

## Misdiagnosing Suffering Job

ETS: Job's friends misdiagnosed the reason for his suffering based on faulty presuppositions.

ESS: Misdiagnosis of suffering can lead to damaging consequences

OSS: I want people to be very careful about explaining reasons for suffering

PQ: Is your diagnosis of suffering based in God's Word?

UW: Misdiagnosis

ME

Have you been the recipient of a misdiagnosis?

[Pat's misdiagnosis](#)

A **misdiagnosis** is when your healthcare provider tells you that you have some illness or condition, but it's **incorrect**.

- [Researchers from Johns Hopkins University](#) analyzed more than **55,000 malpractice claims** to determine **patterns of misdiagnosis**.
  - Their findings, published in the journal *Diagnosis*, show that nearly three quarters (74.1%) of the *most harmful misdiagnoses* can be attributed to just three conditions: **cancer**

(37.8%), **vascular events**, or problems relating to **blood vessels** (22.8%), and **infection** (13.5%).

- Even scarier, more than half of the misdiagnosis cases analyzed in this study happened to **women**.
- A **2015 National Academy of Medicine** report that found **diagnostic errors** result in up to **80,000 deaths annually in US hospitals**.
- In the USA, [misdiagnosis](#) (26%) now rivals **surgical accidents** (25%) as the leading cause of **medicolegal** claims.

WE

HOW do Doctor's **misdiagnose** a problem?

- NOT intentional –Doctors truly want to help people

According to the **Royal College of Physicians** report in the *US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health*, in a comprehensive review of previous studies of **misdiagnosis**, diagnostic errors were assigned to one of three categories: <sup>1</sup>

**1. No fault:**

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<sup>1</sup>"Misdiagnosis: analysis based on case record review with proposals aimed to improve diagnostic processes"  
(internet accessed: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5873736/>)

- a. Included **unusual** or **silent presentation** of **disease**.
- b. Or patients provided confusing descriptions of symptoms—which led to a misdiagnosis

## 2. System-based

- a. 'system errors' included technical malfunctioning (i.e. a technology failure)
- b. Organizational malfunctioning (i.e. the protocol used was the wrong one)

## 3. Human-cognitive

- a. Faulty gathering of data
- b. inadequate reasoning
- c. faulty verification

An **American** study found **cognitive errors** accounted for **74%** of the misdiagnosis and **system-based** errors accounted for **65%** of misdiagnosis

WHY do Doctor's make misdiagnose a problem?

- Mostly because their **presupposition** was wrong (*system-based* protocol) OR they **failed** to **gather all** the **data**, **think through the situation** or did not do the **proper verifications** of the issues.

According to the article: “*Minimizing cognitive errors that enhance the incidence of misdiagnoses requires thought and understanding.*”

IT is easy to make a misdiagnosis when it comes to suffering!

- HOW do WE keep from misdiagnosing a persons’, or even our own, suffering?
- WHY is it important we do all we can NOT to misdiagnose suffering?

Suffering is a part of this fallen world!

- We all are going to go through suffering
- W are all going to walk with people through suffering

HOW do WE keep from misdiagnosing a persons’, or even our own, suffering?

**GOD**

**Turn to Job**

The **REASON** for the **Book of Job** is to answer the question:

**HOW SHOULD A *RIGHTEOUS* PERSON SUFFER?**

How does a **righteous person** suffer?

## **A Righteous Person Suffers in Total Surrender**

How is Total Surrender Possible in Suffering?

***Accepting both BLESSING and ADVERSITY as coming from God!***

**REALITY:** It is DIFFICULT to go through suffering!

In **Chapter 1** Job suffered **emotionally**

- Loss of **wealth**
- Loss of **family**

In **Chapter 2** Job suffered **physically**

- **Boils** over his entire body

What can make suffering even MORE DIFFICULT is the **MENTAL ANGUISH**

- INTERNAL TEMPATION: To just “**End it all**”
  - This may even be **reinforced** by others who are **watching** you go through the suffering!
    - **Job’s wife’s** advice was to “**Curse God and die!**”

REALITY: A suffering person's **mental anguish** can be **reinforced** or **added to** by *well-meaning people who **misdiagnose** suffering!*

**Well-meaning** people can easily increase a suffering person's anguish by **misdiagnosing** the situation!

- HOW do WE keep from misdiagnosing a persons', or even our own, suffering?

