

What is the purpose of pain? God draws us closer to Him by withdrawing from us. His perceived absence.

Suffering is taking away something that makes life worth living. For some it's their lifestyle, for others, it is God Himself.

God draws us closer to us by withdrawing from us. His perceived absence makes us long for Him, to cry out to Him.

God's perceived absence is proof of our awareness of Him.

God is doing a good thing in those times where He appears to be missing from my life. We don't miss that which we don't know.

God is enlarging our capacity for Him. He increases our dependence on Him.

The Purpose of Pain... To conform us into the image of Christ. To press us deeper into God.

Pain breaks me of my self-sufficiency, my self-dependence.

God's absence in my life causes in me a thirst and affection for God that is greater than my thirst for the things of this world.

We are in the dialog section of the book of Job where Job is listening to and responding to the council of his friends as to why Job is suffering.

Jobs friends attempt to answer the question of Jobs suffering and why God has withdrawn from Job.

Job's friends' answers

Jobs friends answers to Job made moralistic assumptions. God blesses good people and God blesses bad people.

Job's friends tell Job to change his ways, clean up your act. Do what you need to do to get God to bless you again.

Job, you have done something to earn God's favor and you have obviously have done something to lose God's favor.

Just get it right and God will bless your life again.

Moralistic assumptions that are graceless.

We tell people to "Do more try harder".

We can't see all that God is doing

Eliphaz... "As I see it" A faith based on what we think we see.

When people are in pain, they need to be reminded everything we have need of is found in Christ Jesus.

The bible is not a record of good people earning God's favor.

The Gospel focuses on what Jesus did for us and religion focuses on what man attempts to

do for God.

Chapters 3 through 42 describe the dialog between Job and his "Frenemies."

It's been said of chapters 3-42, "Its a dialogue that begins as a discussion, continues as a debate and ends up us a dispute. Only in the end does God brings resolution to it."

Before we give Job's three friends a complete bad rap there are three things noteworthy about Job's friends.

1. They came to him. Your friends come to you in your darkest hours of pain while everyone else walks away.

2. They sat in silence with him for seven days. Your friends you enjoy at times without even a word being spoken. Just being together. Job, after his three friends speak, is in Job 13 is going to long for the day his friends said nothing.

3. They spoke to him and not others about him.

If your friends have something to say about you they say it to your face.

As we study the dialog between Job and his three friends we can learn some things NOT to do when we seek to help our friends who are hurting. Two things that jump out from this dialog between Job and his friends.

1. We make a moralistic presumption about suffering. The natural response to suffering is "why"? Why me, why now?

Religious people become moralistic at the point of pain and suffering. Instinctively we say to ourselves, "I must have done something wrong?"

Religious people become moralistic about suffering. What did you do wrong? You must have done something to deserve this, God must be punishing you.

Job's friends become moralistic. Job's friends in 30 some odd chapters says, "Job, we know

how God works. Good people get blessed, bad people get cursed. Obviously, you are being cursed. What have you done wrong? Show us the skeletons. God is just and so you are suffering because you deserve it.

Job's friends' answers revolve around one major moralistic assumption. Job must have suffered is a direct result because of bad behavior.

Job 1-2 tell us Job was a righteous man, an upright man. Interesting word, the word, "Straight" Are you straight? Are you God fearing? Do you have integrity? Are you complete? Then you are straight.

2. We make moralistic prescriptions. From studying the text Job's friends know nothing about God's amazing GRACE.

There is an old saying that goes, "To prescribe without first diagnosing is malpractice."

Job's friends are acting on the devil's behalf.

We don't hear about the devil after chapter 2 directly. We hear from the devil indirectly through Job's friends. They are saying exactly what the devil was saying to God.

All of Job's friends are offering a rescue that can be earned. They offer relief that can be earned. Bildad in Job 8:5-7, (You'll get your stuff back if you clean up your act). If Bildad was right then Satan would win as it would prove Job only serves God because of stuff.

How NOT to counsel Hurting People.

