else, they stopped cooperating. In the restoration process, they stopped talking, stopped being reasonable. And without that resolution it's difficult. It's open-ended. It's like a wound that never heals. And that produces significant feelings. So I want to talk today about how do we deal with that degree of emotional difficulty that comes out of our suffering.

I think it's important first to recognize that when we deal with emotional difficulty, what we feel is what we feel. You must understand that feeling is legitimate. Don't try and pretend that you're feeling something else when you are suffering like this. It's the first step in emotional maturity, to be able to nail what it is that you're feeling. You got to move beyond Dr. Seuss bad, mad, sad, and try and nail it and label it so you know what it is. It's a crucial first step. Because we must first acknowledge what we feel before we can take that thought and emotion captive to what we know. That is so important. We shine the light of the spotlight of God's Word on that emotion and with time subjected to wisdom, we will know how to respond. But when somebody is in that phase, of feeling, and is flooded with that, it's best not to talk. Job's friends did that, we learned that last week, it's probably the best thing they did. Seven days just sitting with him just acknowledging the pain, just recognizing it, absorbing it, and being there. And sometimes, you will absolutely not know what to say if you're with somebody who's experiencing a very difficult time, maybe somebody is dying. You may not know what to say. And it's okay to say that. I don't know what to say, but I'm here.

But I say that it's possible for us to go places that surprised us because those feelings can be so intense. They can be incredibly strong. For example, our anger can be so bad that we contemplate hurting somebody's reputation, retaliating in revenge. Jesus said, that's how murder begins. It can be sinful anger, or it can be righteous indignation. Peter took a swing at Malchus, the high priest's servant, here and cut his ear off, righteous indignation. But a sword that was not well placed. And so what do I do? And when I know that I feel that and I'm not supposed to I'm a Christian, after all, or, or sadness can be so deep that we may experience hopelessness. But a Christian is not supposed to feel that. So why am I? Well, the tremendous hope for the Christian is that once we've identified those feelings, we can expose them to the light of Scripture. And we can expose those emotions to the Scripture, and we can actually recover our balance. We have an incredible blessing of faith in the truth of God's Word and it's absolutely foundational to understand that it is a truth that is outside of us. It is independent of us. The world doesn't have that. The world continues to live on feelings in that process, it's becoming more and more rampant. It is a world that is becoming more confused, more defiant of truth, more and more defining its own truth. And so what do you have? You have worldviews that are drifting further and further and further apart. Proverbs chapter one verse nine says this, "the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge." That's where it starts. You fear God, it's the beginning of knowledge. And we know that.

The second phase to that is that Jesus comes to earth armed with truth, so that we might know it. And we now have that truth, to use to interpret our feelings in our world and to know how to respond. I just did a study on the Word of Truth and briefly, in rapid fire, I'm going to take you through several verses, if you're taking notes get ready. Luke chapter 20 verse 21, "the scribes and the Pharisees questioned Him saying, 'Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly and that You are not partial to any but teach the Way of God in Truth.'" John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:17, "for the law was given through Moses, grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ," John 4:24, "God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth." John 8:31 and 32, "so Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, 'if you continue in My Word, then you are truly disciples of mine, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.'" The truth doesn't constrict and constrain us, it sets us free. John 8:40, "But as it is, you are seeking to kill me," Jesus talking to the Pharisees, "a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God, this Abraham did not do." That's the reaction of hostility to truth. John 14:6, "Jesus said to them, 'I am the way and the truth and the life.'" Jesus actually personifies truth. He says, "I am the truth." John 15:26, "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to

you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me.” So now you've got the spirit of truth. John 16:13, “but when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak” so you've got the spirit being a conduit of God's truth to us. John 17:17, “Sanctify them in the truth,” finish it, Your word is truth. One last one, John 18:37, “Pilate said to Him, ‘so you're a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this, I have been born and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth, hears my voice.’ Pilate said to Him, ‘what is truth?’ And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, ‘I find no guilt in Him.’” Isn't that fascinating? That what Pilate said, when he says, what is truth? That is exactly the battle that we are fighting today. What is truth? Your truth is not my truth. What an oxymoron.

