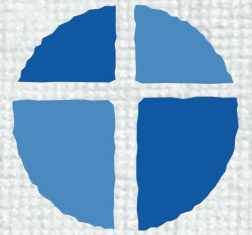


**LIFE GROUP &
PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE**



When Life
HURTS
THE STORY OF JOB



INTRODUCTION

The word “Job” derives from the word enemy. Job employs the word enemy when he announces that God is his enemy (Job 27:7) as well as when he describes God as treating him as his enemy (Job 13:24), which also is quoted by Elihu (Job 33:10). Job therefore stands as the representative of every believer who, in moments of suffering, weakness, or doubt, considers God to be his enemy, or who feels that God is treating him as an enemy.

The book of Job describes an excruciating human experience. In the course of several days, the book’s central character, Job, loses almost everything near and dear to him. The drama takes place on two levels. On the earthly plane, the conflict is between Job and his three friends. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar claim that the righteous enjoy temporal blessings and prosperity during this life, while the wicked suffer. Their principle of retribution is so uniform that the converse conclusion may be drawn: those who prosper must therefore be righteous, while those who suffer, as Job does, must be overt, unrepentant sinners.

At the same time there is a parallel conflict on the heavenly level between Yahweh and Satan, the accuser— or more freely, the prosecuting attorney. Yahweh is confident, contrary to the claims of the accuser, that his servant Job serves him freely, in response to divine grace (Job 1:9; 2:3). The accuser pushes back. He believes Job serves God only for the sake of earthly gain. Because every man has his price, the accuser wagers that acute suffering and loss will cause Job to renounce Yahweh.

These earthly and heavenly conflicts center around one question: Do people serve God because of rewards or out of loving gratitude? The question driving the book therefore is not, “Why do the righteous suffer?” it is rather, “Why are the righteous pious?”

By its opening scene in heaven and subsequent conversations, the book shows how small a part of any situation we see; how much of what we do see we ignore or distort through preconceptions; and how unwise it is to extrapolate from our elementary grasp of the truth.

Consider this truth: Suffering is the heritage of the bad, or the penitent, and of the Son of God. Each one ends at the cross. The impenitent thief is crucified, the penitent thief is crucified, and the Son of God is crucified.

*“Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
Should I not love Thee well? Not for the
sake of winning heaven, or of escaping hell;
Not with the hope of gaining aught; Not
seeking a reward; But as Thyself hast
loved me, O ever-loving Lord. E’en so I
love Thee, and will love, And in Thy
praise will sing; Solely because Thou art
my God, and my eternal King”¹*

¹ Saint Francis Xavier, translated by Edward Caswell, *The English Hymnal*, (London: Oxford, 1933), Hymn 80.

WEEK 1: FLYING BLIND

JOB 1:1-12

What has been a time in your life where you know you *deserved* punishment? (e.g. speeding, being late to work, etc.)

What has been a time where you felt as though you were punished for something *unfairly*?

Job did not deserve what he was about to receive. If Job truly was a “blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil” (Job 1:1), then he should not be entering into the suffering he’s about to. But Satan challenges God and says that Job is only a good man because God continues to bless him and protect him (Job 1:9-11). Has there ever been a moment where you feel as though you’re only serving God so you can get something in return?

Job is about to “fly blind.” Arguably, our whole life is “flying blind.” We have no idea what’s around the next corner. What are ways that you make it through each day not knowing what the next holds?

WEEK 2: SWEET SURRENDER

JOB 1:13-21

Respond to the statement: “Nothing shows more accurately what we are than the way in which we stand in the presence of trial and difficulty.”²

Job’s life went from heaven to hell in a matter of moments. When have you experienced this (e.g. death of a loved one, loss of a job, sudden financial instability, etc.)?

Can you reconcile the fact that the God you worship is the God who *allowed* Job to suffer in such a way? What is hard for you about these passages?

When you have faced trials in life, what brought you through it?

How does surrendering to God in worship, acceptance, and hope change your circumstances or spirit during suffering?

² Keith Brooks, *Summarized Bible: Complete Summary of the Old Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 102.

WEEK 2: ADDITIONAL READING

THEODICY

The term “theodicy”—introduced into the philosophical vocabulary of Europe in the eighteenth century— concerns the question of God’s goodness and power in a world that is manifestly marked by disorder and evil. The logic that has dominated the discussion is this unanswerable riddle:

- God may be powerful and good if there is no evil;
- God may be good and there can be evil if God is not powerful;
- God may be powerful and there can be evil if God is not good.

