

hidden joy in a dark corner

BY WENDY BLIGHT

Week Three

Bible Study Companion Leader: Stacy J. Lowe



Hey there, friend! I'm so glad to be joining you here on the Bible Study Companion this week!

When tragedy strikes, I want to know why. Not necessarily *why*, as in the purpose that could come of it, but *why* as in what caused it to even happen in the first place?

It's not that knowing the why makes a situation any less tragic, but it somehow brings me comfort to be able to point to a reason.

Are you a person who wants to know why? _____

How does knowing why help you process through a situation?

Dissecting the cause of something that's happened helps us make at least a little sense of some tragedies, but what about when there IS no why to be found? What then?

The Darkness

A recent shooting rocked my town of Virginia Beach, Virginia to its core when a gunman opened fire in a city building, killing 12 and critically wounding four others. Immediately, speculation began as to the possible motives of the shooter.

The more information that was released, though, the more it seemed none of the rumors flying around town were true. In fact, as of the writing of these pages, there seems to be no discernible explanation for this man's actions.

What do you do with something like that, when things just don't add up?

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In Wendy's case, she found herself angry with God. As she says on page 50 of *Hidden Joy*:

"I cried out to God: *Why are You doing this to me? What have I done to deserve this? I felt abandoned and alone.*"

Can you relate? How do these unknowable situations make you feel toward God?

Romans 8:28 (NIV) says this, though:

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Note the percentage of things God says He will work for good: ALL things — 100%. Which means despite even the worst ugliness life can throw our way, God will bring something of value from it. Not just for us personally. There is often something beneficial for *others* as they watch us walk through difficult times, just as there can be something for us as we observe them doing the same.

Setting the Stage

Scripture is filled with stories of people just like you and me who faced a darkness of their own. One of the most notable is the story of a man named Job.

Read Job 1:1-3. How does the Bible describe him?

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Job was a good man who followed after God. According to this passage, Job seemed to have everything he could ever dream of, and life was going along splendidly. Until suddenly one day it wasn't.

Read Job 1: 13-18. What does Scripture tell us he lost?

Now, let's go back up a few verses to Job 1:6-12.

Who specifically presented himself to God? _____

What did he request of God? _____

What was God's response? _____

Can I be honest? I really struggle with this part of Job's story. He was doing *everything* right — God Himself described Job as "blameless and upright" — and yet God allowed Satan to come against him.

While I don't pretend to understand why, there's nevertheless an important distinction to note here: While God may have ALLOWED Job's suffering, *HE DID NOT CAUSE IT*.

Pause for a moment, and let that sink in.

God may have ALLOWED Job's suffering — He may have allowed YOUR suffering — but **HE. DID. NOT. CAUSE. IT!**

Go back up to that sentence and circle it, highlight it, put a star by it — *anything* to emphasize this important truth we need to hold on to when we're fumbling around in the dark.

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Now skip ahead to Job 2:1-7. What happened to Job next?

Can you imagine what it must have been like for him? This man who loved God and followed wholeheartedly after Him had, in a very short span of time, lost his children, his servants, his animals, his livelihood, and now even his health.

I hope you haven't experienced loss to *that* extreme, but what loss *have* you experienced?

It's times like these that test our faith the most.

Have you ever escaped the city lights and gazed upon the clear night sky? It never ceases to amaze me the countless number of stars you can see. It's not that they're any less there in the light; they're just not visible to us.

There are some things we can only observe in total darkness.

I love that Job's story gives us a front row seat to his darkness — not just what he was going through, but also how he responded and God's take on it as well.

And, remember how Romans 8:28 says God works ALL things for good? In Job's darkness, I see a lot of good shining through for us.

Let's jump back into his story and see what we can learn.

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LESSON 1

Read Job 2:9. What does Job's wife suggest he should do?

What was Job's response in verse 10?

Read the following Scriptures:

Job 4:7-8

Job 8:20

Job 11: 10-15

What do Job's friends say about the cause of his suffering?

What two words are used to describe Job in Job 1:1 (NIV)?

 and

Bible Study Tip!

Want to look up Scripture in different translations?

Step 1: Go to BibleGateway.com (linked).

Step 2: Type the Scripture reference in the search box.

Step 3: Choose the translation from the dropdown menu.

Step 4: Click the magnifying glass or "Search."

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In the NLT translation, it describes him as “a man of complete integrity.”

It would seem Job’s friends got it wrong. He wasn’t suffering because God was punishing him for something he had done.

In fact, read John 9:1-3. What reason does Jesus give for the man’s blindness?