I read all of that purposefully, so that you would understand that it is the overwhelming claim from Scripture, that God, Jesus and the Spirit are the source of truth and our truth. We ought not to base our life on anything else. We know then that, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” We know then that any knowledge of God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit is true. Then we also know that wisdom is the application of that truth in our life. Being able to skillfully apply that truth to the circumstances of our lives. But if you don't have a fear of God, you're not going to go to the Bible to find out what is right and wrong. You're just not going to do that. And so you're going to be left to your own devices. And you're going to be completely at sea in this ocean of feelings. And therefore, you'll be like the man in James chapter one verse six, “doubting and driven, and tossed by the wind.” And in Ephesians 4:14. Paul says that as a child is easily influenced and not stable, he says, we are no longer to be children. Tossed here and there by waves carried about by every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming, we're not to do that.

So when you understand that you're going through trial and you understand that there's a purpose even if it is hard to see that purpose. You respond based on knowledge of Scripture of what is true, you can weather that storm. Feelings are tricky. Job had intense feelings. We have intense feelings. But I want to illustrate for you how difficult and dangerous those feelings are. I want you to think of a time when you were 100% convinced about something and yet later, despite the fact that there was absolutely no doubt in your mind, you were proven to be wrong. Maybe some of you who've wandered into the investment world will have some regrets in that regard and you lost your money. Can you think of some time when you've done that 100% convinced, and later you were wrong? That is the danger of living by feelings and desires.

I've got six examples for you that I want to go through. Gender Dysphoria is number one. Our entire children, our generation of children and teenagers and people in their 20s particularly are being subjected to the lie, and the deceit, that gender is fluid and changes from day to day. And your gender identity is different from your biological sex. That is a lie and that is the crux of the entire transgender movement, that how you feel trump's the biological evidence of your DNA and the expression of it. I had a patient the other day who is 12. And her teacher said to her, I see you like sports maybe you're actually a boy. This results in a dysphoria. Now, what is dysphoria? A fancy word? It's not fancy at all. It just means discomfort or dissatisfaction. There's a restlessness, there's an anxiety, it's just the feeling that something is not right. And you've all had dysphoria. But it's very traumatic to live like that. It's something that torments you, we've all experienced it. But the way to deal with it is to find a solution for it, to actually identify what it is that you are feeling restless and anxious about. And then you feel better, and it's resolved. But if there's no solution it's much more difficult. And it is very difficult for these young people to live like this. Because it leads to hopelessness, and marginalization, feeling like a misfit. And then in many cases, suicide. So to address the suicide, or to keep these young people safe, our culture is offering a

solution. And it is hormones, and gender reassignment and surgery. And the government and the experts are telling us that the right thing to do is to simply affirm, don't question the feelings. And so that leads these young people all the way down the path to hormones and reassignment and gender surgery, a path from which you can not return once your body has been mutilated. As physicians, our first mandate is do no harm. I'm telling you that is harmful. And it makes no sense because gender dysphoria has its up as its origin in feelings versus the biological sex. Why would we not explore the feelings? Why is there a law that says we're not supposed to do that? But we will take these young lives and subject them in a very influential way to surgery. That makes absolutely no sense. And it's possible, after all, that our feelings can be wrong. We just made that point. It's possible that this euphoria that we're feeling is actually not related to gender at all. What a tragedy, what an accountability that hundreds and 1000s of professionals will have before God one day for misguiding these young people.

But if you have a truth, if you have something that is outside of your feelings, a standard, a truth to which you can submit those feelings, you can take those feelings and subjugate it to the Word of God and what God says. He made us male and female, but I have these feelings. What needs to change? Not the truth, but the feelings. And so you begin a journey subjugating those feelings rather than surgery. And so you have a solution, and you feel better, because you have some anchor point. That is truth. It's not the solution the world would offer but it's a better solution. It's a right solution. It's a solution based on truth.

