

## Job 15-17 Room for Pain

1. In many religions, there is no room for doubt. I heard an interview with Billy Graham wherein the interviewer asked him if he had any doubts. Dr. Graham said he had not had a single doubt since his conversion. My father often said the same thing. I was astounded when I heard this – though I didn't question their truthfulness; I was just amazed at life lived without doubt.
2. In many Islamic regions, doubt is considered the same as blasphemy. In many Christian tribes, it is the same. Religion is settled, firmed up, and received. To question any aspect of it is to invite the wrath of God...conveniently delivered at the hands of people who claim to be His representatives. (Heretic Detector, Lovers Lane CoC, Contending For the Faith, Spiritual Sword).
3. Job is set up as a play with set pieces within it. In this two chapter scene, Eliphaz maintains that there is no room for doubt; doubt is a sign of iniquity, evil, and a sin filled heart. Job then responds. Lets look at Eliphaz's opening. (**Job 15:1-10**)
4. Wow. A lot here. First, he says that Job is full of hot air. Literally. That is what "fill their belly with the hot east wind" meant. When wind came from the west, it came from desert regions. It brought no benefit – just heat, no water.
5. He dismisses Job's arguments and pain without answering or even acknowledging it. (practice of repeating what the other said in your own words to check on comprehension) He dismisses it all as just words. To be fair, some people hit you with slogans and a word salad that there is no way to pick apart and answer...but these people are supposed to be friends who know each other well, who grew up with each other. Where there should be compassion, there is only a rush to defend God by quashing anyone who might speak their doubts out loud.
6. Eliphaz uses sarcasm here – as does every player in this book, including God, at some point. He asks if Job listened in on God's council room. God DOES have a council. He is Lord of Hosts and that council room is pictured in the first chapter of Job. Jeremiah and

Amos both spoke of the council of God. If you know this book, you get a little shudder when you hear Eliphaz speak sarcastically about Job sitting in on God's war room (**Job 15:8**) because God IS going to show up in this book again, and when He does, He speaks directly to Eliphaz's comment (**Job 38:1-2 New King James Version, please**)

7. Eliphaz says something that is way too close to the way we often "comfort" people. (**Job 15:11**). In other words, hey, you've got God and that's all that matters. Except, it doesn't always.
8. Eliphaz argues for two things: age and consensus (smarter people than you have already figured all this out...settled science). This consensus was settled and established by driving out all who might think in a different way (**Job 15:19**). It is absolutely fair to ask people if they have checked in the wisdom already out there. It is not fair to tell them to accept whatever they find without examining it if they believe they have a new and better take.
9. Eliphaz gives the traditional warnings against doubting or speaking against the consensus and the aged. Only doom awaits Job, he says, if Job does not lay aside all doubts about God and then own up to his own sinfulness.
10. Job replies. (**Job 16:1-5**) In every interaction with someone in pain, you have a choice: you can rub their nose in their pain or you can find a way to comfort them. This is a very helpful thing to remember. We live in "offendista" world, where people take offense at every thing they can, as if they lie awake at night, looking for another way to be offended. Fear rules the streets and rules our hearts so we are pre-bruised for any confrontation. We CAN choose comfort and kindness.
11. Job has a healthier relationship with God than his friends do! He is not afraid to go directly to God with his complaint. (**Job 16:7-8**) He calls his friends "the ungodly." (**Job 16:11**) They are defending God and re-establishing the old paths of accepted wisdom...but they are speaking deceitfully for God (**Job 13:7**) and ignoring Job's need for comfort. It is only fair to note that they DID try to comfort him, but they quit when they felt he was expressing inappropriate doubt. There's a lesson in there somewhere.

12. Much of chapter 16 reminds me of David in Psalm 51 but there is one rather large difference: David was speaking of being broken by God because of his sin. Job had no Nathan the prophet to come and tell him his sin. Job asks his blood to cry out like the blood of Abel cried out to God (Job 16:18-21). Again, a cry answered in Jesus.
13. Chapter 17 is Job speaking to God, then his friends, then to God about his friends. Why would his friends insist that all of this tragedy had a reason? Because, if it can happen to Job without reason, it can happen to them. That is the key here: like hearing a diagnosis a friend received, hearing about a child dying in an accident, a car rolled over because of a moment's inattention, seeing a person with a prosthetic limb... we fear what might happen to us so we either block it out or we explain it away...or both.
14. Job closes his cry in chapter 17 with an invitation to try again (Job 17:10) and then cries the cry of every atheist (Job 17:13-15).
15. When we see the violence, hatred and division in our world, we need to remember that it links right back to the father of lies, the destroyer, the annihilation, the great dragon. When people are stripped of their faith in God, they have to make something else their religion. And they will fight for it and kill for it just as hard as Job's friends are fighting for theirs.
16. Our response to this is not to amp up our own arguments and fights...that was the mistake the friends of Job made. No, our response must be to show those around us that the comforter, friend, and advocate for whom Job cried came. And then we speak of Jesus.