

THANKSGIVING IN THE WILDERNESS (1)

FINDING GRATITUDE WHEN LIFE IS HARD



Thanksgiving in the Wilderness

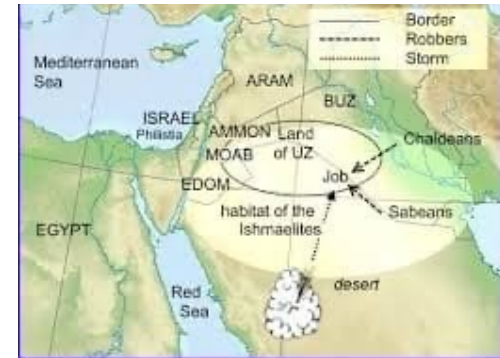
- Finding gratitude when life is hard
 - Focus on 5 biblical figures where individuals express thanks not for the difficulty, but in the midst of it, trusting in God's presence and provision.
 - The case studies of Job, Habakkuk, Jonah, Daniel, Paul.
- Contexts
 - Pain, difficulties, and hardships may affect everyone. We cannot change our circumstances, but we can change our responses and attitudes toward that pain. We can blame God, complain to others, or protest the circumstances, but none of these actions will change anything. However, we can choose to respond by worshiping and thanking God despite our difficulties.
 - This way—finding thankfulness when life is hard—is the biblical method and aligns with what God asks us to do. The Bible contains many examples of people thanking God during horrible times, such as Job, Jonah, Miriam, Peter, Paul, David, Mary, and even Jesus. Finding thankfulness when life is hard will give you the opportunity to become more like Jesus.

Who is Job?



- Is Job a real person?
 - A man from the land of Uz (Edom).
 - He lived in the timeframe of Abraham (around 2000 BC). He lived for 140 years (Job 42:16).
 - His name was mentioned three times in the Bible (outside of Job).
 - Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD (Ezekiel 14:14).
 - As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, even if Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor daughter (Ezekiel 14:20).
 - We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance (James 5:11).
- He is rich and blameless
 - He had 7 sons and 3 daughters, and he owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 donkeys, and had a large number of servants (Job 1:2-3).
 - He feared God and shunned evil (Job 1:1).
 - There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil (Job 1:8).

Job Lost Everything in One Day



- He lost all children, all his livestock, and many servants.
 - One day...a messenger came and said, “The **oxen** were plowing and the **donkeys** were grazing, and the Sabeans attacked and made off with them. They put the **servants** to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you.” While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned up the **sheep** and the **servants**, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!” While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, “The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your **camels** and made off with them. They put the **servants** to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!” While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, “Your **sons** and **daughters** were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them, and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!” (Job 1:13-19).

When Trouble and Suffering Come

- How did Job respond to the tragedy?
 - Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong (Job 1:20-22).
- Three ways to look at our suffering
 - The enemy Satan is attacking me.
 - I am suffering because of my sin.
 - To view suffering in God's larger picture.
- Job thanked and worshipped God
 - Job mourned, but he did not sin or blame God. He thanked God by falling to the ground, worshiping, and declaring, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord".
- How would you view difficulties and pains in your life?
 - You can't choose to avoid it, but you can choose how to face (respond) it. You may cry out in anger, bewilderment or bitterness. Or you worship God.

Acknowledged Loss, not Anger

- Job mourned his tremendous losses.
 - At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head (Job 1:20a).
 - Job acknowledged his immense losses by tearing his robe and shaving his head, showing his grief. This response highlights the importance of humility and trust in God's goodness, regardless of our circumstances.
 - He praised God rather than blame Him. In times of great loss, pain, grief, and suffering, it is easy to get bitter and shake our fists at God because we are human and our knowledge is limited!
- Job decided to worship God amidst his grief!
 - Then he fell to the ground in **worship** (Job 1:20b).
 - His worship was not a denial of his pain but a response to God's character, even in the darkest moments.
 - When suffering strikes, it's possible to respond with reverence and worship by acknowledging God's sovereignty rather than sinning or blaming Him.

The Lord Gave, and The Lord Has Taken Away

- Job acknowledged that it was a privilege to have been blessed with all he had
 - Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21-22).
 - He admitted that he came with nothing into the world and that he would exit the world with nothing! Only God is a Giver, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Restorer.
- Job acknowledged the source of his blessings
 - In his grief, he took time to praise the name of God of his essence and possessions.
 - Job learns God is the source of every blessing to begin with, and what he had was not his own for he was simply a steward of God's blessings.
 - God enables us to either have or dispossess us of things. Hard work and the use of our abilities are necessary to create wealth. But we must remember that those abilities are gifts from God.
- We should always remain humble and grateful
 - He did all this so you would never say to yourself, 'I have achieved all this wealth with my own strength and energy.' Remember the LORD your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful (Deuteronomy 8:17-18).