Of the three elements of the question—goodness, power, and evil—any two together can be affirmed, but in no logical way can all three elements hold together.

First, there is only one God who all-powerfully governs all according to his will. The whole Bible, of course, assumes this (e.g., Pss 66:7; 89:9–13; 93; 103:19; 104; Mt 6; Acts 17:24–28; 1 Cor 8:4–6). There are no “accidents” in the ultimate sense. Job too assumes this (Job 9:4–10; 12:7–25).

Second, God is good and loving. This affirmation became virtually a creed for ancient Israel (Ex 34:6–7; Jl 2:13; Jon 4:2; Ps 136). Job had assumed this (Job 10:3, 11–12), but in his suffering he sometimes questioned it.

Third, human suffering is real. The Bible throughout has a very realistic perspective. Suffering is not an illusion. Also, affliction and pain are in and of themselves bad. They are a disruption into God’s good creation. Suffering along with death was not there before the fall and will not be experienced by God’s people after Christ returns (Gn 1–2; Rv 21–22).

These three assumptions constitute the worldview of the book of Job. If we deny or soften one of them, the book loses its punch; there is no problem with which to wrestle. The situation of the faithful suffering and the wicked prospering poses no problem for polytheists, dualists, atheists, agnostics, naturalists, and fatalists.

WEEK 3: LEARNING TO LAMENT

JOB 3:1-26

How would you define the word “lament”? What have been the moments in life where you have *lamented* the most?

Though **we** might try to “fly over” the events in our life that cause us pain, **Job** doesn’t. Job wades in his pool of problems, crying out to God. Have you ever be afraid to say things as bluntly as Job did, even though you felt that way?

Pastor Reed Lessing, Senior Pastor at St. Michael’s Lutheran Church in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, says there’s two things we do to cope and survive suffering. Consider each point and discuss your thoughts.

1. We cope with sorrow by going through it. We go through it with the CARE model (Complain, Appeal, Remind, Express):
 - a. **Complain:** It’s okay not to be okay!
 - b. **Appeal:** Appeal to God’s nature and character.
 - c. **Remind:** Remind God of His promises.
 - d. **Express:** Express trust in God’s wisdom and the things we don’t understand.
2. We survive sorrow by looking past it to Jesus Christ and the promises made about His return.

Take time to lament, if you so desire, the problems occurring in your life right now. Use this time as an ongoing prayer.

WEEK 3: ADDITIONAL READING

WHY DO THE RIGHTEOUS SERVE GOD?

The standard approach is to interpret the book of Job along the lines of theodicy—how can a just God allow a righteous person to suffer? While the accuser, Job and his wife, Bildad, Zophar, Eliphaz, and Elihu take up the issue of suffering, in his speeches at the end of the book God does not. This suggests that Job's suffering is a foil for something bigger. But what is that issue? It is Job's struggle to serve and trust in God.

Although Job confesses that God is the one who "gives and takes away" (Job 1:21) his friends insist that it is human beings who control God's giving and taking by their own righteous or unrighteous lives.

They believe that the righteous always prosper and the wicked always suffer. In doing so, the three friends unconsciously align themselves with the accuser's position that human beings serve God only because it gets them something. Job, however, argues that this is not true.

Does this mean that the book has nothing to say about the theodicy of suffering? On the contrary, it is only when the central concern of the book is understood that its teaching on theodicy becomes clear. And it is this: Job demonstrates that theodicy is an irrelevant exercise. People cannot explain God's actions because they do not have access to his wisdom in the heavenly court. They can only make guesses that, in the end, are as unreliable as those made by Job's friends.

Therefore, the overarching dialectic in the book of Job is between a false faith (the accuser and the three friends) and a true faith (Job, Elihu, and Yahweh). Those with false faith serve God only because of temporal benefits. Everything is *quid pro quo*. This faith operates with a mechanical view of retribution: good works earn rewards and prosperity, while evil works bring punishment and suffering.

WEEK 4: IT IS ENOUGH

JOB 14:1-14

How would you describe “hope” in a way that a 5-year-old would understand?

As Job’s friends give him poor advice, and as Job himself is still mourning the loss of everything he held dear, he says, “For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease” (Job 14:7). How do you think he is able to say this as he is suffering?

Reading as New Testament Christians, we know this verse is tied to the promise of the Christ. The prophet Isaiah also points to this promise saying, “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:1-2). How does the promise of new life and growth, even after seeming death, give you comfort?

