

An Angry Man:
Misplaced Significance
Job 35

If you're a man reading this, I must warn you that you might feel, well, you might feel twinges of discrimination. Based on anecdotal evidence provided by women, when men become ill, they are the worst patients. Furthermore, I've heard it said, that men are worse than little babies. Just sayin' what I've heard. I could try to justify the position of men in this argument, but I'm afraid I would only dig a hole too deep from which I could ever hope to extricate myself. Hence, I'll just agree with what most women say.

In Job's case, after listening to her husband justifiably moan and groan day after day, with the loss of patience Job's wife emphatically spoke to Job saying, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die" (Job 2:9). At least she wouldn't have to deal with his loss as well as her loss. Job, so upset about his losses, neglected to think about his wife and her losses. Gone were her children that she carried in her womb and heart. Gone was her financial security. Gone was her status in the community. Gone was her life, too. It appears that Job only focused on his losses, not the losses of others.

Yes, all of us tend to respond or react like Job when the market drops, or the doctor tells us that we have the big "C," or we get caught in a big lay off, or the surgeon says, "I'm sorry, but we did all we could." Sitting in my office chair, having slept in a comfortable bed and showered earlier this morning in lots of hot water, I feel great. Knowing that I have food in the freezer and money in the bank helps me to feel secure about today and tomorrow. Take all that away from me, and I guarantee that I will become moody, extremely moody. People that I know personally would respond or react in the same manner.

In this third speech, Elihu never accuses Job of one social sin committed against others. Like a hunter sighting in his rifle, he zeroes in on Job's attitudinal sins committed against God. These attitudinal sins are difficult to prove in a court of law. We cannot split open a man's conscience to examine what he's thinking. However, his life is like a fish tank. The tank clearly reveals what is going on inside of a man's conscience by seeing his behavior. Elihu begins this chapter with the charges in 35:2-3.

"Do you think this to be just?
Do you say, 'It is my right before God,'
that you ask, 'What advantage have I?
How am I better off than if I had sinned?'"

Back in the role of the prosecutor, Elihu charges Job with two attitudinal sins. "You, the thing created by God believe that you have rights before God. You, the thing created by God, see yourself as the center of God's universe, the center of God's affection. You believe that you deserve more 'bang for your buck.'"

As iron sharpens iron,
So a person sharpens his friends.
-- Solomon

Thousands of years later, the apostle Paul wrestled with these same attitudinal charges in Romans 9:20-23 (NLT).

Who are you, a mere human being, to argue with God? Should the thing that was created say to the one who created it, "Why have you made me like this?" When a potter makes jars out of clay, doesn't he have a right to use the same lump of clay to make one jar for decoration and another to throw garbage into? In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction. He does this to make the riches of his glory shine even brighter on those to whom he shows mercy, who were prepared in advance for glory."

How does Elihu argue his case? He starts by asking Job and his friends to reconsider their position in God's universe.

Look at the heavens, and see;
and behold the clouds, which are higher than you.
If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against him?
And if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to him?
If you are righteous, what do you give to him?
Or what does he receive from your hand?
Your wickedness concerns a man like yourself,
and your righteousness a son of man. (Job 35:5-8)

Does our sin or righteousness affect God? Does our lifestyle altar Him in some respect? Is He dependent upon us for His existence or plans? Do we believe that we are so significant to God and His plans for the universe that He must focus every thought with laser accuracy on us? Elihu refocuses that laser on reality (35:8), saying, "No, your sins affect only people like yourself, and your good deeds also affect only humans" (NLT). Eugene Peterson in *The Message*, adds a remark to the end of 35:8. "God's not dependent on your behavior."

Before postmodernity placed man at the center of the universe, Job became the representative of humanity that placed man at the center of the universe. Who is at the center of our universe, us or God? We are dependent on Him. He is not dependent upon us.

Like rotating a diamond to see its beauty from another angle, Elihu changes his argument's position to help Job clearly see the reality of his position before God. Arguing further in 35:9-16, Elihu says,

Because of the multitude of oppressions people cry out;
they call for help because of the arm of the mighty.
But none says, 'Where is God my Maker,
who gives songs in the night,
who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth
and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?'
There they cry out, but he does not answer,
because of the pride of evil men.
Surely God does not hear an empty cry,

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nor does the Almighty regard it.
 How much less when you say that you do not see him,
 that the case is before him, and you are waiting for him!
 And now, because his anger does not punish,
 and he does not take much note of transgression,
 Job opens his mouth in empty talk;
 he multiplies words without knowledge.

Elihu's argument is simple. Many people live their day-to-day lives without any thought for God. When a powerful person or force attacks them, they cry out to God for relief (35:9). In their non-vocalized opinion, God is like a genie in a bottle. Take off the cork. Rub the bottle. Out comes the genie granting them three wishes. When God gives them what they want, they place Him back in the bottle underneath a secure cork. If God doesn't give them what they want, they throw the genie away and find a new genie, a new god.

When a person's crisis is past, they resume life as normal. The rest of their life ignores God's beautiful music that He brings to them at night. They ignore the fact that He gives them a mind that surpasses those of the animals. They ignore the fact that although birds soar in the skies above, people are still superior creatures, created in the image of God (35:10-11; cf. [Genesis 1:26-28](#)). To most people, God is like the Tooth Fairy, the Easter Bunny or Santa Claus.

Is it any wonder that when trouble comes to us God is silent ([35:12-13](#))? Is He silent? Or, are our senses so dull:

- Because we have not walked with Him,
- Because we have not talked with Him,
- Because we have not listened to Him

so that we do not hear or recognize His voice when He speaks to us?

Likewise, having presented our case before God, we are upset because He does not appear to hear our case ([35:14-15](#)). We wait and wait and wait, but God does not appear. He does not even send a clerk to tell us that God is considering the case and will decide our case soon. Because God does not act according to our preconceived ideas, we fling Him aside like a wadded-up wrapper from a consumed hamburger. "God didn't take me into account when the plane crashed." "God took my wife away from me and my children when they were still babies." "God let my mom suffer and she never did anything wrong to anybody." "God never showed up." Like Job, we multiply our words exponentially against God (35:16).

Have we turned away from pursuing God because of life's tragedies? Do we, the finite inhabitants of earth, not see events from God's omniscient perspective? When we find ourselves in these positions believing that we are the center of God's universe, we may tend to beg, yell or scream at God for relief. In utter frustration, we may curse God and die.

Solomon wrote (Ecclesiastes 5:1-5):

Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better

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than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words.

In the Christian evidence section of my library is a well-worn book by Francis Schaeffer (1972). The title of the 100-page book speaks volumes to us as we face life head on each day, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*. Like trained orchestra conductors, we must ask ourselves this question. Have we trained our ears to listen for and hear the voice of God whether His voice comes to us through His written word, through answered prayer or through the counsel of a trusted elder ([1 Kings 19:11-13](#))? When we hear His voice, will we listen to it and retune our lives so that we live in harmony with God?

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