

L E S S O N 1 3

For February 27 • Page 89

Serving a Just God

Most of us have suffered tragedy and loss. But few of us have lost absolutely everything. That happened to Job. And what was his response? He fell down and worshiped God. One of the most resounding verses in the Bible is, “The LORD giveth, and the LORD taketh away. Blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21, KJV). No, he wasn’t happy about what happened to him. He tore his robe and shaved his head as a symbol of his terrible anguish. He questioned God but never lashed out against Him. In fact, he humbly worshiped Him.

Dave had just arrived at work one morning when the phone rang. It was Human Resources, asking him to come to Room 202. When Dave arrived, he found just Rick, the HR Director, and Dave knew what was happening. After 21 years at the company, he was being let go in a RIF, a Reduction in Force—the latest term for layoffs. Rick gave Dave a packet with information about how to write resumes and how long he would receive severance pay. Then Rick escorted Dave to a side door, and Dave stepped into a bright sun that was still shining, though he didn’t know why. It was the darkest day of his life.

But Dave did not shake his fist at God. He presumed the Lord had something else for his future. It may be bad right now; he did not see any immediate hope on the horizon, and he knew he would do some grieving and mourning for a job he had loved and now lost. But he would keep the faith, and humble himself before his Lord.

- 1. How do you sometimes respond when experiencing a painful circumstance and God’s reason for it is unknown?*
- 2. How does God want us to respond when experiencing these types of events?*
- 3. What can be of help as we endeavor to do this?*

LESSON FOCUS: Be humble before God, even when you don’t understand His ways.

Lessons Learned

Job 42:1-6, KJV

1 Then Job answered the LORD, and said,

2 I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.

3 Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Job 42:1-6, NIV

¹Then Job replied to the LORD:

²"I know that you can do all things;
no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

³You 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.

⁴"You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.'

⁵My ears had heard of you
but now my eyes have seen you.

⁶Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

After struggling to make sense of why he was suffering, and hearing his friends passionately but wrongly accuse him of wrongdoing, Job finally heard directly from God about his troubles (Job 38—41). Neither Job nor his three friends knew why Job was suffering, and what they concluded was faulty. They did not fully understand God or the reason Job was being afflicted. They had spoken without "knowledge" (42:3).

God had revealed and Job now understood that the ways of God were "too wonderful" for Job to "know," too incredible for him to understand. How as a mere man could he expect to understand God or bend Him to his will?

Job's response revealed that he finally understood that God is who He is while man is what he is. God is eternal; He is the Creator; in some ways He is unknowable. Job humbly realized

that he needed to repent in “dust and ashes” (vs. 6).

Job was beginning to see God in a new and more personal way. He had “seen” God in a different way (vs. 5). But though Job understood much more about God than he had before, his knowledge of God was still limited. He was not going to understand all of God’s purposes, but he was in the hands of the one who can do “all things” (vs. 2). What that showed Job, and us, is that we may be facing terrible things we do not understand, but we can trust that God knows and can do all things. We are in good hands with Him.

Job despised himself because earlier he had questioned God and had accused Him of being unjust (e.g. 9:22-24).

4. *What were some things Job learned as a result of his suffering?*

5. *What was Job’s response to what he learned?*

Fortunes Restored

Job 42:10-17, KJV

10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.

12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke

Job 42:10-17, NIV

¹⁰After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. ¹¹All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the LORD had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

¹²The LORD blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of

KJV

of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

13 He had also seven sons and three daughters.

14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch.

15 And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.

17 So Job died, being old and full of days.

NIV

oxen and a thousand donkeys.

¹³And he also had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch.

¹⁵Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.

¹⁶After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. ¹⁷And so Job died, an old man and full of years.

Although Job had spoken without knowledge, God nevertheless called him "my servant" (42:7). After chastising Job's friends for being presumptuous, God told them to sacrifice a burnt offering. He also asked Job to pray for them. God accepted their sacrifice and Job's prayers and forgave his friends for their arrogance (42:8-9).

God then restored Job's fortunes. What Job had after his loss was greater than what he had before. Although the number of his children and their gender was the same, the rest of his new fortunes were double what they were before. Bildad's had earlier predicted that Job's fortunes would be restored if he repented (8:7, 20-22). Bildad was wrong about the cause of Job's misfortunes, but he predicted the ultimate outcome.

