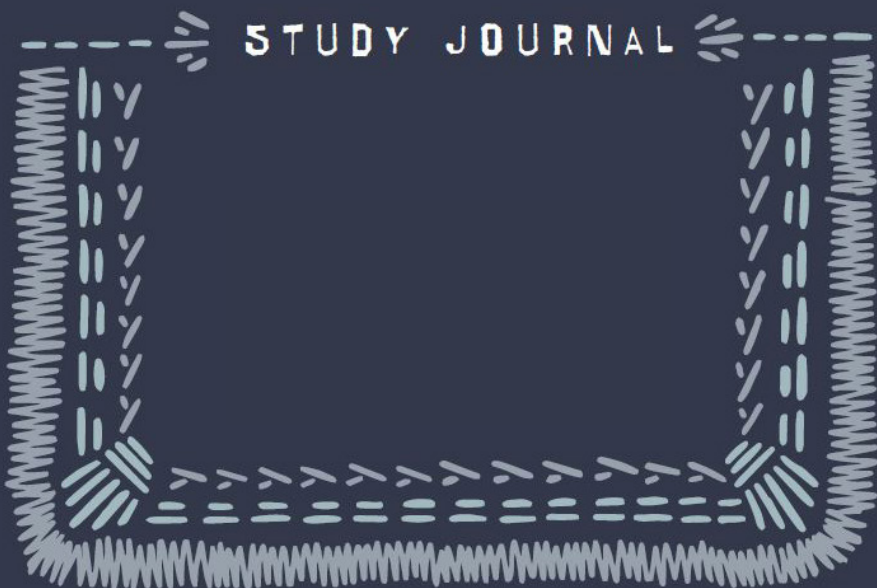


# UNRAVELED

SEEKING GOD WHEN OUR PLANS FALL APART

STUDY JOURNAL





The Way to Wonder | Lisle Gwynn Garrity



# UNRAVELED

JOB'S LAMENT & LOSS

*Seeking Understanding When Everything Has Fallen Apart*

READ // JOB 28:12-28

FROM THE ARTIST // LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

Everything Job holds dear—his property, his family, his wealth, his physical health—has been taken from him. His life has unraveled in every way imaginable. How can we possibly make sense of the pain we endure, especially the pain we don't cause or deserve?

Much of Job's journey requires him to untangle the punitive, quid pro quo theology he has absorbed. If I do good things, God will reward me. If I do bad things, God will punish me. On a cerebral level, I disagree with the logic of these words. But I remember how easily I can fall into the trap of feeling these words viscerally and bodily in moments of pain, especially in suffering that is so awful and unfair.

When I first began this painting, I hoped to render Job's hymn to wisdom visually. I imagined being stuck in the deep, as if my body was anchored underwater and I was looking up to the surface. I imagined textures and symbols emerging in the swirl of the dark to portray Job's search for meaning, his grasping to find a way out. But as the painting came together, it was all wrong. The strokes and symbols were too literal, too formulaic. I almost scrapped the canvas altogether, but decided to keep going, to add more layers, more depth, more gold.

A window, doorway, or portal emerged in the middle of the painting. I felt a release and realized that, while I started with lament, I ended with awe. "To fear God is wisdom" (Job 28:28). The Hebrew word for "fear," *yirah*, literally translates to "awesome." True wisdom lies in breathless reverence for God's mystery and expansiveness—for God's presence that is beyond what we can control, or reason, or make far too small.



## RESPOND

JOB'S LAMENT & LOSS

*Seeking Understanding*

*When Everything Has Fallen Apart*



## LOOK

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Breathe deeply in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form.

Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook?

Now engage your imagination. If you were to place yourself in this scene, where would you be and how would you interact with what surrounds you?



## REFLECT

- What has unraveled and/or is unraveling in this story?
- Job searches for an explanation for his suffering. How do you seek to make meaning of your own pain?
- Scholar Michael Coogan writes, "Perhaps the ambiguity of Job's final reply to Yahweh, and of the book as a whole, is deliberate: No easy answer exists to the problem of suffering, no formula that can adequately explain the justice of God."<sup>4</sup> When have you embraced the mystery of God, even in the midst of suffering?



## WRITE

When have you been unraveled by unexpected joy and surprise? In the space below, reflect on this experience and what allowed you to receive that joy.

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## PRAY

When I need it most, unravel me with blessed newness and boundless joy. Amen.