Number two, when you have lustful thoughts, and those urges and feelings are so strong, and you sit there with your hand on the mouse, because you're home alone with your computer, and all of a sudden, Proverbs chapters five through seven are ringing in your ears. And you understand that the young man in Proverbs seven sinned, because he went down the street at night to where the adulterous lived, and she came out, boisterous to meet him. And you decide not to go down that street, metaphorically with your mouse. And you walk away, and you don't start that innocent surfing, to see what images might pop up. Because you don't click your mouse, and you walk away, and you maintain your integrity, and you maintain your intimacy with God, you deny that feeling, you starve and you kill that desire, and you subjugate that desire to the Word of God. And then later on, after you've done that, you understand the truth of James chapter four verse seven, "submit, therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee," and so that temptation crests and minutes gone, and you are on the other side of victory, not having burned your testimony, not having disrupted that intimacy with God, but feeling the victory of overcoming sin because you starve that feeling. You can look at your wife in her eyes and look at your husband in his eyes.

Number three, when you're in a heated argument with your wife or your husband, and you remember that "a soft answer turns away wrath," and you humble yourself and you seek forgiveness and that tension settles. And you think, well, my feelings, this relationship is over. We obviously don't belong together. And all of a sudden, that's gone. And you're so glad that you humbled yourself.

Number four, when you're angry about your taxes that you're paying, and you never seem to get ahead, and you remember that God calls you to be satisfied with what you have.

Number five, when you're angry about injustice in the world and you recognize that God says, "Vengeance is mine," you can weather that storm, and you take that feeling of anger and you subjugate it to your knowledge in the Word of God. And when things are happening that you have no control over, you're at your wit's end and you're beside yourself and you remember Psalm 131, turn with me to Psalm 131, you can survive that trial. "Oh,

Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty. Nor do I involve myself in great matters in things too difficult for me. Surely I have composed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me. Oh, Israel, hope in the Lord, from this time forth, and forever.” What a picture of peacefulness.

Job wished he hadn't been born. And I know that some of you have felt that way. But I think we feel that way when we lose sight, and the clarity of the God of the universe is obscured somehow for a while. We're like Peter, and we start out from that boat, and our eyes are fixed on Christ. And all of a sudden, we start to be influenced, and we see the waves, and we begin to go down because our focus and attention was taken away by all that we suffered, it happened to Job. But when we see God properly, it eclipses the suffering and we can endure. So when we suffer, we must remember what we know if it's the consequence of your sin, and that's the reason you're suffering yours or another's. remember, we always reap what we sow. And preferably, you need to remember that ahead of time, so you don't have to go through that. But if you suffer and you haven't sinned, perhaps He's disciplining us, perhaps He's doing what is necessary to grow us. And that is how we survive. I want you to read Hebrews chapter 12. I don't have time to go there and do a dissertation on that. But Hebrews chapter 12 is all about the discipline of God, and that word is used for bringing up a child, not punishing.

Point number four, suffering tests whether we actually believe what we teach and say. I have three sub points. Let's go to chapter four here. First sub point is in chapter four verse two. Eliphaz is first to speak, this is the first of his three speeches in the book of Job, and he almost can't control himself. He says, “If one ventures a word with you, will you become impatient? But who can refrain from speaking?” Chapter four verse two, are we teachable? He's afraid that Job is not going to be willing to hear what he says. That's a question for all of us. Are you open to counsel Job? Are you open to counsel Quinton? Are you in a place that you can hear what we have to say because I don't think I can stand by and say nothing anymore. But you know what, even just contemplating counsel or feedback from somebody else can feel very threatening. Being teachable means, we must be prepared for another person, not be pretty, it might be completely undoing to our confidence. But that's because we all suffer from pride. And none of us likes to think that there are issues that need to be brought to the light, because we don't see ourselves in that way. But sometimes others do. Sometimes we want to project, and we say I'm responding this way, because of what you said, and we project onto other people. But you know what, God might use suffering to bring us from a place of pride, to a place where we are prepared to listen. To a place where we have exhausted all of our means, where we've gone our way, where life has not turned out for ourselves. And now we're actually prepared to listen to what God has to say. I think prodigal son. Sometimes others around us will have had enough, will be grumbling and complaining and not doing anything about it. And somebody will say, “Listen, I got to talk to you.” So, like Job's friends, who weren't able to hold their tongue, you might be in a situation where this is happening to you.