Job's family and friends comforted him for what he'd lost, unlike Job's three friends who failed to do so earlier. The family and friends also gave him pieces of silver, something typically mentioned in the Old Testament in context of the patriarchs. These as well as the gold rings they gave to Job may

have been evidence of the high respect they had for him now that his fortunes were restored. Earlier, however, it seems that they viewed Job's afflictions through the same lens as his three friends, as Job complained that they had gone away, forgotten him, and failed to have pity for him (19:13-22). But though they may have concluded at one time that Job's misery was the result of wrongdoing, their response in the end indicated their belief that Job was once again accepted by God, was once again accepted by God. But they were wrong. God never rejected Job.

The names of Job's daughters reflect attributes of exceptional feminine beauty. This is consistent with the writer's comment that "Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters" (42:15). Job granted them a portion of his inheritance, something typically only done for male descendants. One reason Job may have done this is to protect his daughters from undesired suitors. Women of such great beauty would have attracted many admirers, and providing them with financial independence would have given them the freedom to be certain they had found the "right" one.

Some commentators believe that Job was around 70 years of age when he experienced the trials recorded in this book. If this is so, then the additional 140 years he lived afterward would have been another doubling of blessings. What's significant is that when Job died that he was still "full of years" (42:17). Job apparently died while still vigorous and with much life left in him, not seemingly as a frail man just waiting for life to end. This is in sharp contrast to Job's response in the midst of his affliction when he cursed the day of his birth (3:3) and longed for his life to end (3:20-21).

6. *What was significant about Job's fortunes following their restoration?*

7. *What is revealing about the response of Job's family and friends after his health and fortunes were restored?*

8. *What is significant about Job's remaining years?*

God Is Good All the Time

When my friend Sherry was first diagnosed with terminal cancer, she and her husband Henry questioned why they deserved such bad news. They had been faithful to God and were effective witnesses. They had attempted to live a righteous life. “Why,” they asked God, “are You causing us to go through this?”

Sherry and Henry never got an answer to that question. But they eventually asked a more relevant one: “How do You want us to respond?” They realized that God wanted them to focus on Him. Instead of demanding an answer to the question of “Why?” they humbly asked, “What now?” They concluded that God is good even when our circumstances aren’t and began to share with others their trust in His goodness. When Sherry died, many of those she’d come in contact with shared how they too now believed that God is good even when people are experiencing the worst this world has to offer.

Sherry’s testimony of God’s goodness in the face of extreme difficulties helped her friend Audrey face a similar problem years after Sherry’s death. Like Sherry, Audrey was diagnosed with cancer. Although it was unknown at the time of its discovery if it was terminal, Audrey knew her treatment would include intense chemotherapy followed by radical surgery. She approached her treatment remembering Sherry’s confidence in God’s goodness. She humbly accepted that though her future was unknown, God’s character is not. She consistently reminded herself as well as those treating her and others sharing the chemo rooms with her that God is good even in the difficult and painful times and when we don’t understand Him or His ways.

- 9.** *What are some things you’ve learned about God after experiencing a time of pain or loss?*
- 10.** *What are some other things you need to keep in mind when going through events like these?*
- 11.** *Why is being humble towards God crucial? How is it demonstrated?*

What Now?

It's important when experiencing difficult circumstances not to jump to conclusions about why this might be so. We don't always understand God or His ways. When we don't, it's important not to claim that we do or to speak without knowledge. Sometimes it's best to remain silent when we don't know what God is up to.

We need to approach God with humility, especially when He and His ways are unknown, knowing that He is God and we are not.

► *Complete this sentence: I can demonstrate humility in my relationship with God, especially when God and His ways are unknown, by doing this _____ rather than by doing this _____.*

KEY VERSE

Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. —Job 42:3b, KJV

Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. —Job 42:3b, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Week of February 28 through March 6

(See *The Quiet Hour* for devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Isaiah 40:1-11—Prepare the Way of the Lord.

Tue. Isaiah 45:1-10—Being God's Instrument.

Wed. Philippians 4:10-19—God Will Provide for Every Need.

Thurs. Isaiah 40:12-15, 21-31—Lift Up Your Eyes to God.

Fri. 1 Peter 2:13-17—Live Freely but Responsibly.

Sat. Psalm 97—Light Dawns for the Righteous.

Sun. Ezra 1:1-8, 11; 2:64-70—Cyrus Permits Jews to Return Home.