WEEK 2: A WAR WITHOUT ANSWERS

Mixed LIFEGROUP

STEP 1 SERMON RECAP

Sunday looked at Job, one of the most famous sufferers in history. He lost almost everything he had in a matter of days, and when he demanded an explanation, God never gave him one, but gave him a humbling perspective instead. Here is the sermon in five lines:

1. **The Big Idea:** We are in a war we cannot fully see, and many of our questions will not be answered in this life. Trust God even in the absence of explanation (Job 38:1–4; 1 Corinthians 13:12).
2. **The accusation & attack:** Satan claimed Job only loved God because God kept blessing him. God gave Satan permission to put the validity of that accusation to the test (Job 1:9–12).
3. **Four principles:** (1) We are in an unseen war with eternal stakes. (2) We lack the capacity to understand everything that is going on. (3) God can use our faithful suffering to bring others to Himself. (4) The faithful end with far more than they lose.
4. **A better Job:** Job points forward to Jesus, who suffered without any sin and now intercedes for the very people who accused Him (Luke 23:34; Romans 8:34).
5. **Where it lands:** The sufferings of this life do not compare to what is coming. Job was restored abundantly, and Jesus left heaven for the Cross and then rose to the right hand of the Father. The faithful gain far more in the next life than they lose in this one (Romans 8:18).

STEP 2 ACCOUNTABILITY AND CHECK-IN

Go around the table for the accountability and check-in. In order to avoid over-talking and dominating conversation, keep each answer to about one minute.

- How did it go with the "I Will" statement you made last week? What were the key ingredients of success or failure? (1 minute)
- What is one thing you are thankful for this week? (1 minute)
- What is one challenge you are facing right now? (1 minute)

STEP 3 ONE PERSON READS IDEA 1 ALOUD

In order to optimize time, do not discuss until the end. While this is read, circle or star anything God points out (John 16:8, 13).

Each idea below ends with the same situation handled three different ways. Your situation may not be the one described. So translate the principle underneath it into your own situation.

IDEA 1: We are in an unseen war, so expect attack.

> **Ephesians 6:12**
> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Paul wrote this to Christians in Ephesus, a city known for its temple to the goddess Artemis (Acts 19:27). He tells them their real enemy is not the person across the table but spiritual forces behind the scenes. Job shows the same thing. His losses traced back to a conversation in heaven he never heard, where Satan accused him of loving God only for the blessings (Job 1:9–11). Still, Satan could only act within the limits God set (Job 1:12). Many people live as though this life is supposed to feel like Eden before sin, or like the new heaven and new earth after Jesus returns. In reality, we live in between Eden and eternity, in the middle of a war. Expecting comfort in a war zone sets you up to feel betrayed by God when the attack comes.

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE, SAME SITUATION, THREE PEOPLE:

- **Negative:** One man starts leading a table at LifeGroup and reading his Bible every morning before work. Within three months his car's engine fails and he is passed over for a promotion he had been promised. He never says out loud that he feels betrayed or that he expected stepping up spiritually to bring God's protection. He quits leading his table and tells the group it is "just not the right season."
- **Positive:** A woman is in the same situation. Instead of stepping back, she tells the people at her table that she feels like she is under fire, and she asks them to pray for her by name. She keeps leading, and she tells her family they are going to face this together.
- **Hard to admit:** Another man keeps leading his table through the same three months. Underneath it, he is keeping score of everything he is doing for God against everything that keeps going wrong in his life. He believes his faithfulness should earn him God's protection from hardship, and he grows quietly resentful every week the payoff does not come.

SAMPLE "I WILL"

I will tell one person in this group where I feel under attack right now and ask them to pray for me before the end of the week.

NOTES

STEP 4 A SECOND PERSON READS IDEA 2 ALOUD

In order to optimize time, do not discuss until the end. While this is read, circle or star anything God points out (John 16:8, 13).

IDEA 2: God can use our faithful suffering to bring others to Himself.

