



Eternal PERSPECTIVE

Job

BIBLE TEXT | JOB 33:1-33

1 "But now, hear my speech, O Job, and listen to all my words. **2** Behold, I open my mouth; the tongue in my mouth speaks. **3** My words declare the uprightness of my heart, and what my lips know they speak sincerely. **4** The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. **5** Answer me, if you can; set your words in order before me; take your stand. **6** Behold, I am toward God as you are; I too was pinched off from a piece of clay. **7** Behold, no fear of me need terrify you; my pressure will not be heavy upon you. **8** "Surely you have spoken in my ears, and I have heard the sound of your words. **9** You say, 'I am pure, without transgression; I am clean, and there is no iniquity in me. **10** Behold, he finds occasions against me, he counts me as his enemy, **11** he puts my feet in the stocks and watches all my paths.' **12** "Behold, in this you are not right. I will answer you, for God is greater than man. **13** Why do you contend against him, saying, 'He will answer none of man's words'? **14** For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it. **15** In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, while they slumber on their beds, **16** then he opens the ears of men and terrifies them with warnings, **17** that he may turn man aside from his deed and conceal pride from a man; **18** he keeps back his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword. **19** "Man is also rebuked with pain on his bed and with continual strife in his bones, **20** so that his life loathes bread, and his appetite the choicest food. **21** His flesh is so wasted away that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen stick out. **22** His soul draws near the pit, and his life to those who bring death. **23** If there be for him an angel, a mediator, one of the thousand, to declare to man what is right for him, **24** and he is merciful to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom; **25** let his flesh become fresh with youth; let him return to the days of his youthful vigor'; **26** then man prays to God, and he accepts him; he sees his face with a shout of joy, and he restores to man his righteousness. **27** He sings before men and says: 'I sinned and perverted what was right, and it was not repaid to me. **28** He has redeemed my soul from going down into the pit, and my life shall look upon the light.' **29** "Behold, God does all these things, twice, three times, with a man, **30** to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be lighted with the light of life. **31** Pay attention, O Job, listen to me; be silent, and I will speak. **32** If you have any words, answer me; speak, for I desire to justify you. **33** If not, listen to me; be silent, and I will teach you wisdom."



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DEVOTIONAL FOR JOB 33:1-33

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We all probably remember the very famous passage from Ephesians 4:15 about speaking the truth in love. But here, we see little truth or love from Elihu. We sure see a lot of self-aggrandizement, though! In 1:Corinthians 8:1, Paul is speaking about eating food offered to idols (not much of a problem these days), but he said something that has stuck with me since the first time I encountered it: "all of us possess knowledge." This 'knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up." Elihu seems to be pretty puffed up by his "knowledge." I have to admit that herein lies one of my own weaknesses. I *love* learning things, as I am a natural-born student. And yes, I have been puffed up by my own knowledge more than once in my life, and after some very embarrassing social faux pas, I learned to dial it back. But a while after coming to Christ, (a long while, I am sad to say), I realized that although knowing stuff is fun and learning is good, neither is more important than God and the work He calls us to do.

Elihu, who by his own admission is much younger than Job and his friends, did not have Jesus, and life had not yet swatted him on the nose enough to make him want to dial it back of his own accord. He attempts to insert some modesty by saying that he too was "pinched off from a piece of clay," but that's about it. I choose to believe he means well, but, alight with what he believes is a righteous indignation on God's behalf, he tears into Job in much the same manner as Job's friends had done, but with just as little love, true understanding or even simple compassion. He (and presumably Job's friends) are so busy trying to make Job "right with God" and using their abilities to save his soul that they never truly bother to listen. My study Bible assures me they also have a flawed understanding of God, as do we all. They put Him in a box, expecting Him to behave solely in a certain way and only for certain reasons. "You must have sinned, for God is obviously punishing you." "If you stop sinning, God will forgive you, and all will be well." This last is true enough, but their lack of listening to Job makes them all miss the mark. And their presumptions about God's character make them miss that He is not punishing Job, but He is letting all these horrible things happen to Job for His own purposes, to which they were not privy.

The saying, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions" exists for a reason. This is a pretty good example. These people all came to Job ostensibly to support him, but their intentions to do so led them in completely the wrong direction. I have done this myself more than once, and the results weren't pretty. The problem here is that we cannot truly know what is in a person's soul (sometimes I'm not sure I know what's in my own!), and no one completely knows God's, as Isaiah 55:9 says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."



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I think all this leads to the fact that we are urged to speak the truth in love because, although we almost definitely do not have the whole story whenever someone has trouble, God is always able to work in an afflicted person's life, but unless that person is spoken to lovingly, he or she may not want to accept God or his works.

Questions:

1. Have you ever given advice that was well-intentioned but ultimately harmful due to a lack of facts? Know that you will be obeying God if you confess your error and make amends to the one you harmed (if possible).
2. Do you tend to think that someone's run of trouble may be, in some way, their own fault? How do you react?
3. Do you truly believe that God allows trouble to occur in our lives not merely as discipline, but sometimes as a means to growth? If not, why not?