

August 1, 2021

8. Job's Response to Suffering: Worship — Job 1:18-22

I'm relieved that most theologians view "the book of Job as an allegorical biography about faith and suffering" (*Salt & Light*, p. 50), because the God I find in Job seems to be playing marbles with diamonds, messing with Job's life, just to make a point.

The key verse in this study is Job 1:20, "Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshiped," which would indicate at least two things: Job chose a positive response, rather than *reacting* to virulent circumstances, and Job responded the way he *prepared* to respond (see 1:1-5). He was faithful to God in good times, faithful to God in bad times. The first informed the latter.

During three decades of pastoral leadership, I noticed that tragedy often reveals the contents of one's soul, defining what was present prior to a calamity. While one person prayed with humility, requesting grace and strength when encountering suffering, another shook a fist at the sky. One person's faith deepened because of suffering. Another rejected faith entirely.

In the US, a new idiom has entered the medical lexicon: "pandemic of the unvaccinated," as COVID surges among those refusing vaccination. In Germany, unprecedented rains have caused severe flooding. The death toll (as of July 20) is 125. In Surfside, Florida, the search for human remains continues following the collapse of a condo.

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl, a survivor of Hitler's death camps, wrote: If there is a purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and dying. But no man can tell another what that purpose is. Each must find out for himself, and must accept responsibility [for his answers.] What alone remains is the last of human freedoms—the ability to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances.¹

"The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

If teaching, I might ask the group to address the inherent questions in the final four paragraphs, then compare Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 with Job 1:20-21.

—Ruben Chupp
rubenhome@outlook.com

¹. Simon & Schuster, The Touchstone Edition, 1984, 9.



Ruben Chupp of Nappanee, Indiana, is a spiritual director, chaplain, and retired pastor. His personal goals: “love God and the person in front of me at any given time; read some, write some, think some, pray some, and take a nap every day; love my wife, Idella, my children, and their children with all the grace I possess; and finally, get home before dark.”

Resources for this session

Salt & Light Videos

Hendy Matahelemual is the presenter for unit 3, Suffering. These teaching videos are great for leader preparation or introducing each session. They are available on [**MennoMedia's YouTube channel**](#). Jaye is the pastor of 7 Ways Home Fellowship, Bowie, Maryland.

Additional commentary for this session is available at:
[**https://www.mennomedia.org/salt-light-supplements/**](https://www.mennomedia.org/salt-light-supplements/)