

God is Closer Than You Think - John Ortberg

**A Reaction Paper
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**by
Troy A. Griffitts
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John Ortberg teaches on how to minister to people when 'winter' has overtaken their lives.

Often when people come for counseling, they feel that God has left them or is no where to be found in their trouble. They need to be reminded, as in John's example of Job, that they cannot see the 'upper stage'. They have no idea what God is doing or teaching in their time of trouble. One needs to examine their love for God-- if it will stand up to God's boasting to Satan-- to remain strong when all things aren't as they should be. When winter comes, it will give place to evaluation of our ideas of Who God really is.

Meeting a logical objective is not remotely enough to satisfy most troubled peoples' needs. We find teaching in Scripture directing us to grieve with those who grieve. Sometimes what is needed is to simply be with someone in need. We don't always have to have all the answers, but we can always express an honest caring heart toward those who experience hurt. Often when people feel hurt, it is a reaction against not wanting to be alone. They long for the security of lasting relationships and hurt when they feel betrayed. They want real relationships in their life and break down when any sign arises that this might not be so. As counselors, we can be there for them in their time of hurting and help them restore lasting relationships that will meet a real need that we all have to be loved and close with other people. Often, the best way to do this is to alleviate the immediate hurt and feelings of betrayal by being there for them and satisfying their need to meaningfully interact with another and to be understood.

Though God admonishes us to be likeminded with those hurting, He also calls us in Job to retain a right place of Him in our minds, and to evaluate the substance of our love for Him, when times are tough. As we see in Job God admonishing him for not keeping a right understanding, so also are we presented in the New Testament with a positive example of grief when we don't fully understand. When Paul was overwhelmed with grief for his people, Israel, for not accepting their long awaited Messiah, we see God uplifting his heart, almost as he writes from Romans chapters 9 through 11, as he defends God's sovereign right to do as He pleases, and God gives him just a small insight into His purpose and plan for hardening Israel for a short time, so all might be found guilty before God, so that God might have mercy on all. And in the end of Chapter 11 we see Paul exclaim with joy, almost from the pages of Job, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the Mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen."