

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors....  
Matthew 6:12

### THE JOB LESSON

Admittedly, the book of Job is tough psychological terrain, especially for the emotionally raw Targeted Individual. Nevertheless, there is a lesson to be learned in this biblical book that is particularly relevant to the Target experience. It's the lesson of having to forgive the unforgivable. Let's begin with an overview of the text. Anyone who has read Job knows the following:

- that Job was a righteous man, perfect in all his ways
- that everything Job loved or tried to create in life was suddenly, brutally & utterly destroyed for no apparent reason
- that in spite of the devastation Job suffered he 'sinned not nor charged God foolishly'
- that subsequently Job was afflicted with a relentless disease of the flesh in which he experienced hospice-quality decomposition & excruciating pain
- that 3 friends traveled a great distance to visit Job in his distress & were so overwhelmed by shock & pity that for the first week of their visit they sat in mournful silence

12 And when they lifted up their eyes afar off,  
and knew him not,  
they lifted up their voice, and wept;  
and they rent every one his mantle,  
and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.  
13 So they sat down with him upon the ground  
seven days and seven nights,  
and none spake a word unto him:  
for they saw that his grief was very great.  
Job 2:12-13

At the week's end, however, an unspeakably cruel banter ensues during which the three men unite in a callous & unfairly presumptive judgment against Job, serving only to compound his plight with injustice & merciless pain. Unfortunately, the inclination of his friends to 'blame the victim' is a common human reaction that can occur when one is confronted with an inexplicable vision of threat. Job's friends had to emotionally distance themselves from the Jobian fate in order to assuage the primal fear that they themselves could one day become the recipients of his inexplicable circumstance.

To accomplish the disassociation, they collectively embraced the assumption that Job must have committed certain evil atrocities for which God was justified in punishing him. Job is but a small voice in the boisterous group-think wind trying to defend his own honor. The first to launch the attack was Eliphaz:

The Accusations of Eliphaz:

2 If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved?  
but who can withhold himself from speaking?

3 Behold, thou hast instructed many,  
and thou hast strengthened the weak hands.

4 Thy words have upholden him that was falling,  
and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.

5 But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest;  
it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.

6 Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope,  
and the uprightness of thy ways?

7 Remember, I pray thee,  
who ever perished, being innocent?  
or where were the righteous cut off?

8 Even as I have seen,  
they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness,  
reap the same.

9 By the blast of God they perish,  
and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.

Job 4:1-8

13 He taketh the wise in their own craftiness:  
and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.

14 They meet with darkness in the day time,  
and grope in the noonday as in the night.

Job 5:13-14

17 Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth:  
therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:

18 For he maketh sore, and bindeth up:  
he woundeth, and his hands make whole.

Job 5:17-18

Job's response reveals that he clearly understood the fact that Eliphaz was speaking out of fear but he pleaded with him, nonetheless, to not abandon his humanity:

14 To him that is afflicted

pity should be shewed from his friend;  
but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.  
Job 6:14

21 For now ye are nothing;  
ye see my casting down, and are afraid.  
22 Did I say, Bring unto me?  
or, Give a reward for me of your substance?  
23 Or, Deliver me from the enemy's hand?  
or, Redeem me from the hand of the mighty?  
(In other words,  
'Did I ask you to sacrifice anything of yourselves  
on my behalf?')  
Job 6:21-23

O remember that my life is wind:  
mine eye shall no more see good.  
Job 7:7

14 ...thou scarest me with dreams,  
and terrifiest me through visions:  
15 So that my soul chooseth strangling,  
and death rather than my life.  
Job 7:14-15

Unfortunately, when life gets complex human beings typically take the low road. Bildad disregarded Job's plea for compassion & furthered the charge:

6 If thou wert pure and upright;  
surely now he would awake for thee,  
and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.  
13 So are the paths of all that forget God;  
and the hypocrite's hope shall perish....  
20 Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man,  
neither will he help the evil doers....  
Job 8:6,13,20

In response to Bildad the exasperated & defenseless Job cried to God:

17 Thou renewest thy witnesses against me,  
and increasest thine indignation upon me;  
changes and war are against me.  
Job 10:17

Next, Zophar joined the accusatory chorus:

2 Should not the multitude of words be answered?  
and should a man full of talk be justified?

3 Should thy lies make men hold their peace?  
and when thou mockest,  
shall no man make thee ashamed?

6 And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom,  
that they are double to that which is!

Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less  
than thine iniquity deserveth.

