

STAGES ON THE HEALING JOURNEY OF JOB

(As inspired by biblical scholar and psychologist Norman Habel in his book: *God Trauma and Wisdom Therapy – A Commentary on Job*, and re-worked by Dr. Harris)

Job experiences overwhelming trauma and loss. His whole world falls apart. He is in unspeakable pain.

1) His initial reaction is numbness, an emotional distancing just to survive. He speaks words of acceptance and reaffirms his world view that God is in control and what God does, good or bad, fortune or misfortune, is up to God. Job will maintain his integrity of devotion to God no matter what. It will keep him grounded. Chapters 1-2.

2) After a period of anguished grief as the reality of what's happened begins to sink in, Job cries out: "why!" He becomes unhinged. Nothing makes sense as to why things have happened to him as they have. God makes no sense and the world he thought he understood makes no sense. Job sinks into self pity, even regretting the day of his birth. He just wants to die. Chapters 3ff.

3) Job's friends have come to comfort him, but in the end, and unintentionally, they push him into getting angry and protesting. Job essentially screams bloody murder. How could God do this to him? Sure he's not perfect, but who is? If God is in control God is doing a terrible job. Job now sees the unfairness in the world in a way he never had before when things were good. Chapters 5ff.

4) The next step is taking a leap of faith and demanding in some way for an accounting from God. In order for Job to heal he also needs a better world view and if God is responsible, God has to give an accounting and vindicate Job. Chapters 19-27.

So then, 1) numbness to emotions and feelings can be essential to surviving but only for the short term. Otherwise, we alienate everyone around us because we have made blocking our emotions a way of being. We are stuck and afraid. 2) So then, we must find a way, and hopefully with comforting sources of support, to be allowed and given room to express the rawness of loss, grief and trauma without holding back. 3) Then we can move into asking the big why's because the world that has made sense no longer does, and either we give up and close in or we search for new ways to make sense of the world. From self-pity to anger and protest, we can find empowerment to question and see unfairness and injustice in ways we may not have seen before. This is liberating, and beyond the anger in time compassion may also rise in us for others who suffer and this is very healing. 4) But what about also finding some answers towards a better worldview, a better relations with God and a way to love ourselves past the

grief, regret and trauma, especially if and when there is moral injury (I have made mistakes and have regrets related to the loss and harm)?

Now we move into the more constructive stage toward healing in Job.

1) Seeking new wisdom before God, oneself and one's way in the world from the ground up. (Chapter 28)

2) Articulating one's trauma story coherently (Chapters 29-31)

3) Listening to new voices that may or may not help (Chapters 32-37)

4) Hearing God speak again but in a way one hasn't heard before (Chapters 38-42:6)

5) Celebrating healing (42: 7-17). What does healing look like?