So how do we manage? How do we become teachable? Being teachable, begins with humility. And I want to say this, that humility must be an ongoing pursuit, because pride is an ongoing adversary. Pride is always crouching, always looking for an opportunity to puff you up and allow you to think that you're better than you are. And it's most important that we are to win through the Holy Spirit and His Word. His Word speaks to us in our faith, if it's going to be authentic it must be God growing us. Yes, the preaching of His Word. But ultimately, it's God's Word that is doing it through the preacher. Yes, it is Bible studies. Yes, it is your personal study. Yes, it is your worship music. Yes, it is your prayer time, but it is God and the His Spirit who is growing you, it has to be if it's authentic.

We want to be a church where we are disciples. What's that mean? Learning followers, molded, changed on a constant basis by the Word, His Spirit and the quietness of our meditation with Him, in our joys, in our sorrows, we must be connected to God. And then, what that means has happened, is that we're not just moving that ribbon forward in our Bible. We're not just reading, but we're actually reading our Bible, and we're actually absorbing what it means. It's pointless just to read your Bible and come away not having a clue what you read. We have to be students, and reading that Word of God like it's our food, absorbing what it means that we might be changed by it. And then once you're a disciple, you become a discipler. We want you all to be disciples, doing something with all of this knowledge. What is the point? If we sit in church, week after week, just absorbing and not doing anything with that, right? God has made you disciples, that's the great commission. But you know what? Why it's so important to be teachable, because you can never teach something that you don't know. So if you have suffered, and you have wrestled with God, and you have an opportunity to come alongside somebody else who has suffered, is suffering, now you're in a perfect place to offer help, because you've been there. You can teach, you can help, because you were teachable. You cannot teach something you don't know. So God, in His grace, will equip you for just that purpose.

Sub point number two, verses three through five. "Behold, you have admonished many and you have strengthened weak hands, your words have helped the tottering to stand, and you have strengthened feeble knees, but now it's come to you and you're impatient, it touches you and you're dismayed." You could think of Job as having been a biblical counselor, as having been somebody who was active. We read that in chapter 29. Last week we talked about all the different ways in which he had protected and provided for and taught and helped. It's easy to tell people, to counsel people what to do, but the true test is whether you are willing to follow that same counsel. Right? It's the basis and essence of hypocrisy when you tell people what to do, but you're not willing to follow it yourself. The only quote that I could ever remember from Shakespeare, I grew up in Africa, okay. Was from Portia in the Merchant of Venice, "if to do were as easy as to know what it was good to do, chapels would be churches, poor man's cottages would be princes' palaces. It is a good divine. That is, it is a good adviser that follows his own instructions. I can easier teach 20 what for good to be done, than to be one of those 20 to follow my own teachings." We are so good at handing it out, sometimes we need to learn to take, as Job. You've told other people how to get through difficult things. But now when it hits you, you're impatient and dismayed. Suffering exposes that, whether we actually believe what we say we believe.