God Restored Job (Job 42)

Before Suffering

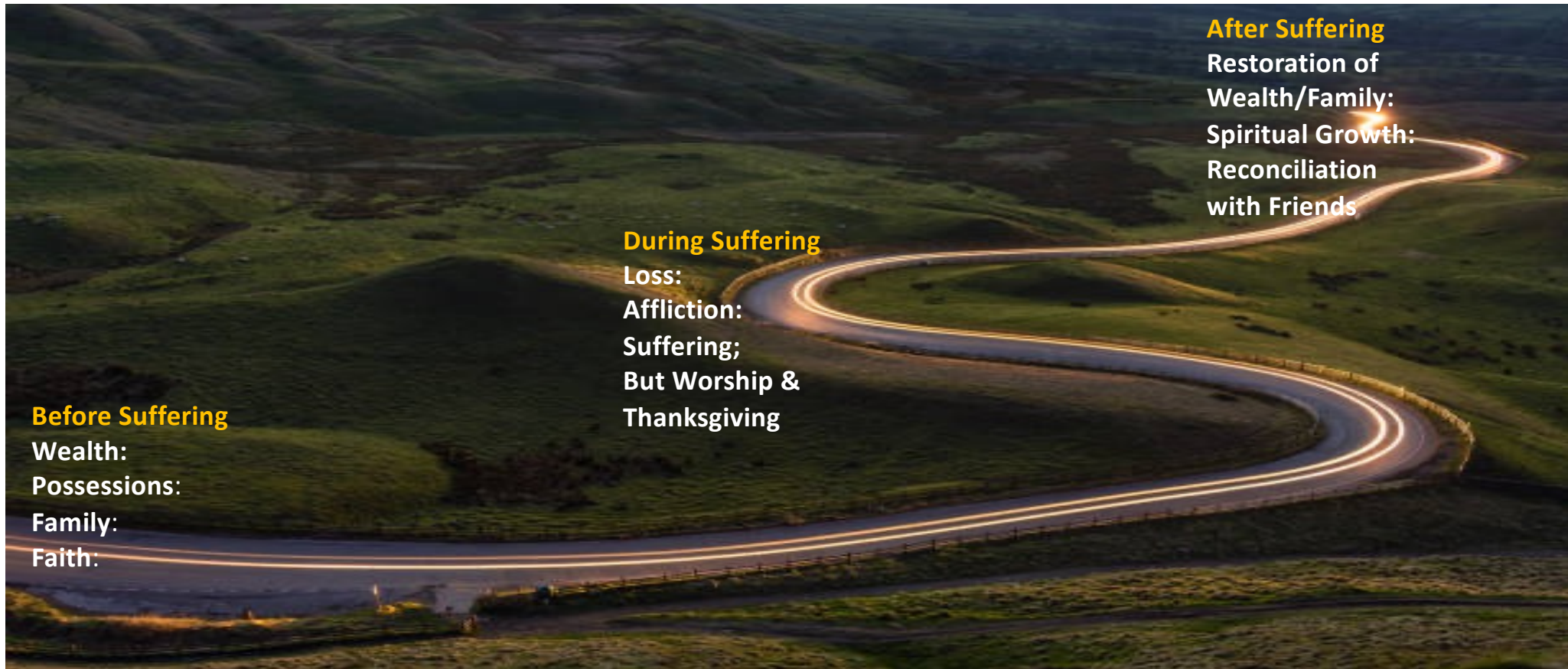
Wealth:
Possessions:
Family:
Faith:

During Suffering

Loss:
Affliction:
Suffering;
But Worship &
Thanksgiving

After Suffering

Restoration of
Wealth/Family:
Spiritual Growth:
Reconciliation
with Friends



What Job Learned

- The brevity of human life and the frailty of earthly possessions
 - Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. (I came and I shall go).
 - Job had nothing when he was born, nothing at all to his name. Even though he lived to accumulate great possessions, it's all gone.
 - All things are loaned to us for a little while, but they are not permanent possessions.
- God is in control, trust Him
 - The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away (Job 1:21).
 - I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you (Job 42:2, NLT).
- God rewards the righteous, obey Him
 - He repays everyone for what they have done; he brings on them what their conduct deserves (Job 34:11)
 - The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part. He had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters (Job 42:12-13).
 - God promises rewards us. Not today, but someday. That's what faith is.
 - Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Worship & Thanksgiving in Times of Suffering

- Acknowledge God's sovereignty:
 - Job's statement, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away," shows a profound belief that God is in control of all things, even life and loss.
- Thanking God in the face of suffering:
 - Despite losing his children, property, and possessions, Job's immediate response is to fall to the ground and worship God. Worship is not only for good times, but in the midst of hardship.
 - Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God (Psalm 42:5).
- Focus on God, not blame:
 - Job does not blame or charge God with wrong. This is a powerful example of trusting God's goodness, even when circumstances are devastating and seemingly inexplicable.
- Recognize your own unworthiness:
 - Job's confession of coming and going naked points to a humility that acknowledges all that he had was a gift from God. It's a reminder that your own blessings are not self-earned but are gifts to be gratefully received.