

**JOB SERIES FIVE
JOB AND HIS “COMFORTERS”
DR. ROGER BARRIER**

**JOB 2:11-14; JOB 4:1-31:40; PROVERBS 25:20; MATTHEW 5:4; ROMANS 12:15
(SERMON 1585)**

I was surprised at how many folks approached me last week thanking me for affirming that it is right and proper for Christians to work with their doctors and take medicine to help control brain chemistry imbalance induced depression. Taking prescription drugs under the close supervision of a wise doctor does not demonstrate a lack of faith. Too many Christians are made to feel guilty for taking this course of action.

Enough of this poor understanding of Christianity! James 5 gives a marvelous theology of the healing relationship between faith and medicine in producing health and wholeness.

If you missed last week’s sermon on Job, get the tape or CD from the Shepherd’s Heart Ministry table on the Plaza this morning after the service.

Next week we will answer the Question: “Why do people suffer?” Don’t miss it. Today we will look at Job and his three comforters.

SLIDE #1: JOB 2:11-14: When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.

SLIDE #2: When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

It isn’t long before the word gets out to Job’s friends that Job had suffered a number of setbacks. They were probably wealthy Seiks who had time and money to leave home and businesses.

Maybe they’d met in the business world. They were part of the enterprise that had been Job’s past. We’re not told.

We can link some of their locations to Edom and northern Arabia. But can’t locate them exactly.

The point is they’d all come from different places in on agreement that they would “sympathize with and comfort” their friend.

Their intentions were praiseworthy. After the grieving and mourning of Job 3 it is time for someone to put his arms around Job and say, “I am sorry.” But that is not going to happen.

Over the next thirty chapters these three friends will pull daggers, honed sharp with misunderstanding, false premises, and arrogance, out of their intellectual scabbards and systematically slice Job to pieces—until he is emotionally cut and bleeding to death.

Three cycles of increasing intensity: Mild to intense to antagonistic tirades.

There is a Round Four with a young man named, Elihu. But 30 chapters is enough for today.

ROUND ONE: Mild

SLIDE #3 Eliphaz replies to Job’s opening salvo of despair by saying, God punishes the wicked with pain. You must have sinner. Appeal to God and he’ll take away the pain.

■ SLIDE #4 Job mourns some more and wishes God would just kill him. Then he says to his friends. A man in despair needs the help of his friends; but you guys are like streams that dry up in the desert when I need water.

■ SLIDE #5 Bildad says, “History and tradition tell us that a just God punishes evil. Look at you children. They obviously were killed because of their sins. What have you done wrong?”

■ SLIDE #6 Job hardly engages. “Who can understand the ways of God. Even if I got an audience with God I would probably say something wrong and he would crush me even more. If I could just have a Mediator to talk to God for me. I would say, “Don’t condemn me! Tell me the charges against me? Do you like to hurt me. Why don’t you just kill me? Leave me alone for just a few days so I can die in peace.”

■ SLIDE #7 Zophar replies, “Somebody ought to rebuke you right now! I wish God would speak and tell you what he really thinks of you.”

■ SLIDE #8 Job says, “Look, you see how life works. God tears down people and never lets them up. He is relentless in hurting people. Why don’t You just let people be born and die and let them along in the middle?”

I am willing to talk with God. I am blameless. *Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him. I will surely defend my case to his face.*”

ROUND TWO: Intense

■ SLIDE #9 Eliphaz: “How dare you talk to God like that! Your mouth is full of sin. The wicked suffer torment the rest of their days.

■ SLIDE #10 Job: “miserable comforters are you all! If I were hurting I could shake my fist and say mean things to you. But I wouldn’t. I would comfort you.

“God, you have left me with evil men. I am going through hell. People look at me and despise me. “Why don’t you guys try again and see if you can do better this time.”

■ SLIDE #11 Bildad: “Why do you treat us as if we are stupid. You are the wicked one. You are just getting what you deserve.”

■ SLIDE #12 Job: “All you guys do is torment me. Show me what I have done wrong. I am so alone. Have pity on me. Have pity on me.

“Yet, I know that my Redeemer lives, after my body is destroyed I will see my God.”

■ SLIDE #13 Zophar: “You are rebuking me and I don’t like it.

“God will punish you awfully. You will perish like your own dung. Food will turn sour in your stomach. You will vomit your riches. God will vent his burning anger against you. He will rain down blows upon you. A bronze tipped arrow will pierce your back and you will pull it dripping with blood out of your liver. You will live in total darkness. The Heavens will expose your guilt.”

■ SLIDE # Job14: “Listen, you have it all wrong. Even the wicked suffer at the hand of God. Who can figure it out? One has a great life and one has a bad life and the both die and lie down side by side in the dust. Look around. Even the wicked can prosper. You don’t have any answers at all.”

ROUND THREE: Antagonistic Tirades

■ SLIDE #15 Eliphaz: “Why would God care if you are blameless. Your sins are endless. You strip men of their clothing. You charge excessive interest. You give no food to the hungry or water to the thirsty. You hurt widows and steal from orphans. No wonder you are suffering. “If you were really righteous you would submit to suffering with rejoicing. (huh?) Submit to God and find peace.”