You know, God may send us trials to equip us, as I said, and I had the privilege of looking after Chris. Many of you will remember Chris. Chris was a member of our congregation. She died in 2019. She had pancreatic cancer. And I had the privilege of looking after her as a physician in her palliative time. And I said to Chris, I shared the analogy of the SWAT team. They practice and they train and they drill, they practice and they train and they drill. So that when it's not a drill, they know what to do. We learn and prepare. And so we know how to respond when God calls us to be able to respond. And just like the SWAT team on that day, there might be nerves that affect their performance, but they rely on what they know. They rely on what they've practiced. And that is the Christian life. I said to Chris, you've been training for this all your Christian life, you are going home. Pray, anticipate, read your Bible. Let your sisters in Christ, your brothers in Christ minister to you, commune with God, He's going to take you, He has decided that this is your time. And what's more, you have a legacy to your children and your grandchildren, that they will remember because they know Nana died a certain way, faithful and calm and sure of her future. Easy to dish it out. Never underestimate the blessing of the suffering in your own life that you might be prepared to exalt God, when you now come across somebody else who is suffering, can't teach something you don't know.

So point number three. A clear conscience is a great gift when we suffer. Chapter four verse six, “is not your fear of God your confidence and the integrity of your ways your hope.” Integrity meant that Job was right with the Lord and yet he was suffering. But I'm telling you that if you are suffering and your conscience is clear that you haven't sinned, it is much easier to undergo if you have a biblical perspective. Not only will we have been living in a way that is honorable, but we understand His power to see us through that circumstance. We trust in His righteousness and power to protect and guide us perfectly through His sovereign will. And we have to understand that these circumstances are never ever random. That's what the sovereignty of God tells us. And though we suffer, we don't have the guilt. And that's what makes it easier. If you're going to suffer and you have guilt, the burden is much, much heavier. But if you suffer and you don't have that burden of guilt, it makes it easier.

Turn with me to First Peter chapter 2, I want to read from verses 18 through 24. “Servants be submissive to your master, to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.” That is code for suffering under a harsh master, for the slave. If he's unreasonable, you be submissive not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. Some of you have unreasonable people in your life and you will suffer as a result of it. “For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.” This is how Christ suffered. He did not sin. And yet He suffered, as an example for us who might sin, that we might suffer without sinning. Verse 23, “and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, he uttered no threats, but he kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.” And there it is, you keep trusting God, you keep understanding that God will repay. He's the one who can judge righteously because you cannot. Your judgment is clouded. You have that anger, you have that vengeance that you want to take and it's not. “And He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross; so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.” So, suffering tests whether we believe what we teach and say.

Point number five. Sometimes we receive bad counsel from good people come back with me to Job chapter four verses seven through nine. This is the crux of his friends' arguments. “Remember now who ever perished, being innocent, or where were the upright destroyed? According to what I've seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it. By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of His anger they come to an end.” In Job's friends' currency, sin leads to suffering, righteousness leads to blessing. Therefore, if you're suffering, you must be reaping what you sowed. That was their whole way of dealing with suffering, period, full stop, that's where it ends. And it becomes very tricky here because what they said is true. Common grace is the theological term we understand for the grace of God that is common to all men, that says yes, if you sin, you will reap what you sow. If we make bad decisions, bad things are going to happen. If we make good decisions, generally good things are going to happen. We understand that. You teach your children that all the time. But the problem with Job's friends was that they erred in their diagnosis. They applied it to Job's situation, and they had one interpretation as to why people suffer. And in this case, it didn't apply to Job. He knew that and, and that was what Job was wrestling with, but they kept pounding him with the fact that he must have sinned, he must have sinned, he must have sinned.

Now we may be exposed to some preaching or teaching or counsel, which is cloaked in some truth. And it may sound right. Let me give you an example. In chapter five there where you are read with me from verse six. And just listen to what Eliphaz says because he says a lot of true things about God. "Affliction does not come from the dust, nor does troubles sprout from the ground." Well, of course it doesn't, God brings it right? So he's right in that. "For man is born for trouble, as sparks fly upward. But as for me," Job if I were you, "I would seek God. And I would place my cause before God; Who does great and unsearchable things, wonders without number. He gives rain on the earth and sends water on the fields, so that He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. He frustrates the plotting of the shrewd, so that their hands cannot attain success. He captures the wise by their own shrewdness, and the advice of the cunning is quickly thwarted. By day they meet with darkness and grope at noon as in the night." Verse 17, "Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds and His hands also heal." All of that is completely true and accurate about God.