**Chapter 2** ends with Job's **friends arriving!**

- Traveled from long distances
  - Job's suffering was apparently well-known!
    - People were talking about all the calamity that had suddenly hit Job.

Job's friends did what good friends do!

- 1. They came to **see Job** in the midst of his suffering
- 2. They **empathized** with Job
- 3. They **spent time** with Job

For 7 days they did not try to **DIAGNOSE** the reason for Job's suffering

- For 7 days they were just there for Job—at his side—being good friends.

However, after 7 days of

- Listening to Job moan

- Watching Job writhe in pain
- Listening to Job's desire for death and cursing the day he was born (Ch. 3)
- Seeing Job's wife upset and crying at her husband's situation
  - They decide they need to **DO SOMETHING** to **FIX** the situation!

In order to FIX the situation, you need to **DIAGNOSE** the **Problem**

- Job's friends decide to FIX the problem by **DIAGNOSING** the **Problem**
- Most of the **Book of Job** are the **dialogue** between Job and his friends as **they try to diagnosis** the situation
  - These dialogues/debates go all the way to **Chapter 37!**

Unfortunately, Job's friends do such a **POOR JOB** at **DIAGNOSING** the situation, that Job says **Job 16:2-3** "I have heard many things like these; you are miserable comforters, all of you! 3Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing?"

HOW do WE keep from misdiagnosing a persons', or even our own, suffering?

- HOW do WE keep from being “Miserable comforters”?
- How can we avoid hurting people in the midst of their suffering?
  - If you are **trying to comfort** someone who is hurting, what can you do to best ensure you minister to them and don’t hurt them further?

WE are not going to read **Chapters 4-37**, but we are going to take a 30,000 view of what is going on.

- Of Job’s **3 friends**, the **oldest, most thoughtful, most profound** and the one with the **most to say** is **Eliphaz**

Today, we are going to look at **ELIPHAZ** and **WHAT** led to his **misdiagnosis**

Do you remember, that I cited that an **American** study found that **65%** of misdiagnosis were the result of **system-based errors**.

- **Eliphaz** makes a “**system-based**” error
  - He is basing his diagnosis on a **faulty “system”**

What is the “faulty” system Eliphaz is using to make his diagnosis?



**Job 4:12-17** “A word was brought to me in secret; my ears caught a whisper of it. <sup>13</sup> Among unsettling thoughts from visions in the night, when deep sleep comes over men, <sup>14</sup> fear and trembling came over me and made all my bones shake. <sup>15</sup> I felt a draft on my face, and the hair on my body stood up. <sup>16</sup> A figure stood there, but I could not recognize its appearance; a form loomed before my eyes. I heard a whispering voice: <sup>17</sup> “Can a mortal be righteous before God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?”

- **Eliphaz** claimed to have a “**word of knowledge**”: “A word was brought to me in secret; ; my ears caught a whisper of it” (v. 12)

HOW do WE keep from **misdiagnosing** a persons’, or even our own, suffering?

**Don’t Make a Diagnosis Based on “Secret” Knowledge**

You can argue that this was BEFORE any books of the **OT** were written, so where else could Eliphaz go ***BUT WE don’t have that excuse!***

**Job 4:12** “A word was brought to me in secret; my ears caught a whisper of it.”

How ELIPHAZ know that this “**word brought to Eliphaz in secret**” was a “**word of knowledge**” from the Lord”?

- Apparently, it was a POWERFUL experience: “**fear and trembling came over me and made all my bones shake. <sup>15</sup> I felt a draft on my face, and the hair on my body stood up.**” (vs. 14-15)
  - BUT, just because you have an **emotion** or **visceral reaction** to something **unexplainable DOES NOT mean it is from God!**
    - How do we know that this “**figure**” who stood before Eliphaz was not Satan or a demon?

What “**REVELATION**” or “**Word of Knowledge**” does Eliphaz have to share with Job?