■ SLIDE #16 Job: “I don’t know where God is. If I could just tell him my case He would vindicate me and remove my suffering.
“He knows the way I take; when He has tested me I will come forth as pure gold.”

■ SLIDE #17 Bildad: “I will make one last short appeal. Nothing, not the moon or stars are pure in God’s eyes. How can you be righteous before God? Give it up and confess your sin.”

■ SLIDE #18 Job: “You guys did not help me a bit. As long as I live I will do right. I will not compromise my integrity. I will maintain my innocence.
“If I have done wrong, lied, defiled, enticed by a woman, denied the poor, trusted gold, worshipped an idol, rejoiced over my enemies misfortune, failed to share my food, then let me be struck. I deserve all of this. But I have done nothing wrong. Let someone prove it.
“I now sign my defense. Let the Almighty answer me.”
“The words of Job are ended.

There is a fourth round.

■ SLIDE #19 Elihu: The fourth friend, only one not disciplined by God. Elihu speaks and then
■ SLIDE #20 Job is silent—speechless: We will see round 4 later.

STORY: SBC Megapastors group. Most dysfunctional group of pastors I have ever met with.
Spend time with Dave Ferguson.

First year I attended, pastor got vulnerable; shared of dealing with childhood sexual abuse and how his church was suffering through it with him.

Time for someone to comfort. Silence. I was new to the group.

“What are we pastor going to do to help increase the attendance at our declining county seat churches.”

He was left bleeding emotionally all over the room and we talked about declining churches.

We can handle the emotionally hurting and distressed all wrong.

■ SLIDE #21: Proverb 25:20: *Like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on soda, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.*
(Tom: That is some explosive chemical reaction waiting to happen.)

■ SLIDE #22: The proper response to the emotionally hurt and distressed is to allow them to mourn and then comfort them.

■ SLIDE #23: Matthew 5:4: Jesus said: *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”*

■ SLIDE #24: Romans 12:15b: Paul said: *“Mourn with those who mourn”*

NOTICE WHAT JESUS DID NOT SAY: “BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN...”

■ SLIDE #25: “...FOR THEY SHALL BE TOLD WHY THEY SHOULDN'T FEEL THAT WAY.” NO.
Job 4:1-6: I've given you the verses in the sermon insert for each of these.

■ SLIDE #26: "...FOR THEY SHALL RECEIVE A PEP TALK." NO.
Job 8:20-23

Wipe the smile off your face. Smiles tell them that we really don't understand. Weep with those who weep.

Don't tell them to cheer up. Depressed totally unable to cheer themselves up. Not will power.

■ SLIDE #27: "...FOR THEY SHALL BE GIVEN LOGIC AND REASONS." NO.
Job 20:1-29 Zophar

Explanations never mend a broken heart. If his friends had listened to him, accepted his feelings and not argued with him, they would have helped him greatly; but they chose to be prosecuting attorneys instead of witnesses.

■ SLIDE #28: "...FOR THEY SHALL BE TOLD HOW TO DO IT BETTER NEXT TIME."
Job 22:6-11

■ SLIDE #29: "...FOR THEY SHALL BE TOLD WHY IT IS REALLY THEIR FAULT."
Job 8:1-4 Bildad hits on Job's kids
Eliphaz: 22:1-5: is not your wickedness great?

■ SLIDE #30: "...FOR THEY SHALL BE TOLD HOW TO FIX IT."
Job 5:8 Eliphaz: Job has already done that.

■ SLIDE #31: "...FOR THEY SHALL BE LED INTO AN ARGUMENT."
Job 11:1-5 Zophar
Job 20:1-3 Zophar upset because Job dares to rebuke him.

■ SLIDE #32: "...FOR THEY SHALL BE TOLD, DON'T CRY. IT REALLY DOESN'T HURT. IT IS NOT AS BAD AS YOU THINK IT IS. BUCK UP, "BUCKO."
Job 15:7-13 Eliphaz

There is a time for some these things: encouragement; planning solutions; dealing with guilt and responsibility, fixing the mess that has been made—Just not now.

■ SLIDE #33: "...FOR IF YOU LEAVE THEM ALONE IT WILL ALL BE OK."

■ SLIDE #34: "Blessed are they who mourn, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED."

■ SLIDE #35: *ONLY MOURNING AND COMFORTING HEALS HURTS.*

Let me give you five simple thoughts regarding comforting from Job's encounter with his "friends."

■ SLIDE #36: 1. COMFORTERS CARE ENOUGH TO COME UNINVITED.

No one sent a message to the three, "Would you please come and bring some sympathy and comfort. The man is dying in anguish."

No. They heard that he was going through it and they came.

If a friend has a coronary, it's not long before you're down at the hospital beside your friend. You don't wait for an invitation.

No one is ever invited to a funeral. We go to pay our last respects.

These friends loved Job and cared enough to come without being asked to come.

Whether invited or not, when you see hurt comfort it.