1. We don't need sarcasm we need support. When we hurt we don't need a finger in our face, we need a hand around our shoulder.

Job 4:1-6, "Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: "If one attempts a word with you, will you become weary? But who can withhold himself from speaking? Surely you

have instructed many, And you have strengthened weak hands. Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, And you have strengthened the feeble knees; But now it comes upon you, and you are weary; It touches you, and you are troubled. Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?

Eliphaz is saying to Job, "you are good at giving advice now you need it and can't take it". Job, you can dish it out but you can't take it. Job 4:6, why are you talking about your problems referring to chapter 3. His response is subtle but clear. When people hurt they don't need sarcasm they need support. Job is broken, he is desperate, pleading for comfort and Eliphaz basically says in verse 8, Job 4:8, "Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same"

Job 4:2, "innocent people don't perish, the upright are not cut off". Verse 8, "As I have seen" His insensitivity comes as a result of his simplistic theology. He is insensitive because he

is inaccurate. He bases his response by "What I have seen"... As Christians, we are called to, "walk by faith, not by sight".

When our brain and eyes can't take in any more our faith goes on. There is so much more going on than what we see. There is always more going on than what we see. God is eternal and His working is from before the world ever was. Our days were numbered before there was any. There is more to life than what we see. It is like looking at the ocean. The ocean you don't see is greater than the ocean you do see. Even if you can see to the end of the earth, there is always more than what you see.

Walking by faith curtails our arrogance.

We are a lot like Job's friends than we care to admit. The Pharisees pretended they were different than the Gentiles. The counsel of Job's friends. There is never a shortage of opinions in the life of the church.

Problem: People try to explain the pain they are

not suffering.

We don't need theological responses we need comfort. When you are going through tough times we need people to pick us up not put us down.

Suffering is never simplistic. Life is not always what it seems. Christianity doesn't offer pat answers for the real probing questions of life.

Tragedy and trial, pain and suffering are complex issues. We make everything manageable.

Religious people often times see suffering as a moral or spiritual problem. We get a list and a lecture. Did you do this and this and this...

Non-Christians deal with suffering as either a Physical or physiological problem. The world says can I have a pill for this...

Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves at all

times, And a brother is born for adversity."

2. We don't need logic we need love. Job 4:7-9, "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, And by the breath of His anger they are consumed."

In Job 4:8 we read Eliphaz's logical response. Job 4:8, Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity And sow trouble reap the same."

Eliphaz is saying, "If you do well God will bless you, do bad and God will curse you." Eliphaz came to Job to make theological points when Job needed comfort.

Christians know how to give the right answer, but not theologically but functionally what is it that I am living for. Chapter 3-31 Job and his friends try to answer why God left Job.

When we are in pain we need comfort, not theology. What Job needed, what your friends need in their pain is an arm around them not a finger in their face. As Proverbs 17:17 put it, "A friend loves at all times". Your friends lift you up, they don't put you down. 1 Corinthians 13:1, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal"

3. We don't need experiences we need encouragement Job 4:12-21, Eliphaz tells Job about a dream he had... Blah Blah Blah Blah Blah... "Now a word was secretly brought to me, And my ear received a whisper of it. In disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, When deep sleep falls on men, Fear came upon me and trembling, Which made all my bones shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; The hair on my body stood up. It stood still, But I could not discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes; There was silence; Then I heard a voice saying: Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be purer than his Maker? If He puts no trust in His

servants, If He charges His angels with error,
How much more those who dwell in houses of
clay, Whose foundation is in the dust, Who are
crushed before a moth? They are broken in
pieces from morning till evening; They perish
forever, with no one regarding. Does not their
own excellence go away? They die, even
without wisdom."

4. We don't need assumptions we need
assurances. Job 5:3-4, "I have seen the foolish
taking root, But suddenly I cursed his dwelling
place. His sons are far from safety, They are
crushed in the gate, And there is no deliverer."

Eliphaz is saying the death of Job's children is
due to Job's sin. He bases that on his view of
verse 5, Job 5:5, "Because the hungry eat up
his harvest, Taking it even from the thorns, And
a snare snatches their substance."

