

When God

When God is Unresponsive

Job

April 21, 2024

HDBC

God is often unpredictable. He is consistent with His word and His promises. He will do what He said He will do. He never changes in terms of His nature, His character, His essence. But when it comes to how He deals with individual people and individual situations it can be really difficult to precisely predict what He might do. We often set ourselves up for disappointment when we assume to know exactly what God is going to do, particularly in response to a specific situation that we are involved in. I'm guessing we've all been there.

You asked God for a certain thing and His response was not what you were expecting. You thought He would surely say **yes**, but instead His answer was **no**. You were going through a particular season of difficulty and expected God to do certain things to bring it to an end. And instead of seeing Him act or hearing Him speak, it seemed that there was only silence.

In this sermon series we are looking at Biblical examples of these very kinds of things. They are written to teach us, to encourage us, and to prepare us.

For example, what do you do . . .

When God is silent.

When God says no. Or what about . . .

When God is unresponsive.

God was ***silent*** when John the Baptist was imprisoned and ultimately martyred. God said ***no*** to Paul when he prayed for healing from the thorn in the flesh. When it came to Job, God was simply ***unresponsive***, at least for a period.

He was a man who experienced an excruciatingly painful season of life. He had no idea why it was happening. He begged God to explain it to him. He pleaded with God for an explanation. He even challenged God to come down for a face-to-face meeting to talk about it. And what did God do? Absolutely nothing. He

was **unresponsive**, . . . for a long, long time. It was as if God had cotton in His ears and could not hear him. Or that He simply did not want to deal with his questions. At least that's the way he felt. His name was Job and his story is legendary. He has an entire book of the Bible named after him.

People often associate him with the character quality of patience. They speak of the **patience of Job**. I'm not sure this is accurate. He was **faithful**, but I'm not sure **patience** would be a good way to describe him. It is not hard to see the frustration in his heart and mind when we read some of his words.

The book that bears his name reveals his story. **It is a story of personal tragedy, faithful tenacity, and ultimate redemption.** It deals with the place of suffering in human life and more specifically the suffering of the innocent. So, it is very relevant to our day. The innocent still suffer horribly. No one is really innocent. What I really mean is the suffering that comes upon a person because of no fault of their own. They did not cause the suffering. That was the case with Job.

His story also deals with the unresponsiveness of God. In Job's story we have a clear illustration of a situation where a godly man cried out to God for answers, and God remained silent, unresponsive, seemingly indifferent. So, if you've ever felt that God was not responding, pay attention to Job's story.

Read Job 1 (this is one of forty-two chapters)

We can summarize Job's story under four headings.

1. Job's Suffering

We are introduced to Job in chapter one. It's important to understand who he was and what his relationship with God was. Here are some things revealed.

He was spiritually strong.

In the very first verse we learn that Job was a godly man. Four words or phrases are used to describe his spiritual condition. Blameless, upright, fearing God, turning away from evil. He was a righteous man who loved God.

He was financially wealthy (3)

He had livestock, land, servants and money. He had all that he needed, and more. No one in the land could match his wealth.

He was blessed with a large family (2, 4-5)

He had seven sons and three daughters. The boys would regularly host gatherings with their siblings and families. After each one Job would offer sacrifices on behalf of his children, in case they had sinned against God. This was his way of interceding for them. **So far, so good. And then disaster struck . . . in a massive way!**

Without warning this man who was the epitome of integrity and righteousness was **buried under and avalanche of pain and suffering**. With no announcement, disaster thundered down upon him. He woke up one day expecting it to be just like all the ones before it. He would soon learn that it was anything but normal. Before the sun would set that day, he would . . .

Hear that raiders had stolen his donkeys and killed his servants.

Hear that his sheep and their keepers had died in a strange fire.

Hear that raiders had stolen his camels and killed their keepers.

Hear that all of his kids were killed in a deadly tornado.

All that in one day. In fact, he received the news of all four things in a matter of minutes. You talk about the kind of news that could take your breath away!

Watch how Job responded to God. (20-22)

He worshipped God saying . . .

I came into this world with nothing, and I will leave with nothing. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Through all of this he did not blame God. Wow! What incredible faith. But that is not all. You would think that kind of response by Job would move the heart of God to protect him from any further hurt. You would think God would scoop him up in His arms and keep any further harm from coming to him. That was not the case. There was more suffering to come.

In addition to those devastating losses, Job would soon lose his health. He was soon covered from head to toe with painful sores. It was so bad that his wife told him to curse God and die. Yet, in all of this Job did not sin against God. Once again, we would think God would certainly come to Job's rescue.

2. God's Silence

The next thirty-five chapters relate the story of Job's constant search for understanding. He just knew there had to be a reason for his suffering.

He looked inward (his own life) for the answers. Could this be the result of personal sin? Sometimes we suffer because of our own sinful actions. Job understood this. And so, he examined his heart. He opened every door and examined all the dark crevices of his life. But he found nothing that could explain why God would have brought such calamity into his life.

