

JOB SERIES SIX
WHY WE SUFFER AND HOW TO SURVIVE-AND THRIVE
DR. ROGER BARRIER
JOB 4-31

**JOB 8:1-7; 1 CORINTHIANS 13:12; ACTS 5:41; PHILIPPIANS 1:29; 1 PETER 3:17; 4:12-19;
JOSHUA 7:10-12; JOHN 5:14; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:31-32; JAMES 5:13-16; 2 CORINTHIANS
12:7; JOHN 9:1-3; 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-12; JOB 23:10; ROMANS 5:3-5; HEBREWS 12:4-11;
MATTHEW 8:23-27; ROMANS 8:28-29; PSALM 90:10; JOHN 11:4; EPHESIANS 1:15-19; 3:14-
19; PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11; COLOSSIANS 1:9-12; 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10; GENESIS 32, 38; 2
CORINTHIANS 1:3-4**

(SERMON 1586)

Turn to the book of Job. Today we are going to talk about
SLIDE #: 1: why we suffer and how to survive—and thrive

No illusions: Not answer all questions—who can grasp such an elusive experience as the personal interaction with pain and suffering.

Only hope to start us down a path of understanding for a lifetime.

We are entering onto holy ground as we approach the subject of suffering. We must enter with humble hearts.

Charles Swindoll tells story: Dallas seminary chaplain, Bill Brian, is a fun-loving, joyful, competent, trumpet playing, singing pastor of the campus. Personality is borderline contagious. You think his life must have been laughter from beginning to now. He always looks on the bright side. But that's not how things started for him. His life began in a season of woe. Father suffered deeply with depression. Back then, Bill is now 66, Bill was then 3 or 4 years old, he remembers his father in a dark tunnel in his battle with depression. In those days there was very little known to do for people who suffered in this way.

Bill said he remembered going week after week after week to the medical arts building in Springfield, Missouri. They would go up the elevator to the 6th floor and he would sit and wait with his mother as father was going through time of struggle. As a little boy he didn't understand. He just knew his dad was not at peace. Life was dark.

On one occasion the father was asked to come out of the room and spend some time with 4-year-old Bill. Mother was brought in, and the plans were made, because he was getting no better, to admit him to what was then called an insane asylum.

Unfortunately you could hear through the walls, and the father heard of his future. In fact, the comment was made that they didn't know when – or if – he would ever get out.

Bill remembered that as Mom walked out with the doctors, my father picked me up and held me close, and said, "I love you son", put me down and ran and jumped out the window, shattered the glass and jumped to his death. That was the last memory Bill had of his father.

And he sort of went from home to home as his mother would not quite recover from that. A friend took him home that night, another family or friend picked him up.

Who would ever expect a man like Bill Bryan to come from a family like that? Woeful, heartbreaking setting.

I have noticed that intense suffering has a myriad of effects on people—but two results predominate. Some rise above it. Their lives are literally deepened and "made" by the experience.

Others wallow in it and never get over it.

Some powerful things must have gone right in Bill Bryan's life for him to turn out all right.

Last week dealt with the importance of comforting those who suffer. Mourning and comforting begin to heal the hurt. Everyone here needs to hear that sermon.

(That sermon, as well as the next several, is based on the thirty chapters of Job we overviewed last Sunday. *If you missed any of the sermons on Job get the past tapes or CDs.*)

Once you are well into mourning and comforting and thus healing the hurt, there comes a time to move on with the healing.

There are at least five stages in the grief process. We need to know this. Not in insert so get out pens and write these down—in your Bible preferably.

SLIDE #2: Shock/Denial: Defense mechanism against pain.

Anger

Depression

Disorganization: Things just don't click. Grocery store, forget what you came for, lock keys in car. So much energy going to cope, can't focus on basics of life.

(Three middle stages spend most of our time. Not linear. Here is where we struggle most. Family members don't go through all stages at same time. One up, other down. Very complex. Give each other space.

Acceptance/Adjustment

One of the first questions we all have is why? It is helpful to know the purpose of what is going on.

SLIDE #3: Age-old issue: Why do the righteous (I) suffer? Why does anyone have to suffer? Why is there suffering in this world. Why do the innocent suffer?

This is one of the big issues in Job's mind as illustrated in JOB 10:1-22.

READ JOB 10:1-22.

Consider the following: scientists have found ways of measuring the intensity of the pain we feel.

They can measure the fact that a migraine hurts more than a skinned knee.

SLIDE #4: And they have determined that two of the most painful things human beings can experience are giving birth and passing a kidney stone. From a purely physical point of view, these two events both hurt equally, and hardly anything hurts more.

