

Chapter 4. Job Suffered And We Do Too

MEMORY VERSE: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him” (James 1:12).



Several years ago there was a popular song which asked, “Why is everybody always pickin’ on me?” It does seem that way sometimes, doesn’t it? The teacher was unfair in grading your test paper, the referees made an error in a judgment call in an important ball game, your parents blamed you when there was mud on the carpet, a couple of kids at school keep harassing you, or a friend let you down by telling something you had confided in him/her.

Everyone has troubles. There probably isn’t a more difficult period of life than the teenage years. Teens are no longer “kids,” but neither are they mature adults. Many do not clearly comprehend the dangers of fast driving, drinking, smoking, peer-pressure, lying about where they are going, “petting” or so many other situations that are so prevalent in our world today. Many teenage problems seem trivial to adults, but to youth they are often viewed as one catastrophic situation after another. On the flip side, it is important for teens to understand that some of the things they deem as being so important now will be of little significance to them in a few short months or years. Understanding this will help **you** deal with the trials that come your way.

Some troubles are more serious than others. Skipping a class at school will result in greater punishment than being late for a class; a serious illness in the family is more heart wrenching than being “grounded” for staying out too late on a date; being hurt in a car wreck is far worse than losing a ball game; deliberately lying to a friend is far worse than just forgetting to return a phone call; the death of a friend or loved one is much more heartbreaking than losing your current heartthrob!

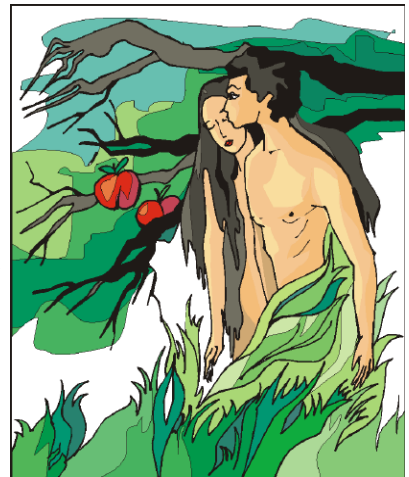
WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR ACTIONS

It is important for youth to develop a sense of responsibility for their own actions and understand the consequences that can follow. Far too many people refuse to accept responsibility for what they do. Even those caught in the midst of some immoral act or crime often try to place the blame on someone else. Some attempt to justify their evil deeds by relating what others have done, or citing their childhood environment. In the garden of Eden Eve blamed the serpent for her sin. Adam placed the blame for his sin on Eve! Later, Aaron blamed the people for “making him” mold a golden idol (Exodus 32:22). Israel’s first king, Saul, blamed the people for his decision not to obey God (1 Samuel 15:15).

The troubles and trials in life often result in suffering. When those times come, the only one responsible for my reaction to that suffering is me. The only person who determines how you react to the trials you face is you. Others may have a positive or negative influence on us, but each of us individually makes the choice as to how we will respond to any situation in life. Each individual will one day give account to God for his or her own actions in this life (Romans 14:12).

WHY DO WE HAVE TRIALS?

Why do we have trials and troubles? We will discuss this topic in much greater detail in Chapter 13, but think back to the time when Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden (Genesis 1-3). Everything God made was good, and He put Adam in charge of all He had made. The landscape was beautiful. Food was abundant. God told Adam and Eve they could eat anything in the garden except the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The penalty for eating the forbidden fruit, God said, was death. You know what happened. They both disobeyed God. Sin had entered the world and with it came death just as God had warned.



Not only did Adam and Eve’s sin bring death into the world, but they were cast out of the garden of Eden. Thereafter, they were required to toil and sweat in tilling the ground to grow their own food, they had to fight thorns and weeds, and women would suffer pain in childbirth. In the beginning God set in motion what we call “nature.” Life in the garden of

Eden had been idyllic, and it is evident that before sin entered the world, all the forces of nature were beneficial for man. After Adam and Eve sinned, “nature” became both a help and a plague to mankind. Since that time nature continues to provide seasons for man to grow his own food, but at times it also brings destruction through such things as tornados, floods, earthquakes, fires, and other such events. God does not cause these natural disasters, they occur because of the laws of nature.