While our sin may lead to suffering, that’s not always the case. It wasn’t the case with Job at all.

Now read Job 42:7. What did God have to say about Job’s friends?

Which brings us to **Lesson #1: Be careful whose voice you listen to.**

Sometimes those around us can offer some much-needed perspective. But if what they’re saying doesn’t line up with the character of God as revealed in Scripture, no matter how close the relationship, theirs is not a voice we should listen to.

Job refused to give in to the negative voices surrounding him. In fact, going back to Job 42:7, how did God describe *Job’s* words about Him?

Job never lost sight of the truth of who God is.

Questions for personal reflection:

Who is speaking into my situation?

Do their words line up with the character of God?

What words am I speaking and believing about God through this?

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LESSON 2

Has anyone ever told you (or have you tried telling yourself) it's somehow wrong to hurt and grieve over a situation?

While Job may have walked honorably through these dark times, he wasn't numb to the experience. Read Job 1: 20-21. What did Job do in response to his loss?

In ancient Jewish culture, tearing one's robe and shaving one's head were outward signs of immeasurable grief. Job's actions expressed to everyone around him that in that moment, *he was not ok*.

Note the author's comment following this passage in Job 1:22. What does the first part of this verse say?

This brings us to **Lesson #2: It's ok to grieve and feel hurt.**

Grief and hurt are part of the healing process we (or others) sometimes think we need to speed through. That it's somehow wrong for us to take the time to grieve and to express our grief. But, the Bible is very clear that Job's reaction to his pain was NOT sin.

Read Job 1:20 again. What did Job do in conjunction with tearing his robe and shaving his head?

Y'all. He fell to the ground and WORSHIPPED.

While I wish I could say that's my first reaction to pain, it's often not. I can't help but wonder, though, if Job's act of worship enabled him to walk through this experience and come out the other side with his faith still intact, and, in fact, stronger than it was before. He allowed himself to grieve, but his was a worship-filled grief.

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Questions for personal reflection:

Have you allowed yourself to properly grieve what's lost?

Are you grieving alone, or have you invited God into that process via worship?

(Please note- Processing your grief for a time, and staying permanently in a place of grief are two different things. If you've grieved for a while and are struggling to move forward, or if you just feel like you need someone to talk to, Focus on the Family has resources available to you. Visit <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/about/contact-us> for help.)

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LESSON 3

On page 58 of *Hidden Joy*, Wendy reminds us, “God wants you to take your questions to Him.” That’s exactly what Job did, beginning in Job 7 and continuing off and on throughout most of the remainder of the book.

Then, in Chapter 38, God responds. If time permits, read all of Chapters 38-41. Otherwise, focus on Job 38:4-41.

What do these verses tell you about God?

God’s response to Job brings me to our final lesson, **Lesson #3: No matter how we may feel, God still sees us, and He is still in control.**

While God didn’t answer Job immediately, He was keenly aware of Job’s suffering. When the time was right, God spoke into Job’s questions with questions of His own. Questions intended to remind Job of His omnipotence.

Now read Psalm 139:16 and Luke 12:6-7.

These verses confirm what Job discovered in his conversations with God. The Almighty God of the universe never takes His eyes off His children. Just because something catches us off guard doesn’t mean it’s done the same for Him. God knew and planned every detail of our lives before we lived a single day.

Personal reflection:

Do you feel forgotten by God?

What can you do to remind yourself of His sovereignty?

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Summing It All Up

The story of Job is a tough one, so thank you for sticking with it! Before we end, I want to bring out one final point from the very last verse of the book.

Job 42:17 (NLT) says this:

“Then he died, an old man who had lived a long, full life.”

Notice, it doesn't say he died an old man who had lived a *difficult* life. It says he died “an old man who had lived a **long, full life**.”

You see, Job may have suffered and walked through a level of darkness we can't even begin to comprehend, but ultimately, *his darkness did not define him*.

And neither does your darkness define you.

THIS IS NOT THE END!

Write out a statement of faith below that your life will ultimately be defined by WHOSE you are, not by what you're going through.

Remember, God is there, and He loves you infinitely more than you could ever imagine!

Father, thank You for the life of Job and for including his story in the Bible. While we may not understand why he had to go through what he did, we thank You for the faith he displayed as he walked through it and the lessons we can take from it. Thank You for the promise that You are working ALL things for our good. Remind us of this truth when we struggle to see it on our own, and let us come out the other side of our suffering closer to You than we've ever been. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Thanks for journeying with me today, friend!

Love and prayers,
Stacy