Who are the friends who point you to this hope? Share concrete ways that someone helped you to see the hope of Jesus Christ when you were suffering.

WEEK 4: ADDITIONAL READING

JOB'S FRIENDS

Eliphaz responds to Job's plight with a sympathetic appeal to Job's former piety, automatically and perhaps unconsciously assuming that Job must have had a serious lapse which has occasioned his present sufferings. According to his principle of retribution, the upright never perish (Job 4:7), while those who sow trouble reap it (Job 4:8). Two more examples illustrate the friends' approach to serving God. Eliphaz describes how upon seeing a "fool taking root," God "quickly cursed his household" (Job 5:3). Temporal prosperity for the ungodly is utterly intolerable and retribution must be immediate, not eschatological. Bildad, who generally lacks the tact of Eliphaz, epitomizes the friends' counsel to the bereaved Job: "If your sons sinned against him [God], then he gave them over to the hand of their transgression" (Job 8:4). For Bildad the only explanation for the tragic death of Job's children is open sin against God.

It is surprising, the friends assert, that Job does not suffer more (Job 11:6). What he needs to do is stop claiming that he is righteous in God's sight and, instead, repent (Job 5:17; 8:5-6; 11:13-20; 22:1-30).

The friends' understanding is incorrect for two reasons. First, it assumes that the relationship between God and people is based on human achievement. Second, it lacks a doctrine of justification for sinners. Their approach believes that God rules with retributive righteousness. Their piety affirms that God is good, but it cannot affirm that God accepts sinners. That's why no one listens to Job's laments (Job 5:1).

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar embrace the idea that if people sin they will suffer. The Sinaitic covenant curses in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 say as much. However, the friends go further and argue that if people suffer, then they have sinned. By reversing the cause and effect they maintained that all suffering can be explained by sin. And since Job suffers, he has sinned.

Satan and the friends exhibit a false faith that is based upon winning God's approval through achievement and good works. The incorrect position can be divided into several categories:

- People with false faith trust in God only because of temporal benefits they receive.
- Faith is self-interested, selfish. Worship is done for what I can get, not for what I can give.

False faith operates with a mechanical view of retribution: good works earn rewards and prosperity, while evil works earn punishment and suffering during this life. The wicked always suffer, and the righteous always prosper. God automatically makes this happen, so God is more like a vending machine than a person (Job 4:7–9; 5:11–16; 8; 11; 15; 18; 20).

False faith believes that because sin always causes suffering, a sufferer must be a sinner (Job 4:17–21; 5:7). What Job needs to do is to stop claiming that he is righteous in God's sight and, instead, repent (Job 5:17; 8:5–6).

False faith adopts an aloof, stoic attitude toward others in their suffering and grief. The three friends never address God, and never pray to God for Job or for themselves. They argue philosophically about God. They do not suffer, but claim that they still know just as much about Job's plight as Job himself (Job 15:9).

True faith is not based on the Law but rather on the Gospel. Those with true faith hope in God despite the fact that their present suffering, experience, and human reason do not give evidence of God's grace (Job 1:1, 8, 20–22; 2:3, 10). Suffering, of course, is a complex subject, and must be handled with care. But at its root is the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. The problem in the book of Job is that Job's suffering has a Gospel cause.

Job is singled out for suffering because he is a righteous man without equal on earth (Job 1:8); his pain will refine his faith (Job 23:10) and bring him closer to God (Job 42:5). However, his suffering is given a Law interpretation by the friends and at times by Job.

WEEK 5: UNDERSTANDING HOW IT ALL WORKS TOGETHER

JOB 23:1-17

When has been a time where you have called on God for help, in a time of trouble, and the response is *silence*? Did you question God during this time or doubt His goodness?

Job 23:10 states, “When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.” Why does God *test* His people? How do you currently feel *tested* by God?

What qualities does gold have that God wants for you?

How has God redeemed suffering and pain in your life? How can your current suffering and pain lead to something redemptive for you or the people around you?

WEEK 5: ADDITIONAL READING

JOB'S MEDIATOR/REDEEMER

Though Job agrees with Bildad that no one stands righteous before God based upon what they do (Job 9:2), he argues that he must be suffering for a reason other than his sin. Job waits for God's vindication and, in spite of his pain, he makes several startling affirmations of faith: Job 13:15–16 (the confession that salvation will come despite death); Job 14:7–17 (belief in an afterlife); Job 16:18–22 (hope for a mediator and afterlife); and Job 19:24–25 (hope for a redeemer and resurrection). Job offers a different motivation for why he serves God—justification by faith and eternal life.

