

**Women's Bible Study ~ Fall 2017**  
**God's Response to the Suffering Person – Job 38-42**  
**October 25, 2017 ~ Angie Pankratz**



So I have a new word for you to add to your vocabulary. It's the word "Jobian" - One who intensely studies the book of Job. I think you all can add that to your resume because for the last several weeks we have all been digging in and getting to know this man of God. I used google to see if there was a movie based on the book of Job and as far as I can tell, there really isn't. (All that came up for my search results was the movie about Steve "Jobs" life...)

I'm not sure why no one has taken to this great story because it has all the means for a great flick - A main character who goes from riches to rags and then back to riches again. A climax in the middle where you wonder if Job will deny or curse God. There's "friends" who appear to be helpful in the beginning but then you realize that they are more of a detriment to Job than a help. There's even a crabby wife who seems to be the only family member that was spared in Job's devastation.

Now for today in the passage we read we finally heard again from the Lord. We've been waiting and waiting for a rescuer to come for Job... If we were watching this as a movie or play we'd be at the edge of our seats wondering if the hero on the white horse would come and help this faithful man of God! We are wanting answers, we are wanting someone to silence his friends and we are wanting to see Job restored.

Our title today is "God's Response to the Suffering Person." It appears that God has not had much of a response up until this point. God has been silent since he suggested that Satan take aim at his servant, Job. Jann and Svea used this chart to show how the characters appear in this book and we can see that God has not appeared on the scene for the last 36 chapters. It seems that Job has been alone to deal with his misery... or does it?

We learn how God responds to our suffering by watching how he responds to Job's suffering. So what would God say to the trial you are going through right now...

**1. When life stinks, I am near!**

As was mentioned earlier, evidence suggests that Job was most likely one of the oldest book in the Bible. It's clear that although his friends talked a lot about God, their view of him was not very personal. Their theology was basically if God was pleased with you, then you would be blessed and if not, you would have tragedy in your life. Hence, why they thought Job must have done something to bring on these great tragedies in his life.

So when God speaks beginning in chapter 38, he speaks very personally to Job and it's clear he has been hearing the conversations all along as he says, **"Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.**

We must not mistake God's silence for his absence. You are diligently studying God's Word and hiding it within your heart so when you face a tragedy like Job I hope you will realize that you are never alone. The Lord tells us in the book of Joshua that we can be strong and courageous because the Lord our God is with us wherever we go. We may not always sense his presence but that is when we remember what Scripture tells us - we are never alone!

Even though I am terrible with maps, I thought I could at least show you a great Job painting for today. I was hoping for some great painting from the middle ages that would depict all of the characters in this story in a new light for you. However, can you believe I was not able to find any paintings that would depict what I was looking for? None of them showed God in any scenes with Job and his friends. I couldn't find one artist who was able to draw on the fact that even when Job laid in devastation being covered with sores that God was still present. Though God appears to be absent and silent when life stinks, Psalm 34:18 tells us that **God is near to the brokenhearted.** Psalm 145:18 says again, **The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."**

There's a video that we have of our first born, Lydia, when we were recording her attempts to stand up on her own two feet. We were hiding behind a wall in our kitchen and Lydia was just a few months old and was determined to use her play piano to bring herself from laying on her stomach, to sitting and then finally to standing up. Now this is a long video and would only bring delight to very close family members to view. But if you were to watch it, you would see Lydia make several attempts to stand before she actually did. You would see her tumble down several times before she got just the right grip and strength to be in an upright position. To be honest, the video is a little painful to watch because it appears that Lydia is all alone - nearly abandoned. Sure we could see her but she is not aware that we are anywhere in sight. In the video you can even see Lydia cry out to us but for the sake of strengthening Lydia we do not immediately come in for her rescue. Though it does not appear that we were fully present, we certainly were and were ready to swoop in and save her if we ever thought she was in any danger. Though we weren't talking in the scene we have recorded we are fully present. Maybe even more present than we normally were...

This is just how God is. There is something about those times when we are brokenhearted, when we feel poor in spirit that we can rest assured from God's Word that HE IS NEAR and that he hears our every word! Don't mistake God's silence for his absence in your life when it's tough!

What else can we learn from Job about what God would say in the midst of our suffering...

## 2. When life stinks I am still in complete control!

Somehow the poetry and thousands of years that separate us from this testament don't dilute even the hint of sarcasm that God uses with Job. I don't believe it's to shame him but rather to get his point across how ridiculous it is to think it was Job's doing to cause all that unfolded in His life... *Like really Job, who laid the earth's foundations, keeps the sea in its place and sprinkled the stars across the sky? And, you think you caused the recent events in your life.*

Even though I am not a fan of sarcasm, I will talk similarly to my kids when they ask ridiculous questions that I think might call for a snarky response back... Some of these questions might be... Mom, it must be so nice to relax all day while all of us, kids are at school? Mom, would you please check the lunch menu to make sure that we don't have the same thing for supper as we did for lunch at school? Mom, you look so thin in your wedding pictures, what happened? So if I feel the need to bring perspective to my kids questions, how much more so God must have felt the need to show Job his power and control when Job was wondering where God was.

