

YOU

Sermon Series: When Emotions Rise
To be used with: Session 1: Walking in Grief
Sermon Title Possibilities: Grief Happens
Scripture: Job 42:1-6

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *“When Emotions Rise,”* these sermon outlines will follow the same theme as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

The Point: God responds to our sorrow with grace and compassion.

Introduction: When I was a young teenager, we had a godly woman in our church named Mrs. Smith. She was a very wise woman. She had once been married to a pastor, but they were separated by the time she joined our church. I don’t remember all the details, but as I recall, her husband was in a bad accident in which he suffered some brain damage. He was no longer in his right mind, and as a result, he abandoned her. As far as I could tell, she had no ill-will toward him, but she sometimes told that story to remind us teenagers that life isn’t always fair.

If any man in history knew life was not fair, that man was Job. The book that bears his name deals with an age-old question: why do bad things happen to good people? Scholars and theologians and philosophers have debated this question for millennia, and yet none of them have ever really found an answer. If you’ll read the book of Job, you’ll see that God never really explained why He allowed all these things to happen. As Rick Warren says, “God does not always give us the answers, and even if He did, it probably wouldn’t make us feel any better.” We don’t know why God allows us to suffer, but we do know that suffering does bring spiritual growth. What did Job learn from his suffering?

1. A new appreciation of God’s power.

- A. After a long while, God finally spoke to Job.
 - a. Most of the book is a series of exchanges between Job and his friends.
 - His friends came to comfort him, but they were not much help.
 - They insisted Job must have done something wrong, and they tried to get him to confess to it.
 - b. What did God say to Job?
 - He did not explain why He had allowed all this misfortune.
 - He showed Job who He really is.
 - a. God referred to “the leviathan.” Some scholars believe this was just a symbol, but God’s question doesn’t make much sense if no such creature existed. Others believe it was a whale or a crocodile. Personally, I believe it was a gigantic sea creature that is now extinct. Either way, it was no match for God.
- B. Why did God say these things to him?

- a. He wanted to remind Job that He is a very big God.
 - We still live in a fallen world, and things often happen to us that we do not understand.
 - God's revelation to Job did not make the suffering go away, but it did reassure Job that God was still in control.
- b. When you understand who God is, it does not make the pain go away, but it does make the pain more bearable.
 - He is with us each step of the way.
 - He strengthens us when we are weak.
 - a. One of the most powerful books I have read in recent years is *Though I Walk Through the Valley*, by Vance Havner, where he told of his wife's illness and death. This really put his faith to the test. In the end, he still didn't understand why it happened, but it brought him to a deeper level of trust in God.

2. A new acceptance of God's purposes.

- A. Job never cursed God, but he did ask a lot of questions.
 - a. Is it wrong to question God?
 - One could make the case that it is wrong, but even God's prophets sometimes doubted Him (Jeremiah 20:7-10).
 - God understands our frailty (Psalm 103:14).
 - b. When you doubt God, you might as well be honest with Him.
 - He knows your thoughts.
 - He's big enough to handle your doubts.
- B. Through his suffering, Job gained a renewed trust in God (v. 4).
 - a. He trusted God even when he didn't understand.
 - One of the all-time great war movies is "The Longest Day." It's about the D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944. Robert Mitchum played one of the generals, and Eddie Albert played a colonel in his command. Mitchum's character was worried that General Eisenhower might call off the invasion because of bad weather (he had already postponed it once). Eddie Albert told him, "We're all just as dedicated and eager to get going as you are, and that includes Ike. If he calls it off, he knows what he's doing!" Wouldn't it be great if we had that kind of confidence in God? He's more dedicated to your well-being than anyone, and when He allows things to happen, He knows what He's doing.
 - b. It's not always easy to trust God but trust Him anyway!

3. A new awareness of God's presence.

- A. In the midst of his suffering, God gave Job a fresh glimpse of His glory.
 - a. He did not explain why He allowed bad things to happen to Job.
 - God is too big for us to understand, and so are many of His plans.
 - Because He is such a big God, we can rest assured that He is still in control.
 - b. God gives us something better than explanations.
 - He gives us "the peace that passes understanding" (Phil. 4:7).
 - He gives us a new consciousness that He is with us.
 - a. Many great men of God have been shaped not by their spiritual victories, but by their brokenness. Charles H. Spurgeon suffered from

depression. George W. Truett was devastated when he killed a man in a hunting accident. Dwight L. Moody was heartbroken when his son abandoned the Christian faith. Adrian Rogers lost an infant son. Horatio Spafford wrote *"It is Well with My Soul"* after his four daughters died. During times of tragedy, we learn that God's grace is indeed sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9).

- B. He enables us to see things from an eternal perspective.
 - a. God restored everything He had taken from Job.
 - He gave Job ten children.
 - He gave him twice as much livestock as he had before.
 - b. Will God do the same for us?
 - He does not always restore our earthly possessions, but this world is not our permanent home.
 - When we get to heaven, all of our earthly possessions and treasure will seem as nothing.

Conclusion: One of my favorite gospel groups is The Inspirations from Bryson City, NC. They recorded a song some years ago called "God is Still Good". I listen to it from time to time because it reminds me that God's goodness does not depend on my feelings or my personal circumstances. The song goes like this:

As I look back on all of my days, so many times and so many ways,
I have been blessed, and all I can say is God is still good;
Sometimes the night brings sorrow and pain, sometimes the tears fall like the rain,
But through it all, He's never changed, God is still good.

There have been times when I've let Him down,
Made my mistakes, but still I have found
I may stumble and fall, but through it all God is still good;
Mercy still flows from the palm of His hand,
He will give grace and help me to stand,
And although He knows how unworthy I am, God is still good.

God is still good when the waves roll high, God is still good all through the night,
When I've done all I can, and I don't understand, God is still good;
Clouds of doubt may darken the way, but showers of blessing will come any day,
He'll bring me through, and I'll stand and say, God is still good! ¹

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¹ "God is Still Good," by Tracy Jones, Ricky Atkinson Publishing, BMI.