



**GLOBAL GRIEF  
SUPPORT**

### **Where is God when we suffer deep affliction? (For Grief Support Groups)**

When we suffer severe and sometimes multiple losses, we often ask the question, “Why?”

I always say that whenever we ask the question, “Why?” we are in spiritual territory.

And so it was for Job and his friends in the Book of Job. Job, a man of great wealth and prosperity, lost everything in one day. He lost thousands of animals, many servants and all his sons and daughters. In his grief, he developed a skin disease. He felt so afflicted that he cursed the day he was born, saying, “It would have been better to never have been born, or if he had been born to go immediately to the grave.”

Job’s friends showed up to comfort him, but all they had to say condemned and blamed him. Job, fed up with their counsel, said of them, “miserable comforters are you all.” And he said, “You are physicians of no value. If you would hold your peace (keep your mouth shut); it would be regarded as wisdom.”

Have you ever been “comforted” by people who make you upset with their counsel? Have you ever received words of comfort and advice from people who had no idea what they were talking about?

#### **(Share your experience in your group)**

I have to give Job’s friends some credit for reflecting the common understanding of God in those times. It was commonly believed that God blessed those who were pure and righteous, while God punished the wicked, the impure and the unrighteous. Job, a righteous and virtuous believer, asked the question, “Why?” and demanded an answer from God. His friends, taken back by Job’s insistence on his righteousness, advised him to confess his sins and to admit that he was to blame for his losses. Job’s friends assumed (as everyone did in those days) that if Job lost his wealth and health and lost his children that it must be a sign of God’s chastisement. And since God chastises the wicked, the unclean and the unrighteous, then it stands to reason that Job must have done something awful to deserve such affliction.

Have you ever felt that your friends blamed you for the death of your loved one? Perhaps they asked, “Why did you take her to that hospital? Or why didn’t you call 911 earlier?” Have you ever felt that the loss of your loved one meant that God was punishing you? Have you ever struggled with issues related to “Who is to blame for the death of your loved one?” Have you ever blamed God for your losses? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are surely standing on the same spiritual ground as Job.

## **Group Work (For Bereavement Support Groups)**

Read the selected verses from the counsel of Job's friends. Each person select one verse and share why you identify with it. Why does this "counsel" remind you of your own grief story?

*Eliphaz said to Job, "You have instructed many. You have strengthened the weak. You have upheld those who were falling. But now grief has come to you and you are faint and troubled. Where is your confidence in God? Is not the integrity of your ways the basis of your hope?" (Job 4:3-6)*

*Eliphaz said to Job, "For affliction comes forth not from the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground; but man is born into trouble, as the sparks of a fire fly upward." (Job 5:6) (In other words; there must be a reason or a cause underlying Job's affliction.)*

*Eliphaz said to Job, "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects. Therefore, do not despise the chastening of the Almighty." (Job 5:17) (Eliphaz assumes that God is punishing Job.)*

*Bilbad said to Job, "How long shall the words of your mouth be like a mighty wind? Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert righteousness? If you were pure and upright; surely now God would awake for you, and make the habitation of your righteousness prosperous." (Job 8:2-6) (Here, Bilbad is skeptical of Job's righteousness and seems to believe that God is doing what is just.)*

*Bilbad said to Job, "Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he uphold the evil-doers." (Job 8:20) (Here Bilbad assumes that Job is an evil-doer.)*

*Zophar said to Job, "Should your babble put others to silence and when you mock, shall no one shame you? For you say, "My conduct is pure, and I am clean in God's sight. But oh, that God would speak, and open his lips to you, and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom! ... Know then that God exacts from you less than your guilt deserves." (Job 11:3-6) (Here Job's friend suggests that God has punished Job less than what he deserves. What a friend!)*

*After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." (Job 42:7) (Does this mean that God had not punished Job and that Job, in the end, was righteous?)*

### **Questions for the group:**

Have you ever received bad counsel from friends?

Have you ever wrestled with God, asking for an explanation for your loss or losses?

Have you ever struggled to understand the meaning of the death of a loved one?

Have you ever felt the need to reconcile your relationship with God after the death of a loved one?

Have you ever felt that you received comfort or strength from God?