Job 11:2-3,6

Job's reply to Zophar:

4 I am as one mocked of his neighbour,  
who calleth upon God, and he answereth him:  
the just upright man is laughed to scorn.

5 He that is ready to slip with his feet  
is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.

Job 12:4-5

2 What ye know, the same do I know also:

I am not inferior unto you.

4 But ye are forgers of lies,  
ye are all physicians of no value.

5 O that ye would altogether hold your peace!  
and it should be your wisdom.

Job 13:2,4-5

Eliphaz rejected the earlier request from Job for sympathy  
& pursued the wolf pack diatribe:

2 Should a wise man utter vain knowledge,  
and fill his belly with the east wind?

3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk?  
or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?

4 Yea, thou castest off fear,  
and restrainest prayer before God.

5 For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity,  
and thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty.

6 Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I:  
yea, thine own lips testify against thee.

20 The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days,

and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor.  
Job 15:2-6,20

Job's response to Eliphaz:

2 I have heard many such things:  
miserable comforters are ye all.  
3 Shall vain words have an end?  
or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?  
4 I also could speak as ye do:  
if your soul were in my soul's stead,  
I could heap up words against you,  
and shake mine head at you.  
5 But I would strengthen you with my mouth,  
and the moving of my lips should asswage your grief.  
9 He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me:  
he gnasheth upon me with his teeth;  
mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me.  
10 They have gaped upon me with their mouth;  
they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully;  
they have gathered themselves together against me.  
11 God hath delivered me to the ungodly,  
and turned me over into the hands of the wicked.  
16 My face is foul with weeping,  
and on my eyelids is the shadow of death;  
17 Not for any injustice in mine hands:  
also my prayer is pure.  
20 My friends scorn me:  
but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.  
Job 16:2-5,9-11,16-17,20

Job's response:

2 Are there not mockers with me?  
and doth not mine eye continue in their provocation?  
10 .... for I cannot find one wise man among you.  
Job 17:2,10

No amount of pleading or reasoning from Job was able to mitigate the unsolicited abuse & slander that came against him. Here are the highlights of the rest of the dialog:

Bildad:

2 How long will it be ere ye make an end of words?

mark, and afterwards we will speak.

3 Wherefore are we counted as beasts,  
and reputed vile in your sight?

4 He teareth himself in his anger:  
shall the earth be forsaken for thee?  
and shall the rock be removed out of his place?

5 Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out,  
and the spark of his fire shall not shine.

6 The light shall be dark in his tabernacle,  
and his candle shall be put out with him.

7 The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down.

8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet,  
and he walketh upon a snare.

9 The gin shall take him by the heel,  
and the robber shall prevail against him.

10 The snare is laid for him in the ground,  
and a trap for him in the way.

11 Terrors shall make him afraid on every side,  
and shall drive him to his feet.

12 His strength shall be hungerbitten,  
and destruction shall be ready at his side.

13 It shall devour the strength of his skin:  
even the firstborn of death shall devour his strength.

14 His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle,  
and it shall bring him to the king of terrors.

15 It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because it is none of his:  
brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation.

16 His roots shall be dried up beneath,  
and above shall his branch be cut off.

17 His remembrance shall perish from the earth,  
and he shall have no name in the street.

18 He shall be driven from light into darkness,  
and chased out of the world.

19 He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people,  
nor any remaining in his dwellings.

20 They that come after him shall be astonished at his day,  
as they that went before were affrighted.

21 Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked,  
and this is the place of him that knoweth not God.