But from a human point of view, the two are so different. The pain of passing a kidney stone is simply pointless suffering, the result of a natural malfunction somewhere in our body. But the pain of birth is creative pain. It is pain that has meaning, pain that gives life that leads to something.

SLIDE #5: That is why the person who passes a kidney stone will usually say, "I'd give anything not to have to go through that again."

SLIDE #6: But the woman who has given birth to a child, like the runner or mountain climber who has driven his body to reach a goal, can transcend her pain and contemplate repeating the experience. "Honey, I think I am ready to have another one.

We don't want to suffer for nothing. If we are going to suffer we want to suffer for something.

SLIDE #7: LET ME SHARE A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING.

The assumed syllogism in the Book of Job is enunciated in JOB 8:1-7:
READ JOB 8:1-7.

SLIDE #8: God punishes the wicked with suffering.

Job is suffering.

Therefore, God is punishing Job for wickedness.

(If Job will repent of his wickedness, God will remove the punishment and suffering.)

There are other syllogisms in present-day reasoning which deal with the “whys” of suffering.

SLIDE #9: If God were all loving He would not want anyone to suffer.

If God were all powerful He could stop suffering if He wanted.

Since there suffering exists, God is either all powerful or all loving. He cannot be both.

Could you imagine there are other ways to look at this?

Job is first book written. God is silent. Last week Job longs for audience with God. Doesn't get it until the end and the answer is really not very satisfying.

Fortunately, we today don't have to wander in the darkness of silence.

God did not answer all of Job's questions. He has answered most of ours.

We are not in the dark. He has progressively revealed the reasons for suffering in the Bible.

SLIDE #10: To begin with it has to do with our world-view. We have talked about this before.

There are constraints on this world both God and we live with.

This is not a perfect world. It is a good world. It is filled with many good things— God made it.

SLIDE #11: But, it is broken. It is bent. The Fall of Angels, and Fall of Man. Job is about both.

Because it is broken, bent and fallen, there is sin and suffering and evil and pain.

SLIDE #12: In fact, God even lets us know that Satan is the God of this world.

What is God's role? We partner with him in the struggle against pain, suffering and evil which result from a broken, fallen world. Fall of Some Angels: Fall of Man.

What is God's role? Pour in the power we need for every situation; strength, encouragement, comfort, wisdom to enable us to get through it.

Live with it—we are not entitled to know all the answers now.

We will learn all the answers later.

SLIDE #13: 1 Corinthians 13:12: Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

We have to live with some mystery.

I don't like this. I don't want it to be this way. This is not how it is supposed to be.

Yes, I know. God never intended for it to be like this. We navigate difficult waters.

SLIDE #14: LET'S DISCUSS SOME GOD-ORDAINED, BIBLICALLY REVEALED REASONS FOR TRIALS AND SUFFERING:

Look at insert. Changed the order to make it flow better, but they are all there.

I will put these in the form of questions. A particular trial may have one or more purposes.

■ SLIDE #15: Am I Paying a Price for Following Christ? (Acts 5:41; Philippians 1:29)

■ SLIDE #16: READ ACTS 5:40-42: They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

Next one is related.

■ SLIDE #17: 2. Am I Suffering For Doing Good? (1 Peter 3:17; 4:12-19)

Ethics at work. Cheating at school.
Good Samaritan Laws

■ SLIDE #18: 3. Is This Discipline (Punishment) For a Sin I've Committed? (Joshua 7:10-12; John 5:14; 1 Corinthians 11:31-32; James 5:13-16)

A brick layer was injured on the construction site. He filed this accident report with his company. On the date of the accident I was working alone on the roof of the building. When I finished I had a sizeable pile of bricks left over. Not wanting to carry them down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel using a pulley that was attached to the roof. After securing the rope at ground level, I climbed back onto the roof and loaded the bricks into the barrel. I climbed back down to the ground, untied the rope and began to lower the barrel. When I began to rise up from the ground that it dawned on me that my weight of 170 pounds was not enough to balance the 500 pounds of bricks in the barrel now coming down at me from above. I proceeded up the building at a rapid pace. Half-way up I met the barrel coming down. The glancing impact accounts for my broken ankle and the lacerations on the left side of my body. I then continued up to the top, banging my head against the beam on the roof and pinching my fingers in the pulley. I dared not let go that far from the ground. When the barrel hit the ground the bricks broke through the bottom. I was now heavier than the barrel. Down I went and up came the empty barrel. Half way down I hit the barrel. That is how I injured my shins. When I hit the ground, I landed on the pile of spilled bricks, getting a number of deep cuts and bruises. At this point I instinctively let go of the rope. Down came the barrel—fast. That is how I got the concussion and ended up in the hospital. I respectively request sick leave.