Job does not serve God for rewards. Belief in a Mediator/Redeemer is the key to his faith. Though God is not a man (Job 9:32) and his judgment is too powerful for people to have any hope, Job longs for an umpire or referee, who “would put his hand on the two of us” (Job 9:33). This mediator will enable Job and God “to go to court together” (Job 9:32) and settle their differences in a just and equitable manner.

Job makes another startling assertion: “Even now I know that my witness, is in heaven, my testifier, is on high, my mediator, is my friend, while my eye weeps to God” (Job 16:19–20). Job again thinks of justification in legal, forensic terms in contrast to the legalistic conception of justification with which the friends operate.

The function of the witness is crucial for Job's eschatological hope. He describes the activity of the witness as litigating with God for the sake of people (Job 16:21).

Job's beliefs in chapters 9 and 16 find their fullest expression in chapter 19 which means that Job 19 is more like a peak in a range of mountains rather than an isolated summit. Yet the affirmation does mark a turning point. Job asserts, “I myself know that my redeemer lives” (Job 19:25). The following verses express his belief in the resurrection. Job is emphatic that with his own eyes he will see God and he yearns for that time (Job 19:26–27).

There is good reason to believe that Job is thinking of a single person, rather than of a separate figure in each of the oracles in Job 9:32; 16:19–20; 19:25–27. It is important to note that in Job's final plea of chapter 31 he leaves his legal case solely in the hands of God, without invoking any other person.

WEEK 6: TEARING DOWN THE SPITE HOUSE

JOB 42:7-9

Jesus speaks a lot of difficult words. Some of the most difficult are: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:43-44). Why is this so difficult?

Both Job (while still sitting in the ash heap) and Jesus (while being spiked to a cross) prayed for their enemies. Who are the enemies you need to pray for? What did they do to you?

Why is Job’s restoration linked to his forgiveness of others? How is your restoration connected to your forgiveness toward people who have hurt you?

Take time to pray for your enemies, those who have opposed you, those who have hurt you or someone you love, etc.

WEEK 6: ADDITIONAL READING

THE YAHWEH SPEECHES

Throughout the book, Job wants God to respond and answer him. The silence of God, with his seeming indifference, is a major problem (e.g., Job 9:11, 32–35; 10:8; 14:14–15; 16:18–22; 19:23–27; 31:35). Beginning with Job 38:1 the hidden God becomes the revealed God whose message is clear. Job is not in a position to question Yahweh. Yahweh is the only legitimate questioner who begins with a bold challenge to Job's wisdom: "Who is this who darkens counsel, with words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2). The counsel which Job obscured is God's goal of salvation through suffering. There were moments when Job thought God was dealing with him according to judgment and not grace. Job interpreted God's will for himself as for evil, rather than for good.

Outline of Job 38–41

- God's wisdom displayed in the universe (Job 38:1–38) God's care for animals (Job 38:39–39:30)
- God's power over Behemoth and Leviathan (Job 40:1–41:34)

In his speeches Yahweh refuses to be drawn into Job's demands. He offers no explanation of suffering. Rather, the text portrays a larger vision of God's power and mystery. After each speech, God pauses, lets his message sink in, and then gives Job a chance to respond, which he does in Job 40:3–5; 42:1–6. But Yahweh does not use his wisdom to humiliate or overpower Job, as easy as that would be. Rather, he patiently instructs Job as to the complexities of the universe and the extreme attention to every detail that is necessary to govern it well.

People are nowhere to be found in these chapters. The thinking of Job and the three friends had become anthropocentric. Theodicy is anthropocentric because it demands that God justify himself and his ways to people. The real issue in the book is not how God may be justified, but how people may be justified—by grace or by works. Yahweh leaves people out of the picture to show Job that Yahweh, not people, is the center of the universe. And Yahweh is a God who justifies people by grace alone.

In Job 3, Job is curved in on himself. He uses images of enclosure. The whole world is collapsing, contracting in on him, and restricting him (e.g., Job 3:23). In the Yahweh

speeches, God opens up the entire universe to Job. God expands Job's horizons and discloses to him new vistas, so that he sees from horizon to horizon. In Job 3 his gaze was inward, myopically focused on his own suffering, and downward toward death and the underworld. In the Yahweh speeches God leads him to look outward toward life all around him, and upward toward God in heaven.