Job 18:2-21

Job's reply to Bildad:

2 How long will ye vex my soul,

and break me in pieces with words?  
3 These ten times have ye reproached me:  
ye are not ashamed that ye make yourselves strange to me.  
7 Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard:  
I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.  
21 Have pity upon me, have pity upon me,  
O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.  
22 Why do ye persecute me as God,  
and are not satisfied with my flesh?  
Job 19:2 -3,7,21-22

Zophar:

4 Knowest thou not this of old,  
since man was placed upon earth,  
5 That the triumphing of the wicked is short,  
and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment?  
6 Though his excellency mount up to the heavens,  
and his head reach unto the clouds;  
7 Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung:  
they which have seen him shall say, Where is he?  
8 He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found:  
yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.  
9 The eye also which saw him shall see him no more;  
neither shall his place any more behold him.  
18 That which he laboured for shall he restore,  
and shall not swallow it down:  
according to his substance shall the restitution be,  
and he shall not rejoice therein.  
19 Because he hath oppressed and hath forsaken the poor;  
because he hath violently taken away an house  
which he builded not;  
20 Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly,  
he shall not save of that which he desired.  
27 The heaven shall reveal his iniquity;  
and the earth shall rise up against him.  
28 The increase of his house shall depart,  
and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath.  
29 This is the portion of a wicked man from God,  
and the heritage appointed unto him by God.  
Job 20:4-9,18-20,28-29

Job's reply to Zophar:

27 Behold, I know your thoughts,  
and the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me.  
Job 21:27

Eliphaz:

5 Is not thy wickedness great?  
and thine iniquities infinite?  
6 For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought,  
and stripped the naked of their clothing.  
7 Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink,  
and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.  
8 But as for the mighty man, he had the earth;  
and the honourable man dwelt in it.  
9 Thou hast sent widows away empty,  
and the arms of the fatherless have been broken.  
10 Therefore snares are round about thee,  
and sudden fear troubleth thee;  
Job 22:5-10

Job's reply to Eliphaz:

3 Oh that I knew where I might find him (God)!  
that I might come even to his seat!  
4 I would order my cause before him,  
and fill my mouth with arguments.  
10 But he knoweth the way that I take:  
when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.  
Job 23: 3-4,10

Job's reply to Bildad:

2 How hast thou helped him that is without power?  
how savest thou the arm that hath no strength?  
3 How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom?  
and how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?  
Job 26:12

And so a lot of tough stuff was unfairly launched against a pitifully vulnerable man. Any hope of ameliorated pain coming through the support of friends & family was wholly denied the suffering Job. For him it was pain on top of pain. This is very much the case for many Target Individuals, is it not? For those of you who are intimate with this type of experience, you really want to familiarize yourselves with the lesson Job had to learn in order to reverse his circumstance.



After much pleading, God eventually responded to Job's prayers & visited him. During the course of the encounter, God obligated Job to intercede in prayer on behalf of his friends in order to save their lives. Evidently, Job did this willingly & without complaint. Please ask yourselves why God issued this command? Certainly He didn't require Job's prayers to save the lives of his friends. That was God's own decision to make. I propose that the benefit was meant more as a psychological necessity for Job than a necessity for the salvation of his friends.

This is my take on the moral: What happened to Job is what happens to just about all of us during the initial shock of traumatic stress. We tend to forget about the outward focus. Some of us never quite restore in this area while the fortunate ones eventually remember that there remains a world of need beyond their own experiences. This restored perspective is in itself valuable both in terms of its ability to heal & to move an individual along in the maturation process.

Certainly Job's ability to love those who were incapable of matching his concern for them serves as one of the bible's earliest Christ prototypes-an example of love without recompense. Fortunately, he had the strength of character to not be limited by the impossible-to-fulfill need for self-justification & reprisal against injustice. Job's was an enormously difficult test of internal mettle which for having mastered he reaped great reward.

Intercessory prayer also happens to be a great place for anyone to begin discipleship. Hopefully, each of you will consider dedicating several hours daily to this private devotion. Lives will transform for the better, your own included.