In chapter 22, in his third speech, verse 21. "Yield now and be at peace with Him; thereby good will come to you. Please receive instruction from His mouth." Job, you are being so hard hearted, you're not listening to us. Just accept what God has to say to you. Establish His words in your heart. "If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored. If you remove unrighteousness far from your tent, and place your gold in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks, then the Almighty will be your gold and choice silver to you. For then you will delight in the Almighty and lift up your face to God. You will pray to Him, and He will hear you; and you will pay your vows. You will also decree a thing, and it will be established for you; and light will shine on your ways." All of that is completely legitimate. If you repent it'll go well with you. Obviously The problem was, they said that he had sinned. And now Job is left in this place saying, I don't agree. I don't agree with your diagnosis.

You know, in medicine, making the right diagnosis is always critical to prescribing treatment. You know that if, you put a bandaid on an abscess, you're not doing anybody any good. You need to lance that, get the pus out. If you're taking a medication that is aimed for asthma, instead of blood pressure, your blood pressure is not going to be helped.

I was a small town doctor in Canada when we first moved here. It was three physicians in town, town of 1200, with a catchment area of 10,000. And as time went along, the incompetence of one of these physicians rose to the surface. And I'll give you one example, because it fits so well. He had one way to treat back pain. And so this elderly man came into the small emergency department of the hospital that we were in, in the small town, and he presented with back pain. And so that particular physician was on that day. And he received the treatment for back pain, traction, bedrest, traction, elastoplast on your legs, ropes over to weights that are hanging there over pulleys. And so he lay for five days. And he wasn't getting better. And to his credit, he discharged himself. And he went to a bigger center near where we were. And he checked into the emergency room and within an hour, he was in the operating room, because he had a 10 centimeter abdominal aortic aneurysm that was rupturing posteriorly and that gives you back pain. And as they got him onto the table, and they induced that anesthesia, and the surgeon made that cut, it ruptured. They were able to clamp it and save his life. It was that close.

The treatment and the prescription of repentance from Job's friends missed the mark because the diagnosis was not right. And if the diagnosis is not right, it will never be right. What Job was looking for was the why, and he becomes increasingly frustrated. Chapter 10 verse one, "I loathe my own life, I will give full vent to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me; let me know why

You contend with me.” Verse seven, “According to Your knowledge I am indeed not guilty, yet there is no deliverance from Your hand.” Verse 18, “Why then have You brought me out of the womb? Would that I had died and no eye had seen me!”

In chapter 27, very similar language, chapter 27 verse one, “Then Job continued his discourse and said, ‘As God lives, who has taken away my right, and the Almighty, who has embittered my soul. For as long as life is in me, and the breath of God is in my nostrils, my lips certainly will not speak unjustly, nor will my tongue utter deceit. Far be it from me that I should declare you right.’” He's saying, far be it that I would agree with you, that I've sinned. “Till I die, I will not put away my integrity from me. I will hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go. My heart does not reproach any of my days.” What a beautiful way of saying, my conscience is clear. My heart does not reproach me any of these days. But in that frustration of dealing with this and in his frustration with God, he goes too far and he overreaches, and he becomes demanding. And his friends interpret that as pride. And ultimately, he tells them off and he recognizes that they are not good counselors. In chapter 12, he says, he starts off sarcastically, “truly then you are the people, and with you wisdom will die!” And 12:3 “But I have intelligence as well as you, I'm not inferior to you.” Chapter 13 verse one through five, “Behold, my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it. What you know I also know; I am not inferior to you. But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue with God. But you smear with lies; you are all worthless physicians. O, that you would be completely silent, and that it would become your wisdom!” You can just understand, bearing up under this bad counsel this badgering, and he knows he hasn't done it, he reaches a point where he is only human. Chapter 16 he calls them, “sorry comforters you are.”