Eliphaz is saying that he has seen sinners
prosper only to lose everything in the end.
Eliphaz's speech is filled with assumptions.
How could he know what he assumes in verses

6-7, "Job 5:6-7, "For affliction does not come from the dust, Nor does trouble spring from the ground; Yet man is born to trouble, As the sparks fly upward."

Don't assume. When you are hurting

Bad assumptions... A story of the man who called home and the maid answered. Is my wife there? She is upstairs with her boyfriend. Furious the man says to the maid, do you know where the shotgun is? Yes. Go get it and load it and go up there and shoot them both.

5. We don't need advice we need affirmation. Job 5:8-11, "But as for me, I would seek God, And to God, I would commit my cause-- Who does great things, and unsearchable, Marvelous things without number. He gives rain on the earth And sends waters on the fields. He sets on high those who are lowly, And those who mourn are lifted to safety." Eliphaz has already come to Job assuming he knows why Job is suffering and here in verses 5-11 he tells Job how to fix it. Just go to God and throw

yourself on His mercy and just maybe God will surprise you and have mercy on you.

The worst words ever spoken to someone in their pain is. "I know how you feel".

6. We don't need fortune cookies, we need powerful principles.

Job 5:17-26, "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole. He shall deliver you in six troubles, Yes, in seven no evil shall touch you. In famine, He shall redeem you from death, And in war from the power of the sword. You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, And you shall not be afraid of destruction when it comes. You shall laugh at destruction and famine, And you shall not be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For you shall have a covenant with the stones of the field, And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you. You shall know that your tent is in peace; You shall visit your dwelling and

find nothing amiss. You shall also know that your descendants shall be many, And your offspring like the grass of the earth. You shall come to the grave at a full age, As a sheaf of grain ripens in its season."

Problem: People try to explain the pain they are not suffering.

We don't need to grasp for words to say that seem right for "such a time as this". We might call this the health and wealth, prosperity gospel and not the true Gospel that God is gracious and kind to sinners.

Its as if Eliphaz is saying, "this sounds good". I have no idea what I am saying but it sounds good.

"The road to hell is paved with good intentions".

Proverbs 25:20, "Like one who takes away a garment in cold weather, And like vinegar on soda, Is one who sings songs to a heavy heart."

Sometimes the things we share with others when they are hurting has the same effect taking away someone's jacket in the middle of a snowstorm.

Sometimes in our wanting to help we can make things worse.

Two kinds of friends in this world. "Some friends brighten up a room when enter and others brighten up a room when they leave"

The two mistakes Eliphaz made in his counsel to Job.

1. All suffering is the result of sin if you go back to the Garden of Eden. But not all suffering is due to our sin. Innocent people suffer. Eliphaz was saying to Job, just go back far enough in your life and you will find the sin you committed.

2. All righteousness will be rewarded and all sin will be judged. This is true one day but here it's out of context. The timing is way off.

Righteousness and judgment are not immediate. No man reaps and sows in the same day. We are finite and God is infinite.

Proverbs 18:24, "A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

What a friend we have in Jesus! Before Jesus can be your friend He must first become your Savior and Lord.

We can tell Jesus anything. We can pour our hearts out to Him and He will never turn His back on you.

Coming to Christ. We don't get a pass from our pain but what we do get is a person who promises to be with us in the midst of our pain. We get a Comforter.

Here in chapter 6, Job is responding to the council he has received from Eliphaz, who basically said, "Job, the reason you're in the situation you're in is because of the sin in your

life. If you are wondering why you are experiencing so much heartache? Sin.”

Job 6:1-30

1 Then Job answered and said:

2 "Oh, that my grief were fully weighed, And my calamity laid with it on the scales!

3 For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea-- Therefore my words have been rash.

Job is saying they don't understand the pain he's feeling... It is so heavy it's heavier than all the sand on all the beaches in the whole world.

4 For the arrows of the Almighty are within me;
My spirit drinks in their poison; The terrors of
God are arrayed against me.