Even though people are absent, Yahweh's oracles suggest an analogy from the natural world to the human sphere. If God governs the natural world and keeps it in such a balanced state of harmony and order, how much more does he govern the human world according to his own lofty standards of harmony, justice, and order?

While creation is ordered according to divine wisdom (Job 28) Behemoth and Leviathan are present as well (Job 40–41). Both are symbols of Satan. Natural beasts are partly in view, whatever their exact identity may be. However, they are also transcendent and supernatural agents of evil. Their presence means that life can be unpredictable, unfair, capricious, and seemingly futile.

The word behemah normally denotes animals or beasts. However, in Job 40:15–24, it is a proper name in the form of an intensive or abstract plural. Behemoth is the abstract and intensified epitome of beastliness and ungodly strength. He is a sort of beast par excellence.

Leviathan breathes fire like a dragon (Job 41:10–11) and inhabits the sea (Job 41:23–24), which in Job is the locus of chaos and evil (Job 9:8; 26:12–13; 38:8–11). He rules over all the worldly "sons of pride" as their king and "on earth is not his equal" (Job 41:25–26). Leviathan appears earlier in the book (Job 3:8), while Rahab (apparently an epithet for Leviathan) is mentioned in Job 9:13; 26:12.

Behemoth and Leviathan are potentially devastating, since Yahweh repeatedly points out to Job that people cannot protect themselves against these beasts, let alone control them. But God subdues them with the greatest of ease. He takes Behemoth by his eyes and pierces his nose with a snare (Job 40:26). Yahweh keeps Leviathan like a harmless pet on a leash (Job 40:26), or like a fish in a bowl, since Yahweh has set limits for the sea, its home (Job 38:8–11). Just as Yahweh is sovereign over the natural world, he is victorious over wickedness in the heavenly realm.

UNDERSTANDING MORE OF JOB

JOB'S REPENTANCE

The only solution that resolves the conflict in the book of Job is the fact that Yahweh alone defeats the forces of evil, Behemoth and Leviathan. The recognition of this reality moves Job to repentance and faith in Yahweh as his vindicator, and is followed by the condemnation of the friends' false theology.

But why did Job need to repent (Job 42:6)? It was because he falsely accused God of injustice. For example, Job describes God in vivid detail as assailing him, shattering him, seizing him by the neck and crushing him, using him as an archery target (Job 16:7–14). With biting sarcasm, Job says God governs the world as if his purpose is to promote chaos and injustice: God uses waters to destroy, not for fertility. God deceives, strips counselors, mocks judges, shackles kings, and destroys the wisdom of elders (Job 12:13–25). In essence Job accuses God of being a chaos monster like Behemoth or Leviathan who is out to hurt people rather than working for their salvation. For all of this, Job repents.

Job's repentance, however, is not a capitulation to the theology of his friends. He does not confess that he had committed a grievous sin which precipitated his suffering as punishment. Rather, Job regrets his foolish accusations that God is unjust. He had thought that God was cruel because he had misinterpreted his sufferings as punishment rather than as an opportunity for the exercise and increase of his faith in God's grace (Job 42:5). Job had failed to perceive what the reader knows from the prologue, namely, that it was not his sin which occasioned his suffering, but rather his exemplary faith in God's grace, which was being tested and proved (cf. Job 23:10).

THE STRUGGLE OF LIFE UNDER THE CROSS

According to the theology of the cross, the person of faith is not free from doubt, but rather struggles with anguish and doubt. Job is a model struggler, as James 5:11 indicates. Job persevered in faith despite his sufferings. He did not

demonstrate placid patience as some translations have it. Even Christ himself experienced anguish in the garden of Gethsemane. Those bogged down in doubt and despair may even have the strongest faith. Yet faith repeatedly overcomes doubt; anguish will depart, and joy will return, though under the cross, we struggle constantly and vacillate between faith and doubt, joy and despair.

Job's startling affirmations of faith in 13:15–16 (God's salvation despite death); 14:7–17 (an afterlife); 16:18–22 (a mediator and an afterlife); 19:24–25 (a redeemer and bodily resurrection), appear incongruous among Job's expressions of anguish and despair. However, Job is simply exhibiting the vacillation between faith and doubt, joy and despair, which is characteristic of a person of faith.