- **Job 4:7-8** “**Consider: Who has perished when he was innocent? Where have the honest been destroyed? 8 In my experience, those who plow injustice and those who sow trouble reap the same.**”
  - Eliphaz “**word of knowledge**” is that Job is **NOT innocent**
  - Eliphaz **diagnosis** is that Job needs to **seek God's forgiveness**
    - **Job 5:8** “**However, if I were you, I would appeal to God and would present my case to him.**”

RESULT: **Misdiagnosis** by ELIPHAZ!

- **God** said in **Job 1:8** “...No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil.”

There are **3 spiritual gifts lists** in Scripture (Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; and 12:28), but **only 1** of them **mentions** the **gifts** referred to as the “**word of wisdom**” and the “**word of knowledge**”:

- **1 Cor. 12:8** “to one is given a message of wisdom through the Spirit, to another, a message of knowledge by the same Spirit”
  - Some believe that the “**message (or word) of knowledge**” is the Holy Spirit speaking from **one believer to another** in which he/she gives a **special revelation** regarding a **situation** or a **decision**.
    - EX: Robby is going to be a great evangelist
    - EX: “There is something great within you”

Admittedly, when someone says God has given them a “**word of knowledge**” to reveal something to you, it is **powerful moment!**

DANGER: Denying the **sufficiency of Scripture!**

- In other words, If we **need God** to reveal “**words of knowledge**” to *other believers* about our situation (or suffering) then we are dangerously close to saying that **we need** more than Scripture; we need **more revelation** outside of God’s Word—God’s Word is incomplete.
  - Perhaps **Paul** was **wrong** when he wrote that **God’s Word** truly is **sufficient** to make us “**complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work**” (2 Timothy 3:17)?
  - Perhaps **Peter** was wrong when he wrote that God truly given us “**everything we need for life and godliness**” (2 Peter 1:3)

What is the “**word of knowledge**” that God has given some believers?

- It is NOT a **new revelation**, but the **ability to understand the deep things of God and the mysteries of His Word**.
  - It is NOT a “**Secret**” **revelation** that has been given by God to an individual who now has to share it with you.

Remember, the **spiritual gifts** are given to **build up** the body of Christ, not **cause confusion** or **doubt** in the Body of Christ.

Does that mean that God NEVER uses a believer to speak truth into the life of another believer? NO!

- BUT there is a **difference** from **speaking God's truth** as **revealed** in **His Word** to **another believer** and delivering a "**Secret**" message from God.

When someone is suffering, WE want to bring **comfort** to them, BUT be **CAREFUL** NOT to **go beyond Scripture** and claim to have a special revelation from God as to WHY they are suffering.

Eliphaz was NOT speaking God's Word to Job

- **Job 42:7** "After the LORD had finished speaking to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has."

The **American** study found that 65% of misdiagnosis were due to system-based error, but even more misdiagnosis (74%) were the results of **cognitive errors**—wrong thinking!

HOW do WE keep from **misdiagnosing** a persons', or even our own, suffering?

## Don't Diagnosis Suffering as Always Being the Result of Sin

TRUE: Sometimes suffering IS the direct **RESULT** of our **sins**

- You pay the price for a **bad financial** decision
- You suffer a **STD** because of a one-night stand
- You lose your **marriage** because of an affair

IN those cases, **REPENTANCE** is in order BUT even *after* you repent, you may **still SUFFER**

- **REPENTANCE** does not mean the **automatic removal of the consequences!**
  - You may still suffer the consequences

*ELIPHAZ assumed Job's suffering was the result of Job sinning against God*

- **Job 4:7-9** "Consider: Who has perished when he was innocent? Where have the honest been destroyed?"
  - **Presupposition:** NO one has perished when "he was innocent" and the "honest" have NOT been destroyed.
- 8 In my experience, those who plow injustice and those who sow trouble reap the same. 9 They perish at a single blast from God and come to an end by the breath of his nostrils."

- **Presupposition:** *You reap what you sow*
- **Presupposition:** God rewards the good people and punishes the evil doers

Eliphaz observation is **TRUE** sometimes in this world, but not always!

- WHY? We live in a “**fallen**” world.
  - REALITY: WE DO NOT always “reap what we sow” in this world!
    - **Ps. 73:3** “For I envied the arrogant; I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

ELIPHAZ fails to see life from BOTH an earthly and heavenly perspective!