Job felt as if God had a target on Job's back

5 Does the wild donkey bray when it has grass
Or does the ox low over its fodder?

They are content when they have been fed.
Job is starving for words of encouragement.

6 Can flavorless food be eaten without salt? Or
is there any taste in the white of an egg?

7 My soul refuses to touch them; They are as
loathsome food to me.

Corson writes, "That which you've put on my
plate, Eliphaz, is tasteless and bitter, inedible,
indigestible. The speech you gave me, the
accusation you made against me is impossible
to swallow. You don't understand not only my
heaviness, my bitterness, but my
hopelessness..."

8 "Oh, that I might have my request, That God
would grant me the thing that I long for!

9 That it would please God to crush me, That
He would lose His hand and cut me off!

10 Then I would still have comfort; Though in
anguish, I would exult, He will not spare; For I
have not concealed the words of the Holy One.

Job was praying for God to take him out, to kill him. Thank God for unanswered prayers. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Thank God He knows what is best for us.

11 "What strength do I have, that I should hope? And what is my end, that I should prolong my life?

12 Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh bronze?

"Eliphaz," Job asks, "do you think I'm as strong as a rock? Do you think I can go round after round with you?"

13 Is my help not within me? And is success driven from me?

14 "To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend, Even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.

15 My brothers have dealt deceitfully like a

brook, Like the streams of the brooks that pass away,

16 Which are dark because of the ice, And into which the snow vanishes.

17 When it is warm, they cease to flow; When it is hot, they vanish from their place.

“You are like streams,” Job says to his friends. “In the wintertime, they overflow from the snow and ice. But when things get hot in the summer, there is no refreshment there as the streams dry up. I’m going through fiery trials, difficult days. I’m in the heat of unbelievable difficulty, but you have no words of refreshment for me.” You are like a dried up stream bed of summer.

18 The paths of their way turn aside, They go nowhere and perish.

19 The caravans of Tema look, The travelers of Sheba hope for them.

20 They are disappointed because they were confident; They come there and are confused.

Contrast Job’s cry with the words of the

psalmist in Psalm 84:5-7... “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.”

Baca means “weeping.” Therefore, the valley of Baca is a valley of difficulties and sorrows, a place where tears are shed. The thing to remember is that, when you’re in that valley, going through tough times, the wells formed from the tears that flow down your cheeks can actually refresh others who will come after you in their journey with the Lord. Viewed through a microscope, the saline crystal of a tear is in the shape of a cross. “Why am I going through this?” we cry. “Why am I in this valley of Baca, this valley of weeping?” we wonder. I suggest one of the primary reasons is so that we won’t be like Job’s miserable counselors who had nothing to say but words of innuendo and accusation. “Blessed be the Father of mercies, the God of all comforts, who comforts us in our

troubles,” Paul declares, “that we may be able to comfort others with the comfort we have received of Him” (see 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4).

21 For now, you are nothing, You see terror and are afraid.

22 Did I ever say, 'Bring something to me'? Or, 'Offer a bribe for me from your wealth'?

Job asks, “Did I ask you for a gift because of what I’m going through?” “My need was simply for compassion and sympathy.”

23 Or, 'Deliver me from the enemy's hand'? Or, 'Redeem me from the hand of oppressors'?

24 "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; Cause me to understand wherein I have erred.

Job says if you showed me where I have erred I will be quiet.

25 How forceful are right words! But what does

your arguing prove?

Job is saying right words are weighty, they mean something.

26 Do you intend to rebuke my words, And the speeches of a desperate one, which are as wind?

27 Yes, you overwhelm the fatherless, And you undermine your friend.

Job asks his friends, “do you think I am just full of hot air?”

28 Now, therefore, be pleased to look at me; For I would never lie to your face.

Look at me, I’m not lying!

29 Yield now, let there be no injustice! Yes, concede, my righteousness still stands!

30 Is there injustice on my tongue? Cannot my taste discern the unsavory?

Job says he knows the difference between

good and bad. Job invites his friends to examine him to see if there is an error in him that they can see.