

PAINFUL UNCERTAINTY
(Common Errors & God's Faithfulness)

JACOB

Genesis 42:35-38

Despondent over sons & life itself

³⁵ As they emptied their sacks, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack. And when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were afraid. ³⁶ And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has come against me." ³⁷ Then Reuben said to his father, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you." ³⁸ But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. If harm should happen to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol."

What's wrong with Jacob's thinking (spiritually)?

ERROR	TRUTH

Why did God make Jacob wait in uncertainty so long?

What does this remind us about God?

TWO APPROACHES TO THE PRAYING LIFE:

GOD IS WEAVING A STORY	
NO ACCOUNTING FOR IT	LOOKING FOR IT
Bitter	Waiting
Angry	Watching
Aimless	Wondering
Cynical	Praying
Controlling	Submitting
Hopeless	Hoping
Thankless	Thankful
Blaming	Repenting

Paul E. Miller
A Praying Life



Principles

- > God provides **UNCERTAIN** time periods so we can hope, not in finishing the time, but in **HIM**
- > Guard against cynicism. God is always weaving a story for your life—and it's not over.
- > God's hiddenness is not abandonment.
- > During suffering, don't assume you understand what God is doing.
- > Stay in the story and pray by: waiting, watching, submitting, thanking, repenting.

"...at the very end, Margaret realizes that the demise of her plans had shattered her false god, and now she was free for the first time to worship the True One. When serving the "god-of-my-plans", she had been extraordinarily anxious. She had never been sure that God was going to come through for her and "get it right." She was always trying to figure out how to bring God to do what she had planned. But she had not really been treating him *as* God -- as the all-wise, all-good, all-powerful one. Now she had been liberated to put her hope not in her agendas and plans but in God himself. If she could make *this* change, it would bring a rest and security she had never had. In short, suffering had pointed her to a glorious God, and it had taught her treat him as such. And when she did so, it freed her from the desperate, doomed, exhausting effort to seek to control all the circumstances of her life and of those she loved.

Tim Keller
Walking with God through Pain & Suffering

The Case of Job

Job did a lot of praying during his suffering. What were his losses?

But, Job could not get over one aspect of his suffering. It vexed him.

What's wrong with this thinking?

His trial started out well:

Job 1:20-22

²⁰ Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

- Did God ever tell Job why he was suffering?
- Did God ever explain the conversation w/ Satan about him?

What DID God do?

Job 38 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

² "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

³ Dress for action like a man;

I will question you, and you make it known to me.

⁴ "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵ Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶ On what were its bases sunk,

or who laid its cornerstone,

"Have you commanded the morning since your days began,
and caused the dawn to know its place,

"Can you hunt the prey for the lion,
or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,

⁴⁰ when they crouch in their dens
or lie in wait in their thicket?

"Do you know when the mountain goats give birth?
Do you observe the calving of the does?

²⁵ “Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of rain
and a way for the thunderbolt,
²⁶ to bring rain on a land where no man is,
on the desert in which there is no man,
²⁷ to satisfy the waste and desolate land,
and to make the ground sprout with grass?

How did Job respond to that revelation of Who God was?

Job 42:1-2, 3b, 5-6

42 Then Job answered the LORD and said: ² “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ^{3b} Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; ⁶ therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Principle

**When you know the “WHO”, insistence on the “why...when...how...” will fade.
Peace and joy are found in praying & rehearsing God’s attributes—not seeking additional
info.**

Great Resources:

A Praying Life
When God Weeps
Walking with God Through Pain & Suffering
Deserted by God?
Hearing Jesus Speak into Your Sorrow
When Suffering Enters Your Door (DVD)

Paul E. Miller
Joni Eareckson Tada & Steven Estes
Timothy Keller
Sinclair Ferguson
Nancy Guthrie
Paul Tripp