

INTRODUCTION

The Warrior Worship idea is simply that a **surrendered warrior** is a **victorious warrior**. A surrendered warrior life is a powerful and power-filled life.

Fully giving our lives over to our amazing King Jesus is the kind of obedience He requires of His followers. It's what Jesus means when He says "If you love Me, you'll obey My commands" (John 14:15, GNT). That kind of commitment begins with believing "all Scripture is breathed out by God and is useful to teach us what is true" (2 Timothy 3:16, ESV).

What amazing payoffs in this life and the next for those that serve Jesus above anything else! His promise is "no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has imagined the things God has prepared for those that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9, NLT).

There is simply no way to live as a warrior for Jesus Christ without **reading, memorizing, digesting** and **living** the truths of God's Word. "The Word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword able to expose our innermost thoughts and desires" (Hebrews 4:12, NIV).

That's why we're so excited to offer this devotional to go along with the Warrior Worship original worship music project "Off The Map" (in partnership with Warrior Leadership Summit 2020).

God's warriors -you!- have so much potential! "You are God's masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus to do good works He prepared in advance for you to do" (Ephesians 2:10, NLT). Loving and living the Bible unlocks the amazing potential and future God has for you!

The guy who wrote these Bible studies, Jesse Colucci, in addition to writing a lot of Warrior Worship music, is one of those warriors that loves and lives God's Word. I think you're going to love what he's prepared out of his love for Jesus and for you.

Our prayer is that as you interact with this devotional, you will experience God's love and truth more than ever before! So go ahead, be a worshipping warrior...and live in the victory of the Creator's life-transforming, eternal truth!



Doug Hutchcraft

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STRONGER DAY 1

Like an army of 300//And the stories like Daniel//When the swords are swinging harder//And it's looking like it's fatal//I will not fear for I know my God is near//We train for war and the enemy is not welcome here//Though things are getting harder//I'm putting on His armor//And it's making me stronger, stronger, stronger//Things are looking bad though//As I'm walking in a battle//But it's making me stronger, stronger//I'm trusting Him who's higher//To help me win this battle//I'm seeking out His favor//As I'm jumping in the saddle//In all these things, we are more than conquerors//Fight the good fight, keep the faith, be warriors//I follow One who's righteous// And I will be victorious//And it's making me stronger, stronger, stronger//I'm walking through the shadows//But I'm on my knees in battle//And it's making me stronger, stronger//My heart is pounding louder//As I'm putting on His armor//But He's making me stronger, stronger, stronger// Don't worry 'bout tomorrow//Cause even when there's sorrow//He's making you stronger, stronger//Stronger, stronger

James 1:2-4

Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

If you're one of those people that choose to run long distances, you know about building endurance. The more you run, the more your body's capacity to run increases.

What used to make you tired doesn't anymore. The same goes for weightlifting, playing an instrument, or speed-eating hot dogs (if you're wanting to go pro). You need to push through pain and difficulty in order to grow. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger, right?

Sort of. A torn muscle won't make you stronger, but it will end endurance training pretty quickly. Some painful circumstances don't seem to make you stronger - they just stop you in your tracks. You can probably think of more than one situation that feels like a weight on your shoulders, a weight you just can't seem to shake.

James 1:2

Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials

At first glance, this makes no sense. The recipients of James' letter were experiencing great suffering for following Jesus. Many were forced out of their homes. Many were killed for their faith.

James is not making light of their situation. He is not saying, "Deal with it", "Just be strong", or "Put on a happy face." No, James is addressing something deeper than outward appearances. He is telling his readers to count these trials, not as they naturally are, as great sorrows. He wants them, and us, deep down in our hearts to consider these difficulties as joy - great joy at that! But why?

James 1:3

...because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

Endurance. Just as stretching and straining a muscle builds it up, our inner selves produce a rock-solidness when our faith is tested. Every hardship you face is an opportunity to believe that either God is telling the truth or He isn't. James says that every time we believe God over what our eyes, ears, brains, and emotions are telling us, something is produced: endurance. So what's the big deal about endurance? Is it really worth all this pain?

James 1:4

And let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

Endurance isn't the finish line. It's how you get to the finish line. In James' mind, our finish line is maturity, that we have and find everything we need in Jesus. The type of strength that God wants you to have looks a lot like dependence. Maturity is knowing, through whatever pain you experience, that God is enough and that God will come through.

The apostle Paul knew something about suffering. He was tortured, imprisoned, and hated for his service to Jesus. On top of everything, he had an extremely painful experience - maybe a physical disability. Here's what he said about it:

2 Corinthians 12:8-10

Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it would leave me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness." Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

I'm strong when I'm weak? Yes. You aren't the one who can muster up the endurance you need. God has promised to work it out in you, but He does so most freely when you are weak. God doesn't smile about your pain. He's too compassionate and merciful. But He does promise to orchestrate every single fraction of a detail of your life for your joy.

The world doesn't have this kind of promise. But you have the assurance that God will work right in the middle of your mess, right when you hit rock bottom. This is the foundation of unshakable peace: no matter how bad it hurts, no matter how bad it is, God is working right here and right now. He is making you stronger in His strength.