Because that is what we fear right... It's like life should not be like this. When I am going through a trial, I feel as if I'm on a sheet of ice and sliding off into the ditch. I wonder does Jesus really have a hold on the steering wheel. Is he asleep? After reading chapters 38-41, you can see that you do not need to cry out with Carrie Underwood "Jesus, take the wheel." He already has it and he is in charge over not only you but all of creation. Though I cannot list them all, here are some ways God shows his power and authority from these chapters

- (38:4) He laid the earth's foundations like it was a blanket one would lay out for a picnic.
- (38:8) He gave boundaries to the earth's water like putting a dog in a cage.
- (38:22) He holds the storehouses of snow like it's on layaway at Walmart.
- (38:34) He commands the clouds and rain like a prized obedient dog who follows such simple commands.
- (chapter 39) He guides the wildest of animals (the bear, ox, horse, rattle snake, behemoth or hippo, leviathan or crocodile) as if he is their puppeteer.

None of these things could Job ever control or even manage and yet God was instantly aware of their every move and was sovereign over it all!

When trials come, though life may seem out of control, they are not. Remember that in chapter 1 we find that God put limits on the destruction that could come to Job's life. Though God's limits are often beyond what we can bear, he has set them and just like the waters, the clouds and the wild animals - all activity here on earth submits to his control.

Let me just add a little caveat here. I think it's important that we allow the beauty of creation to minister to our souls. God uses three chapters in Job to communicate his power, provision and his pleasure over various aspects of creation. There is a healing power when we step outside and see as Psalm 19:1 says that **the heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the work of his hands.**

I do not excel at being a nature loving girl. I wish I had a love for our pet, Tiger, as Jennifer Ouren has for her dog, Ruby, and as Gretchen has for her cat, Boots. (My kids wish that as well.) I must have been convicted about this as several years ago I read this book called, Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv. Though it's a secular book it was a great read on how we as parents need to help save our children from Nature Deficit Disorder. In his book, Richard Louv is concerned that many 8 year olds more easily recognize cartoon characters than native species of beetles and oak trees. Louv gives many reasons why this is a concern but fails to mention one of the most important... Spending time in creation can draw us into a better relationship with our Creator. He confirms in our hearts that God is in control of our lives!

As Christians we do not worship our earth but we do worship our Earth's creator and know that He uses the handiwork around us to draw us nearer to Him. Even Romans 1:20 tells us that God's creation directs people back to his power and love so much so that they are without excuse.

Again, God also tells those who are suffering...

### **3. When life stinks, I will deal with those who defy me.**

Usually when life stinks, we can see there are those who are the enemy - They might be Satan. They might be our "friends" who are not speaking truth or like Job, it might be all of the above. And when life is tough it appears that the enemy is winning. But we know God is near; He is in control and He will deal with those who are against you and ultimately Him.

Let's read starting with 42:7 -

**"After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has. So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has."**

It may not be our timing... Job had to wait 40 chapters to see God stick it to his friends but eventually God will bring justice. Ecclesiastes 3:17 says, “

**“... God will bring into judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time to judge every deed.”**

Matthew 12:36 also has another sobering message...

**“But I tell you that everyone will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.”**

God does not tolerate sin and he may choose to deal with it in this life but most definitely, on the day of Judgement. We don't need to worry about revenge, God promises that He will bring about vengeance.

Finally God responds to our suffering by saying....

#### **4. When life stinks, I will reward your faithfulness.**

The last time we met, I love how Gretchen used the term “rescue” to show how there will be a time when God says to those who love and fear Him, “Well done, Good and Faithful Servant.” He promises to rescue us and restore us. The final verses from the book of Job show us that Satan lost his bet. Job did not curse God in spite of his great devastation. Looking back over several verses this is how Job responds to the tragedy in his life...

- (1:21) “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”
- (2:10) (To his wife...) “Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?”
- (12:13) “To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his.”
- (13:15) “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.”
- (19:25) “I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.”
- (27:3-5) “As long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils, my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter not deceit.”

We are told that God blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first (42:12). This is significant because he started out as the greatest man among all the people of the East. The number of his livestock doubled and He again had seven sons and three beautiful daughters. He lived 140 years and was able to see his fourth generation.

Now let us not forget that we don't know a lot about Job's wife but it appears that she was rewarded as well. Most scholars assume that she too reaps God's reward as she was most likely the mother of all these children. We don't ever read of God scolding her and so let us not judge her too harshly because what she went through was certainly just as devastating (if not even more considering she was a woman and had little hope for income without a healthy husband or any sons). But we can deduce from Scripture that she endured. It could not have been easy for her to lose her standing within society, all sources of income, all 10 children and then her spouse's good health. She was left with little but an ailing, depressed, smelly spouse who could no longer provide the luxuries she once had in life. But... She endured!

