



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

“STAND: Endurance in Trials”

Ps. James Lowe– March 6, 2016

‘For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.’ 2 Corinthians 5:10

WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. **No right or wrong answers.**

1. How do/did you prepare for a school test?
2. When taking a test, do you prefer a standardized type of test or an essay question type of test? Why?
3. Who is an example for you of courage and endurance in the midst of suffering?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

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Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. Then Job answered the Lord and said: “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.” Job 38:1-3; 40:3-5

There is nothing more certain in life than the fact that we’ll encounter suffering. The question of suffering is one that has been asked throughout human history. There is no better place to go in our search for answers than the book of Job. Reading through the life of Job, we can have a balanced understanding of suffering; one that doesn’t fall either into the moralistic easy answers of religious people, or into the cynical response of the hopeless.

Rather than trying to answer the “WHY” - why does God allow suffering in the world; why does God allow good people to suffer- we will focus on the “HOW”. How can we go through different forms of suffering in life, and after all, stand firm?

1. UNDERSTAND IT IS A TEST

The type of testing that Job had to endure was a series of losses that added upon one another. We all can testify that misfortunes seldom come singularly. Yet the Bible underlines the fact that in the middle of all the testing he couldn't even understand, he kept worshipping God.

The test God allows in our life is for the purpose of probing our unconditional love for him. We ought to serve him not for what he give us, but rather for who he is. That's not an easy goal to achieve. It requires a lot of testing. We all are fallen humans to whom this truth is only partially revealed. Even Job loved God unconditionally to a certain degree. As the testing kept raising his stressfulness, he starts questioning the goodness and justice of God. When Satan questioned Job's sincerity, God validated Job even though He knew Job's love for him was partial. When Satan afflicted Job with all kind of losses and illness, Job went on to question God's genuine care. When the devil accuses us, we have an advocate in Jesus. Even God knows the devil is partially right. When the devil accuses God in our mind, we easily doubt his grace and love, even though it's an absolute lie.

2. ENDURE THE TORMENT

Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. He usually uses the people closest to us as the ones who torment us. The hardest part of facing trial is not knowing "why". Yet we can be sure that God is working all things together for our good. God won't allow us to be tempted beyond what we can endure. Actually, God only gives Satan sufficient permission to accomplish the exact opposite to what he wants to accomplish. God only gives Satan enough rope to hang himself. The devil wants us to deny our faith; to doubt the goodness of our God. God wants to transform us into the image of his Son. While going through the torment of excruciating suffering, know that God will only permit it to the degree it defeats the purpose of Satan.

3. LIVE A TESTIMONY

Job's testimony is a testimony of restoration. God restored his finances, his family, and most importantly, God restored his faith and confidence in God. He did not only restore his faith, but rather increased it. Job's new found relationship with God led him to say: "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you."

As Christians, we are called to endure through the high stress of testing and torment. We are to **stand** strong in our relationship with a God we cannot control. He is a God whose goodness we cannot doubt when we truly get to know him.

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.

- What kind of testing are you enduring now? How are you responding?
- How can you grow in your confidence of God's wisdom and goodness when you are suffering?
- What are some testimonies you have from a time of testing?

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Pray that God will give you strength to stand strong in the time of testing.
- Thank the Lord for his faithfulness in carrying you through in the hard seasons of your life.
- Pray that God gives us wisdom to support those who are undergoing trials; to be of comfort to them and not of torment.