

A Lesson Learnt From Job

Testimony of God's hand in the workplace

Job is a lesson in patience and changing our attitude towards suffering. Many of you will have already discovered the trusting attitude required when problems strike and be putting it into practice, but I'm a slow learner! Job was a wealthy man (described in the Bible as being blameless and a man of complete integrity). In very quick succession, Job lost all his livestock, farmhand, servants and children. As he mourned the loss of his children, he was also struck with severe case of boils from head to foot. Things were pretty desperate and in Job 2:8-10, we read "Then Job scraped his skin with a piece of broken pottery as he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, "Are you still trying to maintain your integrity? Curse God and die"." (It is interesting to note in the explanatory notes for these verses, that one of the reasons put forward for Job's wife not being killed along with his children was that her very presence may have caused Job even more suffering!)

Job's well-meaning friends tried to convince Job in his misery that he needed to confess some sin he had committed as this unconfessed sin was sure to be the reason for his suffering. Job knew he had no unconfessed sin and throughout the book, he maintained his faith, but questioned God as to why he was suffering.

I began to examine my attitude to my own problems – particularly my work situation. I would complain to anyone who would listen about the long hours I worked and the unreasonable partner I worked for. But what was I doing about it (apart from complaining)? Well, I did apply for two other positions with other law firms, both of which I missed out on, but I really didn't bother to actively seek out a new job – even outside the legal profession. As I thought, about my work situation, I was reminded that, against all odds, I had been extremely lucky to obtain a secretarial position in a law firm, working for a partner, which was considered more prestigious than working for a legal executive or staff solicitor, when the highest qualification I ever obtained was School Certificate. I had practically no typing ability and had no idea how to use a computer!

Travelling home after the job interview, I was praying "Lord, out of all the jobs I have applied for, this is the one I would really like, but Lord only you know which one is right for me (and so on)..." Two weeks went by before I had a call telling me the job was mine if I still wanted it. I know God's hand was in this and I had further confirmation of this when I found out on my first day in the job that I had actually been the partner's second choice. The woman chosen had resigned after the first week there. Remembering this recently made me grateful, and as I really enjoy my work (but not necessarily the accompanying stress), I asked the Lord to help me change my attitude towards my work. The firm was facing two very stressful weeks ahead with farm conveyances, which nearly always take place at the end of May or the beginning of June to coincide with farmers' financial end of year dates. I was amazed that, after working 10-hour days, I was able to jump into the car at the end of the day feeling elated. I was so relaxed and happy that I was able to sing along with the radio music as I travelled home.

I was recently asked to assist a new employee and, on the resignation and departure of the senior partner's legal executive, have been frequently called upon for advice on procedural matters. This added to my already immense workload, but the Lord gave me real peace in the situation. A month ago, I would have been stressing out big time! Again, I was amazed at His power. I've also had my eyes opened to the advantages of being a long-term employee of the firm. I have gained a lot of experience in the nearly 8 years I have been there and the Lord has recently allowed me to overcome my fear of confronting the partner I work for over my workload and steps are now being taken to reduce this, or at least, prevent the problem becoming worse.

I am still quite tired, but I am much more content with life and feel really blessed. All this has been possible because of a concerted effort, with the Lord's help and empowerment, to change my attitude to my work situation. If we always knew why we were suffering, our faith would have no room to grow. By the end of the book of Job, Job finally asks for forgiveness, as his friends had urged him to, but not for unconfessed sin – for his ignorance in questioning God's sovereignty, power and justice. We read in Job, Chapter 42:1-3, "Then Job replied to the Lord: I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you. You ask, "Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?" It is I. And I was talking about things I did not understand, things far too wonderful for me." Job repented of his attitude. We also sin when we angrily ask, "If God is in control, how could he let this happen?" or "Why is this happening to me?" Because we are locked into time, unable to see beyond today, we cannot know the reasons for everything that happens to us, or others. We must trust in His plan for us and resist self-pity; proclaim our faith in God, knowing He cares, and wait patiently for His aid. I would encourage you next time you face a trial or dilemma, to see it as an opportunity to turn to God for strength. Be patient and examine your attitude to the situation – AND PRAY!

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