So what are the lessons for us? To break it down to if you are a counselor. Then we need to learn lessons, we're talking about life lessons from the book of Job and if you're a counselor, we need to learn a few things. And I'm telling you now today that you are all counselors. Because counseling is not only a pastor, an elder, a biblical counselor, it is a friend. You have friends, that you counsel, you have friends that come to you with situations, and you are asked for your opinion.

Number one, we need to be careful what we say. Sometimes it's better to say nothing. Sometimes it's better to say, ‘I'm not sure.’ Job's friends sat quietly they, let him speak at first but James chapter three verse one says, “Let not many of you become teachers. Knowing that as such, we will incur a stricter judgment,” there's a warning for you. Because we're accountable for the words that we say, you're accountable for your example. You're accountable before God as to where you lead other people. Proverbs 25 Verse 20, the book of Proverbs has a bunch to say about that. Let me just read these to you, Proverbs 25:20, “Like one who takes off a garment on a cold day. Or like vinegar on soda is he who sings songs to a troubled heart.” So if you're a counselor, you don't walk into a room and say, ‘Let's sing, Our God is an awesome God.’ No, read the room. Read the room. It's like taking a garment from somebody on a cold day. Is he who sings songs to a troubled heart? You got to be a little bit more sensitive. You got to go in there with a little bit of humility.

Proverbs 12, verse 18, “There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword. But the tongue of the wise brings healing, “ words matter. Proverbs 16:24, “Pleasant words are as a honeycomb sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” Proverbs 10 Verse 19, “where there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.” Sometimes when we don't know what to say you find yourself over speaking, right? Who's been there? Yeah, you fill the silence. And you just keep talking. And eventually you're thinking this is not

going so well and it's hard to backpedal. So the idea is to minister to each other, and sometimes that means we speak. And we minister with encouraging, edifying, well-chosen words.

Secondly, we should not jump to conclusions. Don't assume that you know that person's situation if you're going to counsel somebody. In biblical counseling circles, we call it data gathering. And it can be the first two or three sessions that you have with somebody. You have to understand the situation you have to take the history in medicine, you answer and the diagnosis is generally in the history. For the most part, blood tests scans, confirm what you already expect from the story because you're following the symptoms. So before you shoot from the hip and throw a Bible verse at a situation, you have to understand the situation because it's likely that you don't know the full picture. Right? How often have you previously thought you might have said something different if you had known that little piece of information? Right? I wish you'd told me that. I might have said something different.

Thirdly, it's helpful for us to know that there may never be a 'why' this side of heaven. Just a fact. Job wanted to know 'why' he was never given an answer in the entire book. We'll talk next week a little bit about that. But he's never given an answer. Because chapter 10 and chapter 11, there were scores of examples of faithful people who suffered, and they never received that which they were looking forward to. The Hall of Fame. Job never received that answer, just an exhortation to persevere and Hebrews 11 it's exactly the same. Finally, if you're a counsellor, you need to be able to recognize bad counsel. If you're somebody who's suffering along with striving to be robust amidst that suffering, you need to recognize counsel that is bad. How do we survive bad counsel? That's an interesting thought, isn't it? Job was pounded and bombarded with bad counsel. And it actually added insult to injury. Because now we've got a second issue to deal with, well-meaning friends. Well, part of it is to look for chapter and verse, either command or by principle, in whatever counsel you're given. Part of it is to remember that SWAT analogy, and you need to be steeped in the Word of God, so that you'll recognize when something is off. You'll recognize bad theology. COVID-19 has taught us that there are a lot of opinions out there, right? Difficult to sift through what is right, accurate and true. And it's the same with a counselor, ultimately, God, the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the sword of truth, the word of God needs to be your counselor. And if the counsel that you are receiving resonates with the Holy Spirit that is living within you, and what you understand the Bible says, then it's probably true. For many of us, we have significant foundational knowledge. And when we waver in suffering, if we're in that situation, it's not information that we need, most of the time, it's encouragement to draw on what we know already, because many of us are very, very Bible literate. Sometimes we're just too weak and vulnerable in that moment to apply it, and that's where we need the encouragement. Hey, what do you know? I'm here for you. What do we know the truth to be about this? And then you have to look for the testimony of the counselor. Look at their life.

