

“Advice You Don't Need”
Various Scriptures from the books of Job and Proverbs
Small Group Discussion Guide

Warm-up question:

- What do you think makes any advice good advice?

This past Sunday, guest Pastor Kevin Mahaffy, Jr. taught us how to be a good friend to someone who's suffering. He had five main points from Scripture:

1. **Friends are “present.” They leave their comfort zones to offer comfort.**

Take turns reading Job 2:11-13.

When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

- a. How did Job's three friends “leave their comfort zone”?
- b. How did they comfort Job?
- c. How can another's silent presence be a better comfort than advice during our worst times?
- d. Have you ever been this type of friend to someone or ever been befriended this way?
- e. How can we “leave our comfort zones” in order to support the suffering?

2. **Friends are productive. They do what they can; they don't try to explain what they can't.**

Isaiah 55:8. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. **Mt 25:34.** “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

- a. How do both of these verses show our limitations as friends to the sufferer?
- b. Let's using a boating analogy. How would your help to the sufferer change if you saw yourself as a fellow sailor/traveler instead of the wind, sail, motor, oars or rudder?

3. **Friends Provide Encouragement. Friends speak words of life, not death.**

Take turns reading Job 16:1-5. Then Job replied: “I have heard many things like these; you are miserable comforters, all of you! Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing? I also could speak like you, if you were in my place; I also could speak like you, if you were in my place; I could make fine speeches against you and shake my head at you. But my mouth would encourage you; comfort from my lips would bring you relief.”

Proverbs 12:18. “The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

Proverbs 15:4. “The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.”

Proverbs 18:21. “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

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- a. In the Job passage, what is Job’s accusation or complaint against his friends? How did they miss the mark in comforting Job?
- b. How would Job have handled it differently?
- c. The Proverbs passages above echo Pastor Josh’s sermon on the previous Sunday. In these three passages, when it is time to use words, what is the right way to use them?

4. **Friends Pray. Friends go to Jesus; they don’t preach prescriptions.**

Mark 2:3-5. Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

- a. Jesus forgave based on the faith of the friends. How did the friends show their faith?
- b. In today’s world, how might you show this active faith; how might you “carry” someone to Jesus or “dig through” obstacles to get someone to Jesus?

5. **Friends have an Eternal Perspective. Friends trust God’s heart when they don’t understand His hand.**

Psalm 147:3-6. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.

- a. How would our actions change toward our friends and their suffering if we recognized the God who upholds the universe by his power?
- b. How would our actions change toward our friends and their suffering if we recognized the God who loves our friends more than we ever will?

6. If YOU are one suffering, can you apply some of these principles to yourself:

- a. Do you know where to find emotionally and spiritually healthy people for support?
- b. Do you go to Jesus for help? If not, what do you think is blocking you?
- c. Is there some wounding that is getting in the way of you trusting God’s ability (sovereignty) to help you or his willingness (love) to help you?
- d. Do any of the verses above help you trust God’s sovereignty and/or love?

7. Read Job 42:7-9. God vindicates Job as opposed to his friends, saying that Job is the one who has spoken truth, in spite of the fact that Job has been honest about his anger. What does that observation say about our approach to God during suffering?

- a. Nonetheless, Job doesn’t get an answer about why he suffers. Read Matt 27:46. What answer does Jesus receive to his cry during suffering? How does this change the way we approach pain?

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8. PRAYER: For those of us who may be suffering, if you feel comfortable, share that. For the rest, let's engage in focused prayer and provide words of encouragement before moving on to other prayer requests.