

When People Put Words in Your Mouth:
Eliphaz 3rd Response to Job
Job 22

Have you ever been in one of those discussions where someone in the group takes your words out of context, twists them, alters them or puts words in your mouth that you never said or intended to say? If you have not experienced this wrenching moment, do not worry. Just keep talking to people and eventually someone will put words in your mouth that you did not say or twist your words like the colors on a Christmas candy cane yet without the soothing flavor of peppermint.

That is exactly what Job experiences when Eliphaz attempts to “comfort” him this third time. Imagine Job’s consternation as he sits on top of his ash pile scraping skin from the boils oozing puss from his body. “I didn’t say that,” he wants to interrupt. But he lets his “friend” finish speaking. “That is not what I meant,” his mind argues silently with his opponent. “What I meant was,” he continues to justify his words taken with no regard or respect for who he is.

Sometimes people only hear what they want to hear. People only take what they want to take. We are left holding the bag or picking up the pieces hoping that we will have a chance to defend ourselves.

Listen to Eliphaz. What twists and turns does he take? What accusations leave his lips? What roads does he lay out before Job to follow in order to return to God?

Eliphaz Asks Questions with Assumed Answers (5:2-5a).

- ² Can a man be profitable to God?
Surely he who is wise is profitable to himself.
- ³ Is it any pleasure to the Almighty if you are in the right,
or is it gain to him if you make your ways blameless?
- ⁴ Is it for your fear of him that he reproves you
and enters into judgment with you?
- ⁵ Is not your evil abundant?

Eliphaz asks those rapid-fire questions that you hear TV attorneys fire at bewildered clients. Not able to butt in and stop the attorney, the client looks ridiculous and guilty before the jurors.

This is Eliphaz’ portrait of Job. A wise man of no use to God. A self-righteous individual. An abundantly evil person.

Eliphaz Makes Unfounded Accusations (22:5b-11).

- There is no end to your iniquities.
- ⁶ For you have exacted pledges of your brothers for nothing

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- and stripped the naked of their clothing.
- ⁷ You have given no water to the weary to drink,
and you have withheld bread from the hungry.
- ⁸ The man with power possessed the land,
and the favored man lived in it.
- ⁹ You have sent widows away empty,
and the arms of the fatherless were crushed.
- ¹⁰ Therefore snares are all around you,
and sudden terror overwhelms you,
- ¹¹ or darkness, so that you cannot see,
and a flood of water covers you.

Eliphaz falsely accused Job of violating God's order by taking the pledges of his debtors, pledges that left them naked and cold. Later, God would reveal this order of law through Moses (Exodus 22:26; Deuteronomy 24:10, 16-17; Ezekiel 18:12).

Furthermore, Eliphaz makes Job out to be a cold-hearted man that has no concern for the needy. Even heartless jailers provide bread and water for prisoners, but Job has denied both bread and water to those stricken by poverty. This charge, Job flatly denies in 29:12–16; 31:13, 16–17, 21. But it is too late. The evil charges slip through the gates of teeth and over the slippery lips of Eliphaz. Words spoken are impossible to retrieve and now the world knows that Job is heartless.

If that were not enough, Eliphaz further points to Job's disregard for the widow and the fatherless, two classes of people without a man to protect them, a man to stand up for their rights, a man to provide for them. Job tramples under his feet the unprotected. Through Moses God will prescribe the treatment that evil doers ought to receive for their ill treatment of widows and the fatherless (Deuteronomy 10:12 – 11:32).

Like the land grabbers of the early days of the wild west, Job gobbles up the land of the poor. After all, he is a "favored one." Who will prosecute him?

How do we know these charges are true? Look at Job's condition. Snares entangle Him. Sudden fear comes upon him. He fears darkness and the sudden flash flood common to desert dwellers that may engulf him. His present circumstances bear witness against him. He is evil. He is guilty.

Eliphaz Puts Words in Job's Mouth (22:12-17).

- ¹² "Is not God high in the heavens?
See the highest stars, how lofty they are!
- ¹³ But you say, 'What does God know?
Can he judge through the deep darkness?
- ¹⁴ Thick clouds veil him, so that he does not see,
and he walks on the vault of heaven.'
- ¹⁵ Will you keep to the old way
that wicked men have trod?
- ¹⁶ They were snatched away before their time;
their foundation was washed away.
- ¹⁷ They said to God, 'Depart from us,'

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and ‘What can the Almighty do to us?’

Having humiliated Job on the witness stand and charged him with unspeakable evil, Eliphaz now puts words in Job’s mouth (22:13-14). Accordingly he says that Job sees God as detached from His creation, dwelling far above the heavens that we see. Unable to judge. Out of sight. Out of mind. He is uncaring. If we didn’t know better, we might think that Job was the founder of deism.

Why Job keeps to his old ways of evil, Eliphaz is not sure. He knows that God cuts short the time of evil men as He washes away their foundations (22:16). They see God as weak (22:17), unable to do any harm to them, unable to punish them. This was Job’s crowd, according to Eliphaz.

Eliphaz Calls for Job to Repent (22:21-30).

- ²¹“Agree with God, and be at peace;
thereby good will come to you.
- ²² Receive instruction from his mouth,
and lay up his words in your heart.
- ²³ If you return to the Almighty you will be built up;
if you remove injustice far from your tents,
- ²⁴ if you lay gold in the dust,
and gold of Ophir among the stones of the torrent-bed,
- ²⁵ then the Almighty will be your gold
and your precious silver.
- ²⁶ For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty
and lift up your face to God.
- ²⁷ You will make your prayer to him, and he will hear you,
and you will pay your vows.
- ²⁸ You will decide on a matter, and it will be established for you,
and light will shine on your ways.
- ²⁹ For when they are humbled you say, ‘It is because of pride’;
but he saves the lowly.
- ³⁰ He delivers even the one who is not innocent,
who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands.”

Considering what Eliphaz thinks of Job, he has no choice but to call Job to repentance. Note the steps that Eliphaz lays out for Job:

- Submit to God (22:21),
- Accept God’s instruction (22:22),
- Return to God (22:23), and
- Resign yourself to the blessings of God (22:24-25).¹

Eliphaz’ formula might work well – for someone other than Job. However, God sees Job as righteous.

Like any good salesperson, Eliphaz points out the blessings bestowed upon the

¹ Alden, R. L. (1993). [Job](#) (Vol. 11, pp. 236–237). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

repentant (22:26-30).

- You will be able to lift your face before God without shame (22:26).
- God will hear your prayers (22:27a).
- You will be able to pay your vows (22:27b).
- Your decisions will be righteous and established (22:28).
- God will deliver people through your hands (22:29-30).

This last section does nothing to alleviate the pain Job experiences as he listens to his “friend” comfort him. With false accusations and misrepresentations lying at his feet, Job waits for his opportunity to speak in his defense.

How do you respond or react to people that twist your words, put words in your mouth or misrepresent what you say and do? Does your blood begin to boil raising your blood pressure to new stroke levels? Does your heart race wildly like a stallion released from a western corral? Is your mind filled with stored-up defensive words that you want to use to save your reputation? Do you want to retaliate?

If you have been or are in Job’s shoes, then you will most likely answer “yes” to all these questions. But God has a better way. Read and carefully consider Paul’s closing words of Romans 12:16-21.

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Taking these actions requires superhuman strength. Taking these actions requires reliance upon the Spirit of God which He gave to us when we became His children (1 John 3:24). Remember God’s Word to you as you overcome the evil one.

But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. (1 John 4:4 – New Living Translation)

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