

Overwhelmed
We Need Each Other
Job 2:11-13

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Text Introduction: We have been at this study on the theme “Overwhelmed” for quite a while now. As we begin to bring this series to a close (next week), we consider the classic story of being overwhelmed. Job’s story of tragedy and being overwhelmed is known even by those who do not know the Bible well. Job lost his possessions, his children, and his health.

I want to examine just a part of Job’s story today, bringing several other Biblical texts into the picture, to talk about a matter that we might not immediately think about in a series on the topic of being overwhelmed. I want to address the matter of the value of friends for the overwhelming moments of life.

Text: **11** Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. **12** And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. **13** So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that *his* grief was very great.

Introduction: I don’t remember how old I was—hopefully not all that old, but I remember very vivid details about this particular day in my childhood. I was with my usual group of friends playing basketball. Though I don’t remember exactly what happened, we got into an argument. In the heat of the argument, I did something really foolish. I announced to the group, “I’m going home. I don’t need any friends anymore.” At that announcement, I literally took, as the cliché says, “my ball and went home.” In less than an hour, I was miserable. Thankfully, partly out of the fact that my friends were miserable also and partly because I had the ball, they came to get me.

We might say we don’t need any friends, but the truth is: We need each other! We need each other every day, but most of all, we need each other for the overwhelming moments of life. Job’s friends set the backdrop for the lesson today. The irony about Job’s friends is that they also show us all the wrong things about friendship. Let’s start there and end up with the more positive example.

A Negative Example of Friendship

The scene in Job 2 gives us friendship at its best. We'll look at that in just a moment. First, let's look at the negative example of friendship. Job's friends were at their best in verse 13 as "no one spoke a word." Their problems seem to begin in chapter 4 when they open their mouths. We know their words were wrong when God reveals His wrath against them as recorded in Job 42:7. The reason for the wrath is because the friends have tried to speak about that which they did not know. Here is the way that Job felt about his friends: "All my close friends abhor me, and those whom I love have turned against me." (Job 19:19)

The lesson is this: Our job as friends is to comfort, sometimes to confront, but never to condemn.

Positive Examples of Friendship

Job's 3 Friends

In this positive example, we see several good characteristics of what friends do for the overwhelmed.

- Friends must be intentional. "For they had made an appointment."
- Friends must be empathetic. "They lifted their voices and wept."
- Friends must be best known for their presence. "No one spoke a word."

Jonathan—David's Friend

One of the best known stories of friendship in the Bible is the friendship between David and Jonathan. We see these same three characteristics in their friendship.

- 1 Samuel 18:3—Here is intentionality. Jonathan made a covenant.
- 1 Samuel 20:4—Here is empathy. He was willing to do whatever. He was willing to enter into David's difficulty.
- 1 Samuel 23:16—Here is presence. He went to him. He helped David find strength in God.

The Lesson: We all need a Jonathan and we all need to seek to be a Jonathan.

Proverbs about Friendship

- Proverbs 17:17—You need friends.

*A friend loves at all times,
And a brother is born for adversity.*

- Proverbs 18:24—To be a friend, you need to be a friend.

*A man who has friends must himself be friendly,
But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

- Proverbs 27:17—Friends are meant to bring us closer to God.

*As iron sharpens iron,
So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*

When I was working on my Ph.D. I had a friend named Richard. In many ways two people could not have been more different. Richard was several years older than I. As a result, he had much more life experiences. Richard was brilliant; I was, well, much less than brilliant. Richard was that kind of student that began working on papers before the semester even started. I was that kind of student who stayed up all night the day before the paper was due. In spite of all this, Richard and I became fast friends. Richard and I started Seminary on the exact same day. We graduated with our Master's Degree on the same day. We started the Ph.D. program on the same day—the only two in the New Testament program that particular year. We had most every class together. We took exams together. Unfortunately for me, we were always graded together. Richard is among, if not the most, intelligent person I have ever personally known. He had breezed through his program of study; I had struggled mightily at times of my study. Richard took his oral examination about a week before I took mine. On the day that I showed up for my oral examination, I was the most nervous I have ever been in my entire life. When I got to the place where I was to sit for the exam, Richard was there. I said, "What are you doing here?" He answered that he had come to sit with me until they called me into the room. He did. He waited until the professors called me into the room. As I went into the room, Richard said, "I'll be praying for you, and I will be back in two hours to wait with you until they call you back in the room to tell you that you have passed. You'll do fine." True to his word, Richard was there when I was dismissed two hours later. He greeted me with a big smile and said, "Now, Steve, when they call you back into that room, they will all be standing. That's the tradition here at the Seminary when a student passes the oral exam." That day I was most thankful that just as Richard said they were standing when they called me back into the room. But you know what I'm more thankful for now some ten years later. I'm thankful for a wonderful friend like Richard who taught me something valuable that day about friendship to the overwhelmed.

One Last Thought about Friendship

Are you a friend of God? It's the most important question.

- John 15:14

You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

- James 2:23

And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.