Joshua Harris, at the age of 21, wrote a book, "I Kissed Dating Goodbye," and suddenly, he was catapulted to being an authority on relationships, this 21 year old single pastor. And it affected an entire generation of particularly single women, and it produced a very legalistic approach to dating and purity. And several years ago, he went on to divorce his wife, deny his faith, recant that book, and walk away from God completely. And there are many who have received bad advice from counselors, bad advice regarding marriage, or child rearing or purity or whatever the subject was. There's been heavy handedness. There's been misapplied Scripture. And then there have been situations where counselors have taken advantage of an unstable situation. They've become sexually involved with the accounts leads. And in all these situations that counsellors has been harmed, not ministered to.

So it's very easy for power and selfishness in a counseling situation, to degenerate into that. And you as a counselor need to be aware of that. So in everything, we will be held accountable for what we say. And so we need to speak into one another's lives with some trepidation and a lot of care. But we can't go the other way. We can't go to the other extreme and never do it. Because if we do that, we will lose out on what God has given us in the community of faith and that is something called the one another's, we are, we are commanded to love one another, to show tolerance for one another, to speak to one another, be subject to one another, regard one another as more important than yourself, do not lie to one another, bearing with one another. Do not speak against one another. Do not complain against one another, confess your sins to one another, pray for one another. We admonish the unruly, we encourage the faint hearted, we help the weak, we're patient with all, but it's how we do that. So don't go and be afraid to do it. Just do it humbly. And do it biblically and do it with the right heart. And we will love one another all the way to eternity. You'll recognize things that are not scriptural.

Have you ever wondered why Job, by God rebuked Job's friends? Well, there were many true things that they said about God. But in chapter 42 verse seven, God rebukes Job's three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, and He says, this, "you've not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." "You've not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." Now that's a little weird to think because Job got angry, and he became frustrated, and he demanded answers from God. But the reason God rebuked them was that they represented God as being responsible for the suffering in Job's life based on him having sinned. And God says they spoke folly. "You have not spoken of me what is right." And the simple reason for that John Wolver in his commentary says this, he says, "By insisting that suffering is always retributive," in other words, always a payback, "they limited God's sovereign ability to use suffering for other purposes. And as a result, they cruelly indicted innocent Job." So let's pull this to a close.

God can always use suffering for His purposes. If we've sinned, there will always be consequences for us even if we haven't sinned, we can still suffer if God can deem it necessary. And today, we talked about how it's possible to feel desperate in our humanity, and that trials take us places that would be surprising to us. We've talked about suffering tests, whether we believe what we say, and that sometimes we will receive bad counsel from well-meaning people. But amidst all of that, God is still raining on His throne. He is mighty, He is wise. He is good, He is trustworthy, He will never let us go. He will always complete that work which He has started in you until the day of Jesus and He will perfect it until that day. And by learning these lessons from the book of Job, we will be better equipped as Christians, to be disciples, learning followers and to be disciplers, because we will have grown. I'm just sorry that God gave us these lessons at his expense. Let's pray.

Father, we are very thankful, Lord to have this book. I know it's been a heavy hour. But we're thankful for the lessons that you teach us through this. Grow as Father, help us to trust you more. Help us to recognize the need to be real. Help us to be real with one another, to never hold back showing love to one another. But to do it in a sober minded way and in a loving way that will really edify each other. Thank you for the community of faith that you've given us and brothers and sisters with whom we will spend an eternity and Lord, help us to be those who come alongside when we recognize suffering. Make us wise in terms of how we do that. Thank you for these lessons. Go with us now Father, as we continue to enjoy the day. We're thankful for the sun. And as we continue to enjoy each other. In Jesus name, Amen.