**EHS The Problem of Suffering II**

The path toward emotionally healthy spirituality involves learning how to deal with, accept and work through the grief, suffering and loss in our lives.

Unresolved grief will hinder us as we try to move forward.

The past 19 months have been a time of grief for all of us.

EHS talks about “Journey Through the Wall” and “Enlarge Your Soul Through Grief and Loss.

Job answers questions about theodicy. Given what we know about the world—all the evil and suffering in the world—is God good?

Theme of Job:

Hanging on to everything (God) through anything.

James 5:11 says that there are two themes in Job.

1. Perseverance.

2. God’s compassion and mercy. Think about that one.

Questions we all have:

Why is there evil in the world?

Why is there suffering in the world?

Why do we (personally) suffer in a particular situation?

What should we do when we suffer and when others suffer?

Job 1:1-5

Job was “blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He was a good, loving father—better than Abraham or David!

He is up there with Joseph, Mary and Daniel—people without obvious sin that we can see.

Wow! We should be so good!

God is really going to bless Job with good things, right?

Job 1:6-12 Satan is patrolling his territory. He is very confident that the earth is his. Heaven is God’s but the earth is his. “I own this place.”

Job 1:8 God to Satan: It may look that way, but it is not true. I still have a few who are faithful to me.

Job 1:9-11 Satan: Job does not really love you. Satan is a total cynic. Job is paid off. Job is spoiled. Take away his blessings and we will see that he is really just selfish and in it for himself.

Job 1:12 God to Satan: He is in your hands.

Why does God allow suffering in our lives? (Job raises more questions than it answers.)

- To show Satan?

- Because God knows Job better than Satan?

- So that Job can prove to God and to himself how faithful he is?

- For our sake? Bingo (James 5:11)

Job 1:20-22 Job: The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. May the name of the Lord be praised.

In all this, Job did not sin.

Job 2:1-8 God allows Satan to go after Job’s body.

Job is really suffering here

Job 2:9-10 Job’s wife is done with this.

v. 10 Job: Shall we accept good from God and not trouble? In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

2:11-13 Pretend you know nothing about Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. How would you rate them as friends?

(joke: Who is the shortest person in the Bible? Bildad the Shuhite)

Remember: One of our questions above is how we can help those who are experiencing suffering, grief and/or loss.

These guys are the ideal friends. They are sitting with Job and listening. They did not speak a word.

They sympathized. They comforted. They wept aloud with him.

Later on, they will start talking, but when they opened their mouths, that is when they blew it!

It will be OK NO!

You will get through this. NO!

God will use this for his benefit. (Romans 8:28 God works all things for the good of those who love him…) NO!

He/she is with God now. NO!

Sit, listen and sympathize (feel what they are feeling). And weep with them.

The central question of the rest of Job is this: Why did Job suffer? (the big, fancy technical word for this question is theodicy)

Q: Why do we suffer?

a. sin of others Exodus 34:6-7

b. our own sin Exodus 34:6-7

c. natural causes (earthquakes, weather, diseases, aging, death)

Peter Scazarro points out that in one day Job lost what the rest of us lose more gradually, over a lifetime. Loss is part of life. You can’t take it with you.

d. God disciplines us (Heb 12:3-11)

e. Helps us to grow (James 1:2-4)

f. Our godly response gives God glory (Jn 9:3)

g. Come to know Christ (Col 1:24)

h. Without suffering there is no joy (Psalms 30:5)

Q: Of these, why did Job suffer?

Answer: e, f

Here is a question for us: Can you love a God you cannot control?

Psalms 77:19 … though your footprints could not be seen.

Job 3:1-25 Q: How is Job feeling? How is he doing spiritually?

Before we do this, let’s do an exercise:

Share a significant loss in your life with a neighbor here this morning.

It could be a vision you had for yourself that never came through.

It could be a loss of a feeling of security.

It could be the loss of a goal—a dream.

It could be the loss of someone you really needed.

v. 6 May that day be removed from the calendar.

v. 11 Why did I not perish at birth.

v. 25 What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.

He is discouraged. He is angry at God. He is depressed. He is crying out.

In the past I would have assumed Job is sinning here. Now, I am not so sure.

Is he sinning? Maybe.

He is not blaming God. He is not blaspheming.

He is lamenting.

Scazarro points out that 2/3 of the Psalms are lamentations.

Plus we have the book of Lamentations.

And the only verse in Lamentations we ever use is Lamentations 3:22-23. “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end.”

What about Lamentations 2:11 My eyes fail from weeping, I am tormented within; my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city.

Summary:

Suffering and grief and loss does not imply that God does not love us.

It is not our job or even a “good” thing for us to try to “fix” other’s sense of loss or grief over suffering.

In fact, suffering is one of the greatest gifts of God.

Are you able to love a God who you cannot control? Can you live with mystery?

Eliphaz: Job 4:1-9

v. 6 If you were really pious, as you say, and blameless, as you claim, you should be confident and hopeful.

v. 7-8 The innocent will not be destroyed. Only the evil reap trouble.

Implication: If you are suffering, it is because you are sinning—you are not as righteous as you think.

17-19 Job, you are suffering because you are unrighteous. Is he correct? Is Job unrighteous? Is he sinful? Is this why he is suffering.

Message: Let us be careful to judge ourselves and others!

Do you ever tend to think this way? Might you be right?

They brought it on themselves.

AIDS is God’s judgment on homosexuals (people say… not true!)

Job 6:2-3, 14-23 Q: Is Job’s analysis of his friends fair?

Job 6:24-30 7:20-21 Q: According to Job, why is he suffering? (he is righteous and does not deserve to suffer)

Q: Is Job right? (answer: no! He is a sinner)

You may not want to do all of the following:

Job 8:1-7 Bildad agrees with Eliphaz. You are suffering because of your sin. Stop sinning (if you are pure and upright) and God will return to blessing you.

Job 9:21-22 10:1-8 What is Job’s attitude? Q: How might we be like that?

Job 11:13-19 Q: What is Zophar’s opinion? Do you agree with him?

Job 13:13-19 (19:1-7) Job’s bold response. What is Job feeling?

Job 29:7-20, 31:1-12 Q: How would you describe Job’s position here?

Job 30:16-19 (-23) Job is really in the spiritual dumps!!!

Job 32:1-5 Q: Describe Elihu in a couple of words.

Job 33:8-26 Q: Why is Job suffering according to Elihu?

It seems that Elihu, of the five, is closest to getting the question of suffering correct. Interesting, since he is the young guy.

Job 38:1-15 Job challenges God and asks him why. Q: In essence, what is God’s answer? Did God answer the question?

Q: How does this apply to us (that God does not answer Job)? Q: How does this apply to Covid-19?

God asks Job 77 questions.

Job: 30 chapters of lament

3 chapters of questions

1 chapter of answers

Summary: Job 40:1-2 Q: Why does God seem so harsh here?

Job 40:3-5 Q: What is Job thinking now?

Job 40:7-14 Just in case Job did not get the idea….

Job 42:1-6 Job repents. Q: What did Job learn? How does this apply to us?

Job 42:5 Now I see God.

Grief is an opportunity to connect with God.

God gave all Job had and more, but Job is SO MUCH a better person. Much less self-pride, much more empathy. A much better friend and shepherd.