QUESTIONS

- 1. WHAT CIRCUMSTANCE ARE YOU FACING RIGHT NOW THAT'S TOO BIG FOR YOU?**
- 2. HOW HAVE YOU SEEN GOD'S POWER SHOW UP IN AND THROUGH YOUR WEAKNESS?**
- 3. ARE YOU WILLING TO ADMIT WEAKNESS SO GOD'S STRENGTH MIGHT WORK THROUGH YOU?**

READ ON

ROMANS 5:1-5

1 PETER 4:12-14

2 TIMOTHY 2:3

IGNITED DAY 2

I need answers dear society//What's the reason for this apathy?//Take a look into my inner self//Find a dead end, fear, and nothing else//Doing all I can to understand//Sing along with every song I can//When the feeling fades away tonight//I'm a rocket falling from the sky//I need more than just excited//I need to be ignited//Thou my vision yeah//I need to be ignited//Soul ignition yeah//I need to be ignited//Love my mission yeah//I need to be ignited//If this world is ever gonna be//Any different than my history//They gotta look and see some evidence//Of a God that gives a second chance//If I'm different they might take a look//If I'm shining they might read the book//Of a God that pushes back the night//Of a God that gives forever life//Let Your love awake me//My soul breathes 'cause I need

Psalm 57:7-9

My heart is confident, God, my heart is confident. I will sing; I will sing praises. Wake up, my soul! Wake up, harp and lyre! I will wake up the dawn. I will praise you, Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations.

It had been a hard year for David. Actually, quite a few hard years. Sure, he was the famous shepherd boy who killed the enemy giant, Goliath. And the prophet Samuel had told him that he would be Israel's next king. But the current king, Saul, wasn't a fan. As God gave David victory in battle, the people began to like David more and more, and Saul less and less. Saul is so filled with jealousy that he and his army began to hunt David down through the desert. He wanted David dead, and as soon as possible.

David and his band of rag-tag soldiers hide in a cave, with Saul and his three thousand man army right outside. So what did David do?

He writes a song. It starts like this:

Psalm 57:1

Be gracious to me, God, be gracious to me, for I take refuge in You. I will seek refuge in the shadow of Your wings until danger passes.

When there is nowhere to run, he hides. But not just in a cave - he finds refuge for his anxious heart in his God. And he really believes that God won't turn him away. He continues:

Psa 57:5

God, be exalted above the heavens; let Your glory be over the whole earth.

His cry for personal protection turns outward. He believes that God will help him and now he expresses what his heart really desires. He wants the world to know about this God. His confidence in God grows and he feels the need to express it.

Psalm 57:7

My heart is confident, God, my heart is confident. I will sing; I will sing praises.

Really? Is right now the best time to be singing praises? Why doesn't he wait until after God delivers him? No, the best time to praise God is now, when everything looks hopeless, because the more you praise God for what He will do, the more you believe that He will do it.

Psalm 57:8-9

Wake up, my soul! Wake up, harp and lyre! I will wake up the dawn. I will praise You, Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to You among the nations.

You may feel a little weird talking to yourself, but David didn't. Even if he doesn't feel it, he tells himself what he is going to do and then he does it, trusting that God will help him in the process. It's like he's bringing a candle to God, believing that God will provide the fire to make it burn.

A man named Augustine wrote this prayer hundreds of years ago: "Command what You will, and grant what You command." In other words, "God, I need Your help to obey You. If I'm going to praise You, it has to come from You, not me. I need to be ignited!" Augustine recognized that he could not fire himself up for God on his own.

The power to love God had to come from outside himself - from God. Is today one of those days where you just feel "Meh", towards God, towards others, towards yourself? Copy our man David and get up. Sing. Pray. And believe that God can and will wake up your heart to love Him like you want to.

QUESTIONS

- 1. HAVE YOU EVER FELT UNINSPIRED OR UNEXCITED ABOUT FOLLOWING JESUS? WHAT HAVE YOU NORMALLY DONE WITH THOSE FEELINGS?**
- 2. DOES DAVID OPENLY ADMIT HIS FEELINGS TO GOD?**
- 3. WHAT DID DAVID DO WHEN HE FELT OVERWHELMED BY HIS CIRCUMSTANCES? HOW MIGHT YOU IMITATE DAVID'S RESPONSE TO HIS SITUATION?**

READ ON

ACTS 4:23-31

PSALM 42-43

MICAH 7:7-10

WHO YOU ARE DAY 3

Welcome to your secret//The place you hide your sad affairs//Underneath a face that//Says I'm living here without a care//Welcome to the inside//The place you place your darkest fear//Welcome to the war zone//Welcome to the time you hide your face//He said he didn't mean it//Welcome to the land of your disgrace//Is anybody out there?//Will anybody tell you you're ok?//Fear and running//That's not who you are//Numb becoming//That's not who you are//Loving nothing//That's not who you are//Poison liquid//That's not who you are//Pain addicted//That's not who you are//Mind afflicted//That's not who you are//That's not who you are//Staring at a mirror//And all you see is just a blur//Looking through a teardrop//Searching for the one you wish you were//Finally you see it//They're deciding who you are//Welcome to your maker//Who sees the violence on your wrist//Even in your closet//When you can't believe it's come to this//Welcome to Jesus//To the One who understands your hell//Used up, hated//That's not who you are//Dreams all faded//That's not who you are//Violated//That's