- Earthly Perspective: *You reap what you sow now*
- Heavenly Perspective: *You may not reap what you sow now, but you will in eternity!*

HOW do WE keep from **misdiagnosing** a persons’, or even our own, suffering?

**Don’t Assume that Suffering is *Always* the Result of God’s Discipline**

**Job 5:17-26** “See how happy is the person whom God corrects; so do not reject the discipline of the Almighty.”

- **Eliphaz argues that God is disciplining Job** and Job should be happy about it

Here is why **Job should be happy** that God is “disciplining” him.

- 18 For he wounds but he also bandages; he strikes, but his hands also heal.
- 19 He will rescue you from six calamities; no harm will touch you in seven.
- 20 In famine he will redeem you from death, and in battle, from the power of the sword.

**ARGUMENT:** If you will just **accept suffering** as **God’s discipline** you will have a great life!

- 21 You will be safe from slander and not fear destruction when it comes.
- 22 You will laugh at destruction and hunger and not fear the land’s wild creatures.
- 23 For you will have a covenant with the stones of the field, and the wild animals will be at peace with you.
- 24 You will know that your tent is secure, and nothing will be missing when you inspect your home.
- 25 You will also know that your offspring will be many and your descendants like the grass of the earth.



- 26 You will approach the grave in full vigor, as a stack of sheaves is gathered in its season.

IN other words, if JOB will just ADMIT he has sinned and ACCEPT God's discipline, life will return to normal.

- What kind of anguish does that misdiagnosis put on a person?!
  - You are saying "Your suffering is ALL your fault!" when there is NO EVIDENCE of sinful living!

SUFFERING is SOMETIMES used by God as a means of DISCIPLINE: **Hebrews 12:5-7** "My son, do not take the Lord's discipline lightly or lose heart when you are reprov'd by him, 6 for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives. Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons."

- Believers should "Endure suffering as discipline" because **Heb. 12:11** "it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

Suffering can be used by God as a "means of disciplining" and, if we endure suffering with "total Surrender" then it can "yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness" BUT that DOES NOT MEAN that God ALWAYS ALLOWS SUFFERING because we NEED DISCIPLINED!

**REALITY:**

**SOMETIMES SUFFERING is the ALLOWED BY GOD we don't know WHY!**

- There is NO blatant SIN in our lives
- We are Not the VICTIM of another's Sin
- We are walking with the Lord

**REALITY: SOMETIMES SUFFERING is the ALLOWED BY GOD and there is NO ANSWER for WHY!**

IF/WHEN a **medical misdiagnosis** occurs, *we try to find out WHY*. As I stated earlier, studies show that one reason for **medical** misdiagnosis is....

**1. No fault of the Doctor:**

- a. A doctor **cannot be blamed** for a misdiagnosis IF the **patient** provided **confusing descriptions** of symptoms.
  - i. The doctor can only go on what the patient is telling him/her and if the information the patient is giving is confusing, it may lead the doctor to look in the wrong place.

Job responds to Eliphaz' misdiagnosis in **Job 6-7** where he defends himself

- **Bildad** and **Zophar** both take shots at diagnosing Job's suffering and Job defends himself against them.

WHY is misdiagnosis of suffering Dangerous?

### **Misdiagnosis of Suffering Can Result in Resentment**

**Eliphaz** comes back with **another** speech in **Chapter 15** and by this point ELIPHAZ is growing resentful of Job.

- Eliphaz blasts Job in **Job 15:7-11** “Were you the first human ever born, or were you brought forth before the hills? **NO!** 8 Do you listen in on the council of God, or have a monopoly on wisdom? **NO!** 9 What do you know that we don't? **NOTHING!** What do you understand that is not clear to us? **NOTHING!** 10 Both the gray-haired and the elderly are with us—older than your father. 11 Are God's consolations not enough for you, even the words that deal gently with you?”

WHY is misdiagnosis of suffering Dangerous?