A lot of us suffer because of our own choices. They are easy to see.
But, when we follow Christ, sometimes God sends us suffering for our sins.

John 5: The crippled man by the Pool of Bethesda that Jesus healed. 5:14: "Stop sinning or something worse will happen to you."

James 5:13-16: Confess your sins, and if the sickness is a result of sin, God will remove it.

Takes careful insight and help from others to discern this. Hear God in your spirit.

■ SLIDE #19: 4. Is This Intended To Keep Me From Future Sin? (2 Corinthians 12:7)

Paul's thorn in the flesh—a messenger from Satan—to torment me because of all the revelations to keep me humble.

■ SLIDE #20: 5. Is This Designed To Increase My Faith And God Dependence? (Matthew 8:23-27)

Disciples struggling on Sea of Galilee.

■ SLIDE #21: “Our experience up ward in the power of God is in direct proportion to our experience downward in ceasing from self (reliance, selfishness, condemnation).”

■ SLIDE #22: 6. Is This an Instructive Experience (Discipline) Designed For My Personal Growth and/or Spiritual Maturity? (Job 23:10; Romans 5:3-5; Hebrews 12:4-11)

■ SLIDE #23: I walked a mile with Pleasure.
She chattered all the way.
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

■ SLIDE #24: I walked a mile with Sorrow.
And n'er a word said she.
But, oh, the things I learned that day
When Sorrow walked with me.

■ SLIDE #25: READ JOB 23:10: But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.

READ AND EXPOUND HEBREWS 12 from a parental perspective.

■ SLIDE #26: When God wants to drill a man,
And thrill a man,
And skill a man;
When God wants to mold a man
To play the noblest part,

■ SLIDE #27: When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch God's methods, watch His ways—
How He ruthlessly perfects
Whom He royally elects.

■ SLIDE #28: How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows, converts him
Into trial shapes of clay
Which only God understands,
While his tortured heart is crying,
And he lifts beseeching hands.

■ SLIDE #29: How He bends but never breaks
When His good He undertakes.
How He uses whom He chooses,

And with every purpose, fuses him,
By every act induces him
To try his splendor out.
Our Father knows what He's about.

SLIDE #30: 7. Is God Using This So That His Glory May Be On Display In My Life? (John 9:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12).

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-12.

David and Tonya Norris new to Casas. 4 children. Tell you about 14 year-old Cory. Played percussion in band this morning.
Cory Norris was five years old. He had been near death four different times with lung disease. During a particularly painful lung procedure at Riley children's hospital in Indianapolis, Indiana, he was thrashing and screaming to get the procedure finished and Tonya was trying to hold him down and pin his arms.
Finally, the doctor got fed up with his hollering and moving around. In frustration, the doctor asked—just a little too loudly and angrily, “Where is this boy's father at a time like this?”
Tanya answered, his father and grandfather were killed in an automobile accident three weeks ago. The room grew silent.
When the procedure was complete, little Cory began to sing hymns. The doctor said, “Cory, what are you so happy about?”
“My dad's up in heaven is talking to Jesus about making me well....”

God received glory from that little life.

OVERHEAD: Do you know what the word, Martyr means? Witness.

Devil's Martyrs vs. God's Martyrs.

Martyrs crown: God gets glory and honor out of your suffering.

SLIDE #31: 8. Is God Using This To Mold Me Into The Image Of Christ? (Romans 8:28-29)

READ ROMANS 8:28-29.

OVERHEAD: Circles and Hammers and Wedges. Jesus inside of most of us is hard to see. God is in the process of molding us to look like Christ.

STORY: Lady in Spiritual Growth Class

SLIDE #32: We don't want to suffer for nothing. If we are going to suffer we want to suffer for something. Wouldn't it be even better if we were suffering for someone.

SLIDE #33: 9. Is It Time To Die? (Psalm 90:10; John 11:4)

READ PSALM 90:10.

Watched a Christian man die. Karl Mendenhall.
Prostate Cancer. Big, gentle man. Suffered for two years.
“Roger, please come.” Set up hospital bed in living room. Wally and Cosetta, Bill and Fran Wiggin.

Awakened early that morning, "Grace. What day is it?"

"Saturday."

"Is this a good day to go home to the Lord?"

"Any day is a good day to go home to the Lord."

Lungs filling with fluid, breaks out in song, "Jesus loves me this I know..."

"Read me 2 Corinthians 5." Bodies wasting away, eternal home prepared.

"I'm ready to go home to see Jesus."

Grace: "It's OK, Karl. It's time to go home and see Jesus. Why don't you just close your eyes and go." And so he did.

Wally: "In the last years, I haven't heard one word of complaint come out of Carl's mouth—only praises."

I got to thinking, "Neither had I."