

Session 1

TRAUMA

Christ's comfort in deep suffering

When Trauma Intrudes

Job 1-2

Steve Midgley



Trauma...

...is deep hurt

...is complicated

...is not beyond our God

Ambitions...

...to listen to the experience

...to view this through a spiritual lens
(especially through the book of Job)

...to be practical *(especially in the streams)*

Reading

Job chapter 1

Definitions of trauma

- Trauma... from a word meaning 'to wound'

Definitions of trauma

“Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, crime, natural disaster, physical or emotional abuse, neglect, experiencing or witnessing violence, death of a loved one, war, and more.”

(American Psychological Association)

Definitions of trauma

“Trauma refers to the way that some distressing events are so extreme or intense that they overwhelm a person’s ability to cope, resulting in lasting negative impact”

(UK Trauma Council)

Definitions of trauma

Trauma is the result of 'an event or repeated experience where the person felt terrified and powerless to defend themselves, and then were unable to process or make sense of the experience'.

Betsy de Thierry

Trauma

...overwhelms a person

...involves feelings of helplessness

...'Big T' and 'little t' trauma

Three E's

An **Event** (or series of events) that happens to someone
which they **Experience** as beyond their capacity to cope
which has an ongoing **Effect** in their life

The Impact of Trauma...

...varies

...a mix of physical, emotional and spiritual effects

Heightened anxiety

What I feared has come upon me;
what I dreaded has happened to me.
I have no peace, no quietness;
I have no rest, but only turmoil.”

Job 3:25-26

Nightmares and flashbacks

When I think my bed will comfort me
and my couch will ease my complaint,
even then you frighten me with dreams
and terrify me with visions

Job 7:13-14



Avoidance

Withdraw your hand far from me,
and stop frightening me with your terrors

Job 13:21

Mood disturbance

My face is red with weeping,
dark shadows ring my eyes

Job 16:16

If only my anguish could be weighed
and all my misery be placed on the scales!

Job 6:2



Suicidal thoughts

You frighten me with dreams
and terrify me with visions,
so that I prefer strangling and death,
rather than this body of mine.
I despise my life; I would not live forever.
Let me alone; my days have no meaning.

Job 7:14-16



Shame

If I am guilty — woe to me!

Even if I am innocent, I cannot lift my head,
for I am full of shame
and drowned in my affliction.

Job 10:15



Relational isolation

“He has alienated my family from me;
my acquaintances are completely estranged from me.
My relatives have gone away;
my closest friends have forgotten me.
My guests and my female servants count me a foreigner;
they look on me as on a stranger.

Job 19:13-15



The Body Keeps the Score

Bessel van der Kolk

Two pathways

Smoke alarm and watchtower

Biblical Reflections on Trauma

1. The suffering of trauma is a terrible expression of evil

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:12



Biblical Reflections on Trauma

2. God stands over the suffering of trauma

*The Bible portrays for us a world that lies under the absolute supremacy and sovereignty of the Creator, who has no rivals... and yet... he governs the world by the means of and through the agency of a multiplicity of supernatural powers, **some of whom are evil.***

Christopher Ash, Job



Biblical Reflections on Trauma

3. Explanations and understanding of trauma may always elude us

Once we have a better understanding of these early chapters of Job, it becomes clear that what God wants from us in Job-like suffering is neither repentance nor deeper spiritual discipline. All he wants is for us to hold onto him - not to curse and walk away, but just to maintain our relationship with him through tears and sackcloth.

Eric Ortlund, *Suffering Wisely and Well*



Biblical Reflections on Trauma

4. In our care of others, we must resist simple formulations

- Resist simplistic explanations
- Avoid trite comfort

Ambitions

To listen well...

...and speak well...

...to those who have faced the deepest pain