### **Misdiagnosis of Suffering Can Result in Victim Blaming**

ELIPHAZ accuses Job of being a Wicked Person! **Job 15:20-23** “A wicked person writhes in pain all his days, throughout the number of years reserved for the

ruthless. 21 Dreadful sounds fill his ears; when he is at peace, a robber attacks him. 22 He doesn't believe he will return from darkness; he is destined for the sword. 23 He wanders about for food, asking, "Where is it?" He knows the day of darkness is at hand."

- ELIPHAZ pushes the knife in deeper **Job 15:34-35**  
"For the company of the godless will have no children, and fire will consume the tents of those who offer bribes. 35 They conceive trouble and give birth to evil; their womb prepares deception.

In other words: "It is ALL YOUR FAULT JOB" that you have "no children" that "fire consumed the tents" of your children!

Job responds to Eliphaz' misdiagnosis in **Job 16-17** where he defends himself

- **Bildad** and **Zophar** both take shots at diagnosing Job's suffering and Job defends himself against them.

Then **Eliphaz** comes back with **another** speech in **Chapter 22** and ELIPHAZ makes an ugly accusation at Job

WHY is misdiagnosis of suffering Dangerous?

**Misdiagnosis of Suffering Can Result in Victim Anxiety**

ELIPHAZ questions whether God really cares about JOB!

**Job 22:1-5** “Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied: 2 Can a man be of any use to God? Can even a wise man be of use to him? 3 Does it delight the Almighty if you are righteous? Does he profit if you perfect your behavior? 4 Does he correct you and take you to court because of your piety? 5 Isn't your wickedness abundant and aren't your iniquities endless?”

This is a terrible misdiagnosis because it plays on the FEAR of anyone going through suffering!

- FEAR: God has forgotten about me!
- FEAR: God doesn't care about me

What Eliphaz does next is what we are tempted to do when we are suffering—and we can't pin point the reason—we start to MANUFACTURE reasons!

- **Job 22:6-11** “For you took collateral from your brothers without cause, stripping off their clothes and leaving them naked. 7 You gave no water to the thirsty and withheld food from the famished, 8 while the land belonged to a powerful man and an influential man lived on it. 9 You sent widows away empty-handed, and the strength of the fatherless

was crushed. 10 Therefore snares surround you, and sudden dread terrifies you, 11 or darkness, so you cannot see, and a flood of water covers you.”

There was **NO EVIDENCE** for any of this, but because ELIPHAZ operated with a “**system error**” that *suffering is always the result of sin*, then he had to MANUFACTURE something to keep his system in place!

## WE

HOW do we keep from misdiagnosing suffering?

### Listen and Assess

If it is **evident** the suffering is the **direct result** of **sin**, THEN an honest, sensitive, truthful discussion is in order.

- However “**Don’t cast your pearls before swine**”
  - The person has to be ready to receive what you have to say
  - Make sure your counsel is rooted in God’s Word!

If it is NOT evident that the suffering is a direct result of sin, then....

### Avoid Quick Fix Solution

It is not always “just repent” and the suffering will stop!

- The suffering may continue after REPENTANCE
- The suffering may continue for life!

HOW do we keep from misdiagnosing suffering?

### **Admit when You Don't Have the Answer**

ELIPHAZ did not know the answer to Job's suffering—in fact, none of his friends knew the answer!

- It is better to **admit you don't know WHY** then to misdiagnose suffering and heap more anguish upon the person!
- It is better to “**mourn with those who mourn**” than to make those who mourn **worse** with a misdiagnosis.

The best you can do is to encourage the person suffering to “totally Surrender” to God!

- REMIND them: **God Knows their situation**
- REMIND them: **God loves them**
- REMIND them: **Life is temporary** and we have an eternity of NO SUFFERING coming.
- REMIND them: **They are NOT alone**
- REMIND them: **Jesus suffered and He knows,** understands and hears their prayer.

- **Encourage them:** To read and meditate on God's Word

IN Job's responses to his friends, he complains about one thing WE have that he DIDN'T have: **A mediator!**

- **Job 9:32-33** "For he [GOD] is not a man like me, that I can answer him, that we can take each other to court. 33 There is no mediator between us, to lay his hand on both of us."
  - **We have a mediator—Jesus Christ!**

**PQ: How are you diagnosing suffering?**