

Reframe Your Pain: Six Lessons On Loss

How can I see hope and purpose beyond my circumstances? How can I live a functional life with so much dysfunction around me? How can I get through this crisis, since I can't seem to get out of it? How can I use this situation to grow?

Asking "How?" questions can spark the creativity necessary for reframing how we view our painful experiences. The biblical account of Job provides some big pictures to help us reset, rewire, reframe, our thought processes for dealing with stress, suffering, and sorrow. In quick succession, Job lost his children, his wealth, and his health—yet he held onto hope.

His story can help us "gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason." Here are six ways to reframe your pain.

One: Know There's a Battle in the Background (Job 1:6-11)

The same enemy that brought pain to Job long ago and pains us today, began by being a pain in the atmosphere. Revelation 12:7-12 tells how an angel earned the nickname Satan, which means "the accuser." He got his name from what he does non-stop, as Job 1 and Zechariah 3:1-2 reveal. He seeks to hurt God by hurting us, to condemn God by condemning us. His additional goal is to make us desert God and join his losing team. If it seems the world is getting crazier, it's because the intensity of Satan's attacks is directly related to the imminence of his demise.

- Since God won the war in heaven, we have confidence that He will win the battle in the background that's currently spilling into our lives, and
- Since we can't see what's going on behind the scenes, we shouldn't presume to know the cause of an individual's suffering.

Two: God is *Bigger* Than Your Outbursts (Job 3)



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Have you ever heard of someone described as having the patience of Job? The picture of a patient Job is developed when we don't pay attention past

chapter 2. Beginning in chapter 3, and for much of the remainder of the book, we see the impatience of Job. He even recognized his own impatience: "Oh, if only my grief could be weighed, and my misfortune laid on the scales too! But because it is heavier than the sand of the sea, that is why my words have been wild" (Job 6:2-3, NET, emphasis added). Though Job implores God to strike him down, God isn't tempted for a moment to do so (Job 6:8-9).

- God can handle the wildness of our words toward Him, but people can't. Cast your cares on Jesus and avoid emotionally overtaxing others.

Three: Sometimes Friends and Family Make Miserable Comforters (Job 16:1-5)

Even with the best of intentions, your loved ones will let you down. Job and his wife were both hurting, but processed their pain in very different ways. The fruit of Mrs. Job's 10 years of childbearing was destroyed in one windstorm. Then some of the family's wealth went up in smoke, while the rest was plundered by ruthless marauders. Now her husband's physical condition rendered her home remedies useless. In Job 2:9, her solution was for Job to verbally curse God—thinking that would ensure a swift end to his agony. Mrs. Job's intended comfort was offensive to Job. As the adage goes: Hurt people hurt people. Unfortunately, it is those closest to us who can hurt us the worst.

- If you accept that friends and family will fail your expectations, you'll reduce your emotional burdens. Expecting more than others can deliver frustrates everyone.

Four: God Has No Grandchildren—Only Children (Job 19:25-27)

When we aren't able to lean on anyone else for strength or solace, our individual relationship with God becomes imperative. If Job would've relied on his wife's relationship with God to get him through, he would have cursed God to hasten the rest of death. If Job would've relied on his friends' relationship with God, he would've confessed to something he wasn't guilty of in order to be released from punishment. Job had cultivated a connection with God over his lifetime; therefore, he knew he didn't need to settle for their recommendations. Job's certainty was, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and...he will stand upon the earth...after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God...my own eyes will behold, and not another" (Job 19:25-27, NET).

- It's OK to know the God of your grandparents, as long as you get to know Him for yourself.

Five: Restoration Follows Reconciliation (Job 42:7-10)

God doubled Job's prosperity after Job prayed for his friends. God commanded him to intercede for people that had multiplied his misery. They had been

trying to persuade Job that he was getting what he deserved, but now they must rely on his prayers to prevent them from getting what they deserve. When Job prayed for his errant friends, he foreshadowed the work of Jesus. After being afflicted with unearned suffering, he brought sinners into harmony with the heart of God. Instead of getting Job to abandon God, Satan's attacks resulted in Job reflecting His maker's image clearer than ever before.

- God blesses us the most when we are conduits, rather than consumers, of His blessings.

Six: Empower the Vulnerable (Job 42:13-15)

Job felt what it's like to be powerless over your circumstances and even your own body. He had been wounded by self-righteous friends kicking him while he was down. He learned to distrust societal norms to protect his children's well-being, especially his daughters. That's why Job's daughters are named, but not his sons (Job 42:13-14). Usually it was the sons whose names were publicized, while the daughters would be largely anonymous. Instead, Job made sure Jemimah, Cassia, and Keren Happuch, were recognized as individuals with

names and
personality.



Job further liberated his daughters from dependence upon the patriarchal system of his day by giving them an inheritance (Job 42:15). Usually, young ladies would be dependent upon and controlled by their fathers until they're handed off to a husband. When their husbands died, the inheritance would be passed onto the sons. Widows would then be dependent upon their sons. Job's move turned that construct upside-down...or perhaps, right-side-up.

- Don't waste painful experiences. Suffering should deepen our capacity for empathy. Draw from that reservoir to anticipate and meet the needs of others. Doing so will replace sorrow with joy, and loss with fulfillment.