He looked outward. Job had three friends who came to comfort and help. When they arrived, they spent seven days just sitting with Job, not saying anything. Eventually they began to offer possible explanations. They meant well, but they were ineffective. Job found no answers in their counsel.

He looked upward (to God) for the answers. Time and time again during the span of those thirty-five chapters Job cried out to God for answers. But God was silent. He was **unresponsive** to Job's pleas. Not only did He not offer a clear explanation, He offered nothing. It was as if He were preoccupied with other things and had no time for His faithful servant. That silence led to . . .

3. Job's Frustration

If you carefully read those thirty-five chapters you will easily perceive the frustration of Job. He was frustrated with his friends and with God. Frustrated with his friends because they seemed to focus primarily on some hidden sin in Job's life. Surely he must have done something, they theorized. Job knew that he had not.

Job was most frustrated with God. Let me show you a few examples of his frustration with God.

Job cursed his birthday and wished he had not been born, or had died. Ch 3.

He wished God would take his life. 6:9. *Would that God were willing to crush me, that He would loose His hand and cut me off.*

Job is ready to die. 17:1 *My spirit is broken, my days are extinguished. The grave is ready for me.*

Job is upset with God. 19:6-7 *God has wronged me and has closed His net around me. I cry “violence!” but I get no answer. I shout for help but there is no justice.*

Job laments that God is **unresponsive**. **23:2-9 (Turn and read this)**

Why was Job so frustrated? Primarily because God was unresponsive. Because God was unresponsive there were things going on that Job did not know about. There were conversations between God and Satan that Job was not privileged to know about. God was proving that a man (or woman) could remain faithful, even in the midst of great suffering. He was using Job to prove that point. Would Job have signed up for it? I doubt it. Yet, God chose to use him in just such a way. And it brought glory and honor to God.

When you are going through suffering and God seems to be unresponsive, you can safely assume there are things going on behind the scenes that you know nothing about. You can also assume that God has allowed your suffering for His glory. But you can also assume that God will ultimately use it for your good.

4. **God’s Response**

Everything changed in chapter thirty-eight. After a long period of silence, God responded. We might think he would have timidly apologized to Job and thing explained about his dealings with Satan. We might think that, but this is not what happened. Job had confidently challenged God to a **word duel**, and now, God was taking him up on it. Rather than meekly apologizing to Job, He reminded Job of some things. He did this in a series of questions that Job was helpless to answer.

Check out God’s opening remarks in 38:1.

Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Who do you think you are?) Now, gird up your loins like a man and I will ask you, and you instruct me. WOW! Job was not expecting that.

What followed in chapters 38-39 was a series of questions, each designed to remind Job of one thing. There is only one who occupies the position and person of God, and Job is not the one. At the end of 77 questions, God gave Job a moment to respond. **Read Job 40:1-5.**

Good answer, Job. Then God jumped right back in with another ??? questions. And what was the ultimate result?

Job repented, acknowledging God's power, sovereignty and authority. God chastised Job's friends.

God restored blessings to Job. This did not take away his loss, but propelled him into a new future.

Takeaways

1. God is sovereign over suffering

It is not always a direct result of a person's sin.

It is not always a direct result of God's action.

However, it is always under God's sovereign control.

2. God uses suffering to accomplish great purposes

In this case it was to show the faithfulness of Job to Satan.

Job's suffering was instrumental in a spiritual dialogue between God and Satan. Job was being used by God to prove an important point. This was not an uncaring, callous act by God toward Job, but a demonstration of His sustaining power in Job and of Job's great faith in God. By the way, as far as we know, God never revealed to Job what went on between He and Satan.

3. Being godly does not protect you from suffering

Job was doing everything right and well when this came upon him. Just because you are doing it right, serving Jesus, actively serving in church, does not mean you will be insulated from suffering. You must avoid the temptation to draw a straight line between suffering and spiritual maturity.

4. Faith and lament can be expressed together

I love this about Job. He expressed great grief and sorrow while also expressing great faith in God. Sprinkled throughout this story are statements

of great faith, courage and conviction. But surrounding these affirmations of His faith are many more statements of grief, despair and frustration.

5. Your friends may mean well, yet fail you.

Appreciate them for trying.

Forgive them for failing.

Learn from them when you need to minister to others who suffer.

Be careful about the kind of friend you are when others suffer.

6. Waiting for God to respond is hard, but essential.

Give it time. Keep trusting and waiting. But as you do, it's okay to tell God how you feel.

7. God will sort it out in the end.

The story is painful to read, but much more painful for Job to live. Yet, in the end, God was able and willing to sort it out. Either in this life, or certainly in the next, God will make it good.

When looking at our present and our future our default longing is for happiness.
When looking at our past we see that our greatest growth came from hardship.

God is not a sadistic tyrant who takes delight in our suffering. He is a loving Savior who desires to use even the suffering of this broken world for our good.

If you want to know just how much God loves you, look to the greatest example of suffering in human history. The suffering of Jesus on the cross. That is the only place where you can find peace and perspective. It is only in looking to the cross that you can begin to put your own suffering in its proper perspective.