

Daily Devotional for Small Group

Discussion: Harm Reduction

by [Chris Mereschuk](#) | published on Oct 7, 2024

Discussion Questions

1. When have you have been tempted to blame someone for their own hardship or suffering? How could you have responded differently?
2. How do you think it impacts a person's relationship with God when they're told that their suffering is due to a lack of faith?
3. How do you use your faith to comfort someone who is grieving or suffering?

Bildad replied: "Does God twist justice? If your children sinned against God and were punished, and you begged Almighty God for them—if you were pure and good, God would hear your prayer and answer you and bless you." – Job 8:1-6 excerpted (TLB adapted)

It seems like humans have an impulse to find fault and assign blame. Hurts, losses, diagnoses, death, bad luck, confounding tragedy—we want to know who's responsible. Too often, the easiest and most logical target is the one experiencing pain. Nowadays we call this victim-blaming: the belief that one's suffering is a direct result of their own failings. But it's nothing new.

Job cried out to God, mourning the loss of his children. His alleged friend Bildad rushed to God's defense, laying blame on Job and his dead children. "God is just! Surely you or they must've sinned! If you're really so faithful and holy, then God would protect you and restore everything." Did Bildad think this

would bring comfort? Motivate Job to repent? Please God?
Whatever his reason, in that moment it only caused more harm.

Multiple scriptures teach victim-blaming as a faithful response to suffering. It's a lesson many of us have internalized. Pray harder, pray better, be more faithful, more pious to avoid suffering. But this leaves God's saving mercy and healing love entirely absent when what's needed is God's presence.

What if the faithful response to suffering is not to find blame and compound shame, but to simply be present with the one who is suffering? Even if later fault can be found, the moment of suffering calls for grace.

Prayer

Heal my impulse to blame and shame. In the presence of suffering, make me a vessel for your grace.

About the Author

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