STORY of instrumental music ministers conference in Houston. Julie teaching on contemporary worship styles and I have all the wives.

"It is no wonder my children are so hard. I haven't cried in 16 years."

Comforted her.

"You're doing it to me."

"This is how you heal your hurt."

"Don't stop, it really feels good."

SLIDE #37: 2. COMFORTERS LISTEN CAREFULLY SO THEY CAN MINISTER TO THE EMOTIONS AND NOT REACT TO THE WORDS.

These guys never got the point of what Job needed. They never listened to what was going on inside. They only listened to the words.

A man asked his wife, "If you could have anything in the world for one day, what would you want.?" She said with a smile, "Well, I'd love to be six again."

Early the next morning, the morning of her birthday he got her up and off they went to a local theme park. What a day. He put her on every ride in the park—the death slide, the screaming loop, the wall of fear—everything that was—five hours later she staggers out of the theme park. Her head is reeling, her stomach is upside down.

Off to MacDonalds next. He ordered her 2 Big Macs along with extra fries and thick chocolate shake.

Then off to an animated movie, the latest Hollywood blockbuster. They ate hot dogs, and popcorn, and M&Ms and Pepsis. It was a fabulous 6-year-old adventure.

Finally she wobbled home with her husband and collapsed into bed. He leaned over and lovingly asked, "Well dear, how did you like being six again?"

One eye opened, she said, "Well, actually, I meant my dress size."

These guys miss Job's needs by miles. They come at Job as if he needs sermons and condemnation and illustrations and philosophical thoughts and examples from nature.

And Job says, "Can't you just be here with me and say, "You're sorry," as I try to survive.

Comfort meant that I listen and respond to their emotions and not react to their words.

Most women have this figured out. Men stumble here.

How often men or women say, "You're not listening to me." Listening for two different things.

Let me tell you what comfort sounds like. Comfort is emotional, feeling words.

"I am so sad that your friends treated you harshly . . . That hurt so badly."

"You were so embarrassed when they teased you on the school bus. I am so sorry . . ."

"I know how much you wanted to be a cheerleader. My heart aches with your pain and disappointment . . ."

"It saddens me that your dad was never around when you were growing up. I hurt for you because I love you. I care about you."

This is what comfort sounds like. It responds to people's emotions with emotional words.

SLIDE #38: 3. COMFORTERS OPENLY EXPRESS THE DEPTH OF THEIR FEELINGS.

Now if you have spent most of your life emotionally alone, this may at first seem difficult—but not for long.

Not uncommon to see a comforter in the room—fighting back tears—when they see you in pain.

The nurse who comes to take care of you in the hospital – is she going to say, "How are you – really? Tell me, I want to feel deeply with you."

Are you kidding? She says, "Bend over," or whatever. Gives you a shot. Friends don't give each other shots.

Job's friends were aghast when they saw him. They didn't recognize him. Went into the homestead where they'd been before and the place didn't even look the same. Everything is destroyed.

Not even a kid around. Only see the gravesites and somebody asks, "Where is Job?" The answer, "I don't know. He left some time ago. I think he's at the city dump."

They went to the dump. He has no hair and his robe is torn and he's sitting there with dung burning near him and dogs nearby and the garbage around, and they wept. They wept.

They threw dust on their heads – an ancient expression of grief. They were down in the dust.

Verse 13 – They sat down in the dust.

SLIDE #39: 4. COMFORTERS ARE NOT TURNED OFF BY DISTASTEFUL SIGHTS.

(Mary Kehl and Brie in dirty high chair.)

You're not turned off because the room doesn't smell good. You're not turned off because your friend weighs half of what he used to weigh.

You see beyond all of that. You're not turned off because they're lying there in a hospital gown. Or because the bottom has dropped out of their lives and they are at wit's end. That doesn't turn you off and make you turn around and leave. That draws you in.

These guys wept and sat down on the ground with him– and for 7 days and nights without a word.

SLIDE #40: 5. COMFORTERS UNDERSTAND, SO THEY SAY VERY LITTLE.

Joe Bayly, *"The View from the Hearse"*

He and Mary Lou had a house full of kids but they lost three, one at 18 days following surgery—one at five because of leukemia, and one at eighteen years in a sledding accident because of mild hemophilia. He bled to death.

Joe writes, "I was sitting torn by grief. Someone came and talked to me of God, of God's dealings, of why it happened, of hope beyond the grave. He talked constantly. He said things I knew were true. I was unmoved except I wished he'd go away. He finally did."

“Another came and sat beside me. He didn’t talk. He didn’t ask leading questions. He just sat beside me an hour or more. He listened when I said something. He answered briefly, prayed simply, and left. I was moved, and I was comforted. I hated to see him go.”

You’ve done it right when they hate to see you go. They’ll usually not tell you, but you’ll know it when it’s time to go.

Would to God these dear guys had just never started talking. They messed everything up.

Sometimes silence is the best comfort.

STORY: Mrs. Green comforted at husband’s death just by my presence.

Pray: Jesus is best spiritual comforter, people around us.