

Songs of the Dark Night: Study Guide

Overview

- Christian ethics case study, bridging our Psalms Study and *Christian Ethics at the Edge*
- **Main point: don't run. Herd together and sing the songs of the dark night.**

Cattle and Bison

Cattle scatter in the storm and die; bison face it together, the younger leaning on the older.

Causes of Suffering

- **Consequential.** Rob a bank, go to jail.
- **Disciplinary.** Secret sins. Calamity from a Father, not a courtroom.
- **Persecutory.** The unjust wrath of man for Christ. Stephen stoned.
- **Purgative.** The other three are traceable. This one is not.

Three Stages, Two Transitions

1. **Purgative.** Comforts are taken away from you.
 - *Dark night of the sense.* God feels absent. Nothing delights, in Him or on earth.
2. **Illuminative.** You experience greater truth in God.
 - *Dark night of the spirit.* The core issues of sin that remain.
3. **Unitive.** Closer to God than you have ever been.

The Endurance of Job

James 5:10–11; Job 7; Job 23

Not consequential, disciplinary, or persecution, so by elimination Job's night is purgative.

1. Lean on Heman

Psalm 88:1–8, 14

Sing the darkest Psalm in hope, because Job's night ended in blessing and union with God.

2. Lean on Jesus

Matthew 26:36–39; Psalm 22:1–8

He endured the dark night not for Himself but for us, and knows a darkness deeper than yours.

3. Lean on Solomon

Song of Songs 5:6–8; 6:2–3

Lovesick with no earthly substitute, and afterward closer to God than ever before.

Questions for Reflection

1. Why is purgative suffering the hardest of the four to recognize from inside it?
2. Where have you seen outward reformation and inward corruption coexist?
3. What does it mean, practically, to be Elihu to a friend in the dark night?