

August 29, 2021

### 13. Job's Response to Suffering: Acceptance — **Job 40:1-5; 41:1-10; 42:1-6 NRSV**

Any significant loss is accompanied by grief. No exceptions. The grief cycle conceived by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross cycles through (1) denial, (2) anger, (3) bargaining, (4) depression, and (5) acceptance.<sup>1</sup> Rarely do these stages evolve in a linear pattern, rather unfolding in a scribbled line in a forward direction or seven steps ahead, five steps back.

The images of Haiti's earthquake and tropical storm reveal horrific suffering and anguish etched on faces traced with tears. With political upheaval and assassination, followed by unimaginable physical devastation and loss of life, I wonder if the grief cycle has any meaning whatsoever in the context of such overwhelming dispossession and deprivation.

In Afghanistan, now under the Taliban's control, citizens are adjusting to a new reality, expecting a return to the customs of the previous period of Taliban rule, when men were not permitted to trim their beards and women were required to wear burqas. For decades, carnage and casualty have been a way of life in this nation. When loss is perpetual, can a people arrive at "acceptance"?

The narrative of Job is packaged in a tidy conclusion: All loss restored by God. Job had seven more sons and three daughters. His animals were replaced, times two. "After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations in all. And Job died, old and full of days" (42:16-17).

Considering the whole of Job, how does Kübler-Ross's grief cycle concur with Job's narrative of loss and gain? Were the citizens of Haiti and Afghanistan to contemplate this ancient book—and how nicely it ends—what personal and national applications might they make? Or not?

Job's final words in his discourse with God (42:1-2) reminds me of David's prayer of repentance: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:1-2). See the Spiritual Practice for this week (*Salt & Light*, p. 75).

I don't like the conclusion of Job very much. I don't care for Job's "acceptance" speech. In my experience, many hard things simply do not have nice endings. If I were teaching, I would raise that wonderment.

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<sup>1</sup>. Christina Gregory, "The Five Stages of Grief: An Examination of the Kübler-Ross Model," *Psycom*, May 4, 2021, <https://www.psycom.net/depression.central.grief.html>



**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.”

**We are grateful to Ruben** for walking with us through this challenging study of Joseph, Job, and our neighbors.

**Helen Johns Tellez**, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, will join us for the fall study, *God’s Approachable Community*.

## 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](#). Hendy is associate minister for community engagement for Mosaic Mennonite Conference.

**Additional commentary for this session is available at:**  
<https://www.mennomedia.org/salt-light-supplements/>