> **Job 42:7–8**
> After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: "My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. 8 Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly. For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."

From chapter 3 through chapter 37, Job's three friends insist that his suffering must be punishment for some hidden sin. They took a true principle, that you often reap what you sow, and made it a law with no exceptions. God says they were wrong, and the man they falsely accused is the one God sends them to for help. Job prays for them, and God accepts his prayer on their behalf. Job's trial put his friends' bad theology on display, and God used it to confront them and bring them back to Himself. Job points forward to Jesus, the only One whose suffering saves, who prayed for the people crucifying Him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Your suffering is never private either. God can use it to reach the people around you, whether they are watching your faith, facing their own mortality, or asking questions they never asked before.

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE, SAME SITUATION, THREE PEOPLE:

- **Negative:** One woman is diagnosed with multiple sclerosis at thirty-eight, with a son she is raising on her own and the other nurses on her floor watching how she responds. She never admits that she is scared or that she expected years of faithfulness to keep something like this away from her. She withdraws from church and tells the other nurses that God clearly is not fair. Her son watches her response and concludes that faith is useless when life gets hard.
- **Positive:** A man gets the same diagnosis. Instead of hiding his fear, he tells his wife and kids he is scared and still trusts God. He prays with his son in the car before every appointment. When two of his coworkers ask him how he is still steady, he tells them about God's faithfulness and why he continues to trust Him despite his diagnosis. One of them comes to church with him for the first time.
- **Looks fine but:** Another woman gets the same diagnosis and keeps working every shift without complaint. She continues to pray and wrestle with God privately, but when others admire her strength, she never explains that it comes from trusting Christ. The people around her see toughness, so her suffering points them to her instead of to Christ.

SAMPLE "I WILL"

I will tell one person who is watching my hardest season what I am trusting God for in it, within 2 days.

NOTES

STEP 5 A THIRD PERSON READS IDEA 3 ALOUD

In order to optimize time, do not discuss until the end. While this is read, circle or star anything God points out (John 16:8, 13).

IDEA 3: The faithful end with far more than they lose.

> **Job 42:10, 12**
> And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. 12 And the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys.

Compare those numbers with Job 1:3, and every one of them is exactly double what Job lost. God also gave him ten more children and 140 more years of life (Job 42:13, 16). Job's restoration came in this life, but that must not be taken as a promise that faithful people get everything back this side of the grave. Hebrews 11 commends men and women who "did not receive what was promised" before they died (Hebrews 11:39). Job points forward to Jesus, who left heaven, endured the Cross, and was raised and seated at the right hand of the Father (Philippians 2:8–9; Hebrews 12:2). Paul put it this way: "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18). Some of what we lose may come back in this life, and all of it is repaid in the next.

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE, SAME SITUATION, THREE PEOPLE:

- **Negative:** One man spends fifteen years building a restaurant, and in his forties a downturn takes the restaurant and most of his retirement savings. He never says out loud that he expected God to protect what he built. He decides faithfulness does not pay, stops giving and serving, and spends every weekend trying to rebuild what he lost with the time he has left.
- **Positive:** A woman loses her own restaurant the same way. She tells her husband they may never get it back in this life, but nothing they have in Christ was lost. She keeps giving and serving, and she tells her kids that God will make all things right, even if they have to wait until the age to come.
- **Looks fine but:** Another man loses his restaurant the same way and keeps showing up and saying the right things. Privately, he has read Job 42 as a contract. He expects God to double it back within a few years. Every month that God doesn't restore what he lost, he grows more bitter.

SAMPLE "I WILL"

I will write down one loss I have been expecting God to repay in this life, and pray Romans 8:18 over it every day this week.

NOTES

STEP 6 NOW DISCUSS

Go around the table.

Which item that you circled or starred stood out to you most and why?

STEP 7 WRITE YOUR "I WILL" STATEMENT

What is a practical, measurable, tangible step you can take to apply this information this next week?

STEP 8 PRAY

Pray for the person on your right by name, and for the "I Will" they just wrote.