Trials and suffering also come from our sins or the sins of others. Some are due to lack of knowledge, carelessness, or accidents. The Bible tells us that Satan is daily striving to lure any who will listen to commit sin. He has plenty of help from those who refuse to obey God. Satan often does his great harm while appearing as an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). When our son died from acute leukemia many “well-intentioned” people told my wife and me that it was God’s plan! In trying to console us, they were blaming God! Neither my wife nor I accepted their comments, nor did we blame God! Our son died as a result of acquiring a type of leukemia for which there was no cure.

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING?

Sometimes people ask, “Why does a loving God allow suffering?” God does love us - even the wicked people - but He gives us free choice to make our own decisions. If He protected us from all harm, we would simply be like robots that He could manipulate, but who would be unable to love and serve Him. God gives us the freedom to choose what we will or will not do - even when our actions bring about harm to ourselves or others.

There is much in life we do not understand. In our study of the book of Job, we find God reminding Job that he (Job) has little knowledge as to what God is able to do. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?” God asked (Job 38:4). Isaiah wrote, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8). We must be careful that we don’t blame God for our troubles when we, like Job, cannot even begin to comprehend the mind of our Creator.

GOD’S PEOPLE SUFFERED TRIALS

Job was a man who suffered many tragedies. Moses chose to suffer with his own people rather than live as a prince in Pharaoh’s house. David had two sons who rebelled and tried to take away his kingdom. The prophet Elijah became a hunted man, and hid for three

years while Ahab sought his life. Daniel was cast into a den of hungry lions. All the apostles of Jesus suffered persecution, and scholars believe that only John died a natural death. Paul suffered shipwrecks, beatings, imprisonment and eventually death for his faith. Jesus, Himself, suffered beyond our ability to comprehend as He took our sins to the cross.

TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS WILL COME

Some suffering in life is inevitable. Both good and evil people prosper and suffer trials. Christians especially, will be persecuted because of our faith in God. Since Jesus suffered so greatly for us, we should be prepared to suffer for Him (1 Peter 4:1). Jesus was hated by His own people. He told His apostles not to be surprised that the world hated them as well (John 15:18, 19). We can learn much from reading how those in the Bible either grew in faith (Moses and Peter), or faltered in faith due to the trials they faced (King Saul and Judas).

Regardless of who we are, troubles will come to us all. When they do, we need to ask God for the strength to overcome them. When we suffer because of our faith, we should humbly thank God that we are worthy to suffer for His name (1 Peter 4:13, 14). As Christians we are joint-heirs with Him and will someday share the glory that He has prepared for us (Romans 8:17, 18). Every day we should humbly thank God for His blessings, and rejoice that we have the comfort and peace that comes from being His follower. We have God's assurance that regardless of what happens, heaven will be worth any troubles or trials that must be endured in this short sojourn on earth. God does care for each one of us, and He tells us to cast all our cares on Him (1 Peter 5:7).

REVIEW

HOW SHOULD YOU REACT? Underline the correct answer(s).

1. You are benched for missing practice when a friend was hurt in an accident. You should:
 - a. Pout when the coach talks to you.
 - b. Explain the reason for missing practice.
 - c. Quit the team.
 - d. Accept the punishment without comment.
2. You are teased because you attended Bible study instead of going to a party. You should:
 - a. Get angry and tell them to stop it!
 - b. Tell them you forgot the party.
 - c. Tell them they need to obey Jesus.
 - d. Invite them to go to worship with you.
3. A massive earthquake hits a large city and many are killed or missing. You should:
 - a. Pray for those who are suffering.
 - b. Tell your friends that this was God's plan.
 - c. Do nothing. It's not your concern.
 - d. Ask officials what you can do to help.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH

1. “Now no _____ for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable _____ of righteousness unto them which are exercised [trained or strengthened] thereby” (Hebrews 12:11).
2. “[F]or he [God] maketh his sun to rise on the _____ and on the _____, and sendeth _____ on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45).
3. “Then Job answered the Lord and said, Behold I am _____; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine _____ upon my mouth” (Job 40:3, 4).
4. “Yet if any man _____ as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him _____ God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:16).

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why didn't Job know what God was (is) able to do?
2. Why doesn't God keep His people from suffering?
3. When did pain and suffering come into the world?
4. Who are some of God's people that the Bible records as suffering trials and troubles?

NOTES