(Sure there is one verse about her that is less than flattering as she encourages her husband to curse God and die but let us not judge her too harshly for one statement she made in the heat of the moment for fear that our life destiny would ever be determined by one slip of our tongues!)

So that is how God responds to our suffering. Let's look back to see how Job responded in the end...

1. He responded with **repentance**.

Job's questions were not answered. God never explained the why he chose him to go through this great trial. Even still Job recognized that he was in the presence of God and spoke to him with a repentant heart. Let's look at the beginning of 42 to see what he said in response to God....

**"I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted. You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me. My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.'"**

2. He responded with **obedience**

As if Job hasn't done enough already, he now is asked to intercede on his "friends" behalf. Though the words read easily off the pages of our Bibles this surely was one more task that seemed nearly unbearable to Job. Time and time again Job's friends try to convince Job that the suffering in his life is because of something he did wrong. How tragic that while Job had lost everything, his friends make a devastating situation that much worse by saying it's all his fault.

How often am I guilty of that... How often do I think I may know God's plan. If God does not state the reason why for suffering than why do I think it is my job to communicate that? Too often I can assume that a successful life is a sign of God's blessing and a tragedy must be a sign of God's punishment.

Crushed to despair many times by his friends, the Lord was now asking Job to (v. 8) take seven bulls and seven rams and to pray on behalf of his enemies. This is an incredible illustration of what the Lord teaches his disciples in Matthew 5:44, "... **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.**"

This leads nicely into Job's third response

### 3. Job responds with **forgiveness**.

Job's friends came to him with seven bulls and seven rams. Job had not handled such livestock since he lost his to the Sabeans' attack. Now he had a choice to make. Would he accept their sacrifice and pray for restoration on their behalf or would he refuse it?! The text says he did as God commanded and the Lord accepted Job's prayer. No doubt that made a huge impact on Job's friends. We can only deduce that from this point forward they were much slower to speak and much more compassionate when they were aware of their friends' sorrows.

Interestingly enough, it appears that Job's prayer of forgiveness for his friends is directly tied to his restoration and reward. Job 42:10 says,

**"After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before."**

We are called to forgive those who have wronged us. It is not easy but more often than not we feel burdens lifted and our relationship with the Lord restored once we have forgiven our debtors.

### 4. Job responds as a **witness**.

There could be no other faith story that could top Job's. He withstood the trial that Satan had bet against him. He did not curse God in the midst of a tragedy that we couldn't even begin to imagine. To top it all off the counsel from his friends was shameful, hopeless and nearly brought Job to ultimate despair. Yet, Job continues to trust in a God he revered from the earlier days of his life. The Lord doubles his physical blessing and gives him 10 more children whom he is able to leave a large inheritance.

But the greatest witness of Job is not just of his incredible faith story but how it points to our Messiah, Jesus - Our Redeemer from this world. The way we see God portrayed in this book is a hint at his rescue plan for us.

When Jesus came to this Earth, he was called Immanuel - meaning God with us. When life stinks, God is near and Jesus proved that as He was born and walked among us! When Christ returned to Heaven, God gave us the Holy Spirit to be our constant guide.

Secondly, Jesus message was that we are not in control but rather God is. We must submit to God's greater plan for our lives. God provided Jesus to be the way, the truth and the life. No one can get to heaven without Jesus. We must believe in Him and accept his free gift of Grace. Like Job's friends we may feel like we control our destiny but that is just a lie. We will never be good enough. We have all sinned. Without Jesus we are destined to an eternity apart from

God. Recognizing that God is in control should move us to deny ourselves and follow Jesus!

Thirdly, just as we see God dealing with those who oppose him in the book of Job, there is a judgment coming and the outcome of it will affect our eternity.

2 Thessalonians 1: 6-10 says,

**"He will come with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power."**

Lastly we learn that for those of us in Christ Jesus, we are guaranteed a happy ending. God will reward our faithfulness. In the story of Job we saw him rewarded here on earth with restored possessions and many descendants. It's true that some may see their rewards here on earth but Scripture tells us they will pale in comparison to the rewards we should receive in heaven.

In Romans we are told that the gift of God is eternal life. God's Word also says that we will receive rewards in heaven for our labor for the Lord here on earth.

As I said at the beginning of my lecture, this really has all the makings of a great movie because we all love happily ever afters. It seems that's how things ended with Job but let's face it, that is not often the case for us. Just a couple weeks ago we found out that a good friend of my husband's family - a woman who served as a missionary with her

family but is now retired in Canada was brutally assaulted walking to church on Sunday. The surgeon has never seen such trauma to anyone and it has shaken this quiet small town. We may never know this side of heaven why a good God would allow Sara Widholm to go through that. You have your stories - experiences and valleys that the Lord has taken you through. I know I have mine. Like Job I am tempted to wonder why and what I could have done differently but let us not lose our focus and instead trust in the Lord in spite of what we see or go through here on earth.

Because our hope is not in this world. Our trust is not in chariots. We trust in the name of the Lord our God and because of that we really can believe in happily ever afters - forever for eternity!

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