

How to Be a Lousy Counselor

Job 42:7-9

7 And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. 8 "Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has." 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD commanded them; for the LORD had accepted Job. (NKJV)

Job's three friends come to him sometime during his mourning and suffering. They set for 7 days and do not say a word. What could they say? Did they have answers for the questions rolling around in Job's head? They mourn with him.

Job 2:11-13 (NKJV) 11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place--Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. 12 And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. 13 So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

Next Job calls out in his suffering with questions of why and cursing the day he was born.

But eventually they begin to speak. Beginning with the eldest. Eliphaz.

Each one in turn tell Job that he must be a terrible sinner and that all the things that have happened to him is because he deserves it.

After each one of his friends speaks Job answers them. But they just become even more unrelenting, accusing him over and over.

- I. Look at how Job referred to his comforters.
 - A. Job 13:4-7 (NKJV) 4 But you forgers of lies, You are all worthless physicians. 5 Oh, that you would be silent, And it would be your wisdom! 6 Now hear my reasoning, And heed the pleadings of my lips. 7 Will you speak wickedly for God, And talk deceitfully for Him?
 - B. They tried to blame Job for his own calamity.
 - C. Their idea of justice was that God never allows something so unjust to happen. Job must have had it coming.
 1. Does God allow injustice to take place in this world? Why would He do that?

- D. Usually if there is the remotest involvement, the mourner will seek to blame themselves and question their past actions and ask all those “If only” questions.
 - E. This of course did not help but only made Job feel worse. All that he had was taken from him and now those who he thought were his friends have turned against him.
 - F. They would have been wiser to be silent and that would have been a thousand times better than what they were doing.
 - G. Job was right about God and they were wrong. Often we are wrong when we get into specifics as to why God allowed something to happen or not to happen.
 - 1. We seldom if ever know if some tragedy was from the hand of God or just the workings of a fallen world.
 - 2. Jesus makes this plain in two examples that He gives us.
 - a. Luke 13:1-5 (NKJV) 1 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. 4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."
 - b. There are three very important teachings from this passage.
 - (1) Everyone is worthy of the most severe judgment.
 - (2) Not every tragedy is judgment from the hand of God.
 - (3) We all need to repent.
- II. Job 30:1 (NKJV) 1 "But now they mock at me, men younger than I, Whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock.
- A. They had no regard for Job.
 - 1. They did not regard his age or the past blessings that he had or the importance of the position he had previously.
 - 2. As a matter of fact Job comments upon their upbringing saying that their fathers would not have been good company for his dogs.
 - 3. When the dogs do not even want you around, you must be pretty bad.
 - B. The key is that if you would not make good company for a dog, then you probably

would not make a good comforter.

- III. Job 12:2 (NKJV) 2 "No doubt you are the people, And wisdom will die with you!
- A. Do not let your council come off as, "Since I am so much wiser than you, let me tell you what to do."
 - B. Don't make less of the tragedy by spinning it as a blessing. Oh they are better off now.
 - C. Acknowledge the loss with them.
 - D. Death is an evil brought on by the fall.
 - 1. God never intended the world to be this way.
 - 2. It is because of our rebellion as humans that this has happened.
 - E. Reinforce the love of God and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to prove that love.
 - F. Help them to keep confidence in God and His care for us. Explain that God does not often intervene in the lives of people and things just happen because they happen.
 - G. Remind them that God can take this tragedy and do some good from it.
- IV. Job 16:1 Then Job answered and said: 2 "I have heard many such things; Miserable comforters are you all!
- A. The origin of the root seems to reflect the idea of "breathing deeply," hence the physical display of one's feelings, usually sorrow, compassion, or comfort. TWOT
 - B. The idea is that if they were proper comforters then they would bring Job to the place of a sigh of relief from his suffering and sorrow.
 - C. The word is most often translated repent, so to give a sigh of regret. But in our context it has the idea of bring one to a place of a sigh of relief.
- V. Job 26:2-3 2 "How have you helped him who is without power? How have you saved the arm that has no strength? 3 How have you counseled one who has no wisdom? And how have you declared sound advice to many?
- A. Job's friends could not be empathetic for they were sure that this could never happen to them because they were not sinners like Job.
 - 1. Therefore they could not see themselves in his shoes.
- VI. Before we are too hard on Job's three friends we must recognize that they at least showed up.

- A. The majority of the folks that Job knew before did not bother coming by.
1. Job 19:13-20 (NKJV) 13 "He has removed my brothers far from me, And my acquaintances are completely estranged from me. 14 My relatives have failed, And my close friends have forgotten me. 15 Those who dwell in my house, and my maidservants, Count me as a stranger; I am an alien in their sight. 16 I call my servant, but he gives no answer; I beg him with my mouth. 17 My breath is offensive to my wife, And I am repulsive to the children of my own body. 18 Even young children despise me; I arise, and they speak against me. 19 All my close friends abhor me, And those whom I love have turned against me. 20 My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh, And I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.
 2. Most people do not know what to say so they stay home.
- B. Comfort is more in a hug than in a slogan.
- C. Comfort comes more in our presence than in our wisdom.
- D. That they might just know that people know and care.
- E. Joe Bayly in his book, *View From the Back of a Hearse* says that one of the best contributions we can make to a person going through intense suffering and loss is our presence without words, not even verses of Scripture dumped into the ears of the grieving. He said: Don't try to "prove" anything to the survivor. An arm about the shoulder, a firm grip of the hand, a kiss: these are the proofs grief needs, not logical reasoning. I was sitting, torn by grief. Someone came and talked to me 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 to wish 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 for an hour or more, listened when I said something, answered briefly, prayed simply, left. I was moved. I was comforted. I hated to see him go."
- F. The Sequoia trees of California tower as much as 300 feet above the ground. Strangely, these giants have unusually shallow root systems that reach out in all directions to capture the greatest amount of surface moisture. Seldom will you see a redwood standing alone, because high winds would quickly uproot it. That's why they grow in clusters. Their intertwining roots provide support for one another against the storms. Suffering comes to all of us, and no one can suffer for us. Even so, just like those giant Sequoia trees, we can be supported in those difficult times by the prayers and understanding of loved ones and friends. It's when we are too proud to admit our needs to others that we are in the greatest danger."