

Prelude: Walking with Job and fellow sufferers

When I initially tried to interweave what I was learning from Job into my face story, *Finding A Face*, the number of topics bogged it down. Talking about such deep and heart-touching subjects is heavy and takes time to ponder, to wrestle with, and soak in.

Instead of writing another book I decided to put the Job related topics online for all to use. You will find a list following this section. Feel free to download and save the topics for your personal study or with others.



This second part in finding God in the midst of our suffering is an offering for those who question God and yearn to know him as he truly is. It's also for those willing to quit trying to place God in a constricted six-walled box. He doesn't fit. He has never chosen to fit into our human boxes. And he works in ways that we find not only confusing at times, but aggravating, and even maddening.

As we look at the life of Job we realize that he suffered in nearly every way imaginable. And the level of his suffering is almost unimaginable. Yet, God considered him the most blameless man on earth. He had watched Job provide loving care for his family, his servants, and the most needy in his community. So, why did this honorable man get hit with so much tragedy?

Job's friends and community naturally assumed Job was suffering due to his sin. God would heartily disagree.

As we look at Job's life, we see that suffering doesn't come just to the bad or to those who are experiencing negative karma. God makes that clear. It's interesting that it was because of Job's integrity that he was tested. Although Job lived an exemplary life, he was the one who lost most everything—his children, his livelihood, and his health. We still see this every day. Can we provide a formula for why the little child gets cancer while the heinous dictator reigns for decades?

Looking at pain and suffering through the perspective of Job provided a place for me and I hope the same for you. May you discover God in new ways—uncomfortable at times but necessary for our views of God to expand. I think that most of us can iden-

tify with Job in some ways because his personal story of extreme suffering has no-sugar-coating. Job kept it real. He wrestled with God. “Why don’t you stand up for me when I’m being attacked for what I tried so hard to do. You know I was honorable and just.”

My desire is that your faith in God expands in bigger, deeper ways as you become more willing, much like Job, to engage God more openly. It may seem far less comfortable to address God with our questions as to why or why not he does or doesn’t do actions that make sense to us. But in the end wrestling with God is far more life-giving to us and honoring to God.

Are we able to be real with God when we suffer and watch others suffer? Can we tell him exactly how we feel, even in our darkest thoughts? Can we also hang on to him when life gives us or others a crushing blow? I call it “fingernail faith.”

I had a friend who was dying of cancer and was experiencing excruciating pain. She screamed out, bursting in tears and anguish, “I want to die. I want to die.” The image of desperation in her haunting eyes is still unforgettable. There was no “peace that passes all understanding.” No angels drifted down from heaven to comfort this woman. There was only pure unadulterated physically excruciating pain, “I cannot endure this.” God chose not to intervene as I wanted him to and as she desperately begged him to do.

As we each embark on our unique journeys of life and faith, we will discover that God embraces each of us in our times of relative peace as well as times of struggle—as we try to wrap our minds, emotions, and hearts around our God who does what he pleases. That is what Job declares. It’s so hard at times but studying Job showed me that God does deeply care about our suffering, but he doesn’t always stop it.

God is love. God is good. God is all knowing. God is all powerful. Yet, we will not always understand his will and ways. May we all begin to see him as he is and not as we want him to be. Although God will always be beyond our understanding, we can at least let him know how we feel as human beings. The older I get, I’ve come to realize the questions still continue and deepen.

God often uses people as his means to bring care and comfort, and hope. We can also use others’ stories, others’ walks of faith—just like Job’s—as beneficial, life-giving, hope-filled aid—especially when we feel we’re barely hanging on to our own faith. I hope you will enjoy reading and getting to know Job as a man who loved people deeply, was wounded cruelly, and never stopped reaching out toward God.