CONCLUSIONS

The issue in the book of Job is whether the relationship between God and people is rooted in judgment or grace. If, as the accuser and friends argue, it is based on works and rewards, then people serve God solely to obtain temporal prosperity and a "righteous sufferer" is a contradiction of terms. If, however, as Yahweh contends, the relationship is based on grace then temporal suffering will not abrogate faith in God but will instead serve to exercise and strengthen faith that trusts in God's eschatological restoration. The chief sin in the book, then, is the dependence upon human righteousness to gain God's blessings rather than seeing them as gifts of divine grace.

Even though Job was at a loss to explain how a gracious God could permit him to suffer, he never renounced his belief in God's mercy, and so in the end he left his legal case in the hands of God (Job 31). The strong affirmations of a personal mediator, witness, and redeemer, as well as everlasting life and resurrection, were forged in the furnace of suffering. In the end, Job serves God freely, in joyful response to Yahweh's grace. The accuser lost his bet and Yahweh won. "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him" (Jn 9:3).

ADVICE FOR HELPING SUFFERING PEOPLE

Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, had heard of his calamities and had "made an appointment together to come to condole with him and comfort him" (Job 2:13). What better way to help someone in their suffering! When they saw him "they did not recognize him," for his sufferings had taken their toll on his physical appearance. They did not speak—words were inadequate—and instead they wept. Nonverbal symbols of compassion were more potent than words. "They rent their robes and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven." And they sat with him for seven days and nights in silence, "for they saw that his suffering was very great" (Job 2:12–13).

The silence of the friends together with their tears and nonverbal symbols of compassion mediated a spirit of understanding to Job. He was encouraged by it to gain the motivation to open his mouth and speak from his heart. Prior to the arrival of the friends Job had reproved his wife for wanting him to "curse God and die" by saying, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the God and shall we not receive evil?" (2:9–10). But with this dramatic and prolonged support of these friends, Job said something entirely different: he cursed the day of his birth (Job 3:3).

Eliphaz is shocked. He obviously did not expect this from Job. We should have no difficulty understanding Eliphaz. What person would not be thrown off balance by such despairing words from whom one would expect the opposite? Uncomfortable with Job's lament, Eliphaz attempted—perhaps compulsively—to silence him. Eliphaz's speaking could be summed up as: "Job, I'm troubled by the way you talk. Why can't you practice what you yourself have counseled?" Hurting people are rarely in a receptive frame of mind to hear platitudes, Bible verses, or theological explanations. When they ask "Why?" have the grace to say, "I don't know why, but I'm praying for you, and I'm hurting with you. I'll be here with you for as long as you need me."

At the root of the friends' inability to help Job is their attitude that they are spiritually superior to Job.

Elihu's perspective predisposed him to a different approach than the three friends; his hope for a mediator protected him from assuming he knew all there was to know. He does not operate with the same mechanical view of retribution that we see in Job's friends. Instead he considers God's ultimate purpose in allowing suffering to be salvation, not merely punishment (Job 33:22-30; 33; 34:31-37; 36:1-33).

"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind" (Job 38:1-2). Finally Job hears God speaking. But what happened to Elihu? There is no closure such as, "the words of Elihu are ended." Is Elihu still speaking? God's approach in the whirlwind is but a continuation of where Elihu was leading. Yet Job is now hearing God. This lack of any line of demarcation between Elihu's care for Job and Job's encounter with God is an example of effective Christian help. In this way, Elihu is a type of John the Baptist who prepares the way for the Lord!

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND IN SHOCK?

Show up. Don't stand on the sidelines. Don't wait for an invitation. We don't have to say anything. In fact it would be better if we just show up and shut up. It's a ministry of presence.

Share their pain. The greater the grief the fewer words needed. When somebody is in pain, comparing never comforts. To console by comparing doesn't work. Even if you both lost your mothers, the relationships to your mothers is not the same. Everybody's grief is different.

Take the initiative. When you have a friend who's in shock, you take the initiative. Don't say, "Call me if you need anything." That's not helpful to somebody in shock. Because now they've got to work to get your help. Don't even say, "How can I help?" Because when somebody's in shock, they haven't the slightest idea how we can help. When somebody's in shock they are numb. They are paralyzed. They pick up a newspaper and they look at it, but they can't even read it. Their eyes aren't even focusing on it. Everything is moving in slow motion. What you do want to do is give people options. Say, "I'd like to bring you dinner, will Wednesday or Thursday night work best?" Call them and say, "I'm going to the store, what can I pick up for you?"