

**Sermon Series:** Distinct: Living Above the Norm  
**To be used with:** Session Five: Distinct in My Reactions  
**Sermon Title Possibilities:** A Life Well-Lived  
**Scripture:** Job 1,2,4,40,42

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the small group study of *Distinct: Living Above the Norm* these sermon outlines will use similar Scripture passages to reinforce the same themes as the study regarding our reactions to .

**Introduction:** In 1982, the movie “First Blood” came to theaters. It was about a Vietnam War veteran named Rambo, played by Sylvester Stallone, who had become a drifter. He had come to a small town in the Northwest looking for an old army buddy. No one welcomed him. The town sheriff immediately treated him with suspicion and disdain and tried to kick him out of town. Because Rambo refused to go, he was arrested, beaten and humiliated. From that point on, Rambo took on his former persona and used his many and varied skills gained in the military to evade capture and eventually defeat the sheriff. When Rambo is contacted by his former CO to find out why he had started this one man war, he says, “All I wanted was something to eat. But the man kept pushing Sir. ... They drew first blood, not me.”

Some of you, probably all of you, know a little bit of what Rambo felt. Everybody keeps pushing. It's so easy to push back when you get pushed. It's just the natural inclination. The Bible tells the story of Job. He was living a comfortable godly life, but individuals began pushing him. Let's take a look at how he responded when he was pushed.

### **1. As a father, Job protected the souls of his children. (Job 1:4-5)**

Children make demands on their parents. It's just the nature of how things work. Job's family was no different from yours except that he had *ten* children – 7 boys and 3 girls! That's a huge amount of faces to be cleaned, diapers (or whatever they had back then) to be changed, tears to be wiped away, meals to be cooked and training to be accomplished. Job and his wife had done a pretty good job of raising this baseball team plus one. Their children were adults now, and they, with their parents' help, had made it through the stage when the children couldn't stand to be around each other. They enjoyed being in each other's company so much that they would invite one another to each other's homes. They were successful, generous and loved life. Some parents send their adult children out the door with a few tears and a whole lot of relief. They think that the demands that raising children have put on them are now over and that it's time to think about themselves...have some fun. Job was not that kind of parent. He graciously gave them their space, but he also recognized that he still had a role in their lives. It was a spiritual role. He knew that his children were not perfect. They were still susceptible to temptation and sin. So he served as what you might call their priest...the one who stood between them and God. He offered sacrifices to God on their behalf just in case they had committed any sin in the midst of all their celebrations. Job spoke to God on behalf of his kids...he prayed for them.

Job worked hard at protecting the souls of his children because he knew that there was nothing that he could do to protect their bodies forever. They were eventually going to die. He just didn't expect it to be during his lifetime. Apparently, Job was successful in this spiritual work for his children. At the end of the book when Job's intense suffering was over, he was rewarded for his faithfulness with a double portion of everything that he had lost. His original number of oxen was doubled. His camels were doubled. His sheep and donkeys were doubled too. But the number of his kids was not. He gained the same number that he originally had – ten – not twenty. Why? As Job's children watched the way in which he met the demands that their presence placed on him, and as they realized that the grace he showed flowed out of his relationship with God, they decided to establish a similar relationship with the God that their father worshipped. They died, but they weren't lost. Job would see them again.

## **2. As a husband, Job comforted the heart of his wife.** (Job 1:20-21; 2:9-10; 42:12-15)

Job was not the only one that was hurting when he lost his possessions, his kids, his health and his reputation. Job was one half of a whole relationship that was formed when he got married. Whatever affected him affected his other half just as severely. She probably could have dealt with the loss of the possessions and the loss of the reputation that they enjoyed. Although it would have hurt her to see her husband going through suffering, she probably could have handled that too. His suffering would have just made her feel more needed and given an opportunity for her mothering instincts to kick into full gear once again since her children were grown and gone. She might even have gotten some fulfillment out of it – being needed again. But it was those mothering instincts that broke her heart when she got the news that all of the sons and daughters that she had birthed and celebrated, she would now have to bury. Based on the accumulation of all that news, she made a demand on her husband: "Curse God, and die!" It is likely that she did not intend on her husband actually doing what she was asking. The last thing that she needed after having lost her ten kids was to lose her husband too. She was hurting, and hurting people say things that are motivated by their pain instead of their beliefs. Most of the time when this scene is played out in people's minds, they probably picture a defiant woman who refuses to accept the actions of God in her life. But what if she was sobbing these words as she slid down to the ground in sorrow and was wrapped in the arms of her husband? And if that's the case, she was demanding something of her husband that was harder than her words conveyed. She was demanding answers. She wanted someone to make sense of life for her. She was demanding comfort. She wanted someone to heal her heart.

In response to her demand, Job did not push her away but chose instead to give her two words of counsel that could help her to stand on a firm foundation. First, he made it clear that though he too was extremely sorrowful, he personally accepted the actions of God in his family's life. He reminded himself and his wife of all that God had given. God gave the resources. God gave the children. They were only on loan from God to begin with. These things that they claimed as their own were never theirs to begin with (Job. 1:21-22). The fact that God had given these things for however long they had them gave evidence that God was good and worthy of praise. Second, the things that God had given, He had every right to take away. He was in control. He

knew what He was doing. God had given them for a time, and now he had taken them away. But one thing that would never go away was God Himself. People and stuff are never stable enough to depend on, but God remains the same and is therefore always worthy of praise (Job. 2:9-10).

The words of Job and the time that the events of chapters 3-41 cover must have accomplished their desired goal. Job and his wife had reconciled by the time of the events of chapter 42. This is evident from the fact that Job and his wife came together once again to conceive and birth ten more children (Job 42:13). Job could have pushed his wife away because of the demands that she made on him. Most people would have taken great offense at what she asked. But Job was gracious enough to provide for her exactly what she needed in order to overcome her pain and receive the comfort that she needed.

### **3. As a friend, Job received the offerings of his counselors. (Job 4:1-6)**

#### **a. He received their offering of silence (Job 2:11-13)**

The news of Job's situation and suffering quickly spread. Who doesn't want to hear about a rich man who's hit hard times? It makes everyone else feel a little better. Job had some friends who heard the local gossip and couldn't believe that something like this could happen to a guy as smart and blessed as Job. So they had to see for themselves. And when they got there, they realized that the news they heard didn't do justice to the reality of Job's situation. They had come prepared with words of encouragement, but now all that they could do is sit there in stunned silence. After all, if something like this could happen to a guy like Job, then it could happen to them too. Job didn't want them to see him like this. He was hurting so much that he just wanted to be alone in his grief. He needed some solitude to get his thoughts right and to fix things with his wife. He could've pushed them away. But he graciously welcomed their presence and their silence into his life.

#### **b. He received their offering of words (Job 4-31)**

Silence soon gave way to an abundance of words. The main section of the book that records Job's story is the retelling of the accusations of Job's friends and his answer to those accusations. They basically said that the cause of Job's sufferings was some sin that Job had been hiding from everyone. Now as you read through the words of Job in response to the accusations of his friends, it may not seem that Job was being too gracious toward them. He had some pretty harsh words toward them at times. Who wouldn't respond that way to someone who was saying that it was your fault that you had just lost your ten kids? But one thing is easily forgotten. Job was gracious enough to not chase them away and to listen to them. He could have thrown them out of his house! Most people would have. They demanded to be heard, and Job listened.

#### **c. He received their offering of humility (Job 42:7-9)**

Eventually God began to speak, and His voice was louder than any of the human voices. And when God was done, everyone else had been put in their places. God

vindicated Job and rebuked his friends for their accusations. At that point, they must have felt like running home with their tails tucked between their legs. But God required of them that they ask forgiveness of God in the presence of Job. They had been wrong, and they felt sure that their friendship with Job must surely be over. How could Job ever forgive them? But God called Job to forgive them, and he did. He recognized that he too had been wrong about a lot of his understanding of what God was all about. If he was going to admit his own weaknesses and give himself permission to need to grow, then he had to give them permission to be wrong and to grow as well.

#### **4. As a human, Job submitted to the wisdom of his God. (Job 40:4-5; 42:1-6)**

Job clearly didn't like the events that were going on in his life. Who would? And for that reason, Job made some of his own demands on God. He, like his wife, wanted to know why. Why was all this happening to his family? What had he done to deserve this kind of suffering? He was quick to respond in faith at the beginning of his troubles, but eventually the physical and emotional pain wore him down such that he basically demanded of God that God go back in time and erase Job's birth from the history books. God is not in the habit of responding to the demands of humans.

In response to Job's demand for answers, God demanded some answers of His own. Beginning with chapter 38, God begins a long series of questions. He asks Job, "Who are you to question me?", "Where were you when I created the universe and its inhabitants?" and "Can you do what I can do?" At the conclusion of one of these sets of questions, God asks, "Who are you to find fault with me?" And then God demands for Job to give Him an answer. Job responds the only legitimate way that he could...by admitting his own foolishness in accusing God of wrongdoing and by submitting to the wisdom and control of God in his life. Once Job was willing to submit to the wisdom of God in his life, only then did the circumstances of his life begin to change. God was gracious to him in forgiving him and in restoring him.

**Conclusion:** "First Blood" is the kind of movie that makes you want to stand up and cheer. Don't get me wrong. The movie itself has some problems with it, but the story that it tells hits a chord with every person that has ever been pushed around. With every person that Rambo pummels, we see ourselves getting back at the people who have so unfairly placed demands on us. With every hand grenade that is tossed, we feel that the scales of justice have finally been equaled out...at least for two hours. It's normal to push back when we are pushed. But Jesus calls us to something higher, and Jesus gives us an example of something more majestic. He who could have pushed the hardest when pushed chose to exercise grace and forgiveness. He calls us to nothing less.

*Chris Talton is a graduate of Liberty University and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served in three churches for a total of 13 years. Currently he teaches Bible at Colonial Hills Christian School just outside Atlanta, Ga. He and his wife of 26 years, Tammy, have two grown children and one grandson.*