

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.

A New Way To Deal With Pain

Having lived and worked in Dayton, Ohio, a short documentary entitled "The

Epidemic" made there last year caught my eye. According to data compiled by the website Arrestrecords.com, Dayton ranked as the national leader for overdoses and deaths due to opioid use.

"Deaths of despair," is the way one expert described the heart-rending trend that has seen spikes across all racial and socio-economic statuses

"We have to find a better way to deal with pain in this country," actor and host Peter Sarsgaard told us at a National Press Club panel discussion. This health epidemic has a strong link to mental and emotional pain. We need a better way to deal with that, indeed.

I reached out to my esteemed friend, Lloyd Williamson, M.D., with the question. Williamson is a physician who is board certified in child, adolescent and adult psychiatry, and the Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences for Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. Following is her prescription for dealing with the pain in everyday life.

"Pain medications certainly have their place for addressing acute medical problems. Chronic medical problems should be assessed for appropriate pain management treatments. Some individuals experience temporary relief from emotional pain by taking pain medications. However, pain medications are never an appropriate solution for stress, anxiety, depression, and other emotional problems.

For people with depression and anxiety, various everyday stressors make it worse. For many people, these stressors are accumulating because of our overscheduled lives. Without adequate relaxation and rest we can have physical symptoms. Instead of giving appropriate attention when our body signals that we need to slow down, we push through the physical warnings and self-medicate with caffeine, food, alcohol or other medications such as pain medications. The following is a brief list of some things that we can do to manage emotional pain and stress:

1. Develop healthy habits such as adequate rest at night, well-balanced meals, regular physical activity, limiting or eliminating caffeine intake.
2. Limit negative things that affect your environment. Reconsider constantly watching or listening to the news, being around negative people, your excessive workload without adequate breaks, constant time pressures, and physical work demands without rest. Setting limits on the negativity allows you to set your own agenda and focus, instead of letting negative things take over your life.
3. Practice stress management techniques such as deep breathing—that allows the abdominal diaphragm to expand, rather than a just chest expansion. This method of breathing often slows elevated breathing and heart rate when your anxiety is high. Progressive muscle relaxation involves a series of repeated contraction and relaxation of muscle groups in your body. This helps relieve the muscle tension that often develops. Utilize visualization techniques and imagery to maintain a mental picture of a calming scene
4. Practice thankfulness. Often when people are depressed, anxious, and overwhelmed they focus on their problems constantly. However, every situation could always be worse. Thus, there are some things for which they can be thankful. Make a list of those things, and reflect on them throughout the day.
5. Surround yourself with positive influences such as encouraging people, inspiring music, a nature walk.

6. Learn how to manage your thoughts and be intentional about what you choose to think about, instead of passively letting thoughts determine the direction of your mood.
7. Schedule quiet time daily, to calm down from the constant rushing in life.
8. Spend time reading the Bible and spiritually uplifting books. Claim God's promises by placing your name in them as you read them.
9. Pray and ask God to send the Holy Spirit to make you aware of negative thought patterns. Ask God to help you turn those thoughts over to Him, and help you to choose to focus on past answered prayers and blessings. Claim them for yourself again in the future.
10. If anxiety and depression are causing serious interference with your daily life at home or work, seek professional help from a Pastor or a mental health professional."

Promised Pain—And Why We're OK With It

Message Magazine's Online Devotional for Tuesday, January 12, 2016

The Bible is full of promises. To those who love Him, God promises eternal life and peace with the Father. He promises answered prayers to those who pray according to His will and in His name. Jesus promised to prepare a place for His children and one day soon, He will return to receive us unto Himself. All of God's promises are sure. We never need to doubt that God will make good on His word.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, Paul wrote a promise to His son in the gospel. It may not seem like a promise from God, but it most certainly is. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12). The Bible says if we are faithful to God, we shall, not might, but shall suffer persecution. Paul was saying this from his own experience to encourage brother Timothy to remain faithful to God through the scriptures. It seems that Paul was quite comfortable with the fact that faithfulness to God brings persecution from the world. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;" (Philippians 3:8-10). Since Paul loved Christ so much, he was happy to suffer for His sake.

You may be wondering why a promise of persecution for righteousness' sake would make anyone happy. Notice the words of Christ Himself. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12).



Motivational Prowling: The devil roams around like a roaring lion, desperately looking for prey.

You see, all of the persecution that we encounter is nothing compared to the suffering Jesus endured for our sake. He did it all that we might be saved. Why do we have this promise of persecution? "...because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" (1 Peter 5:8). One day soon this journey will be over, and we will meet the King. Be encouraged by these words: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Today's Scripture Promise:

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12).

Today's Marching Orders:

Ask the Lord to help you accept the promise of eternal reward, which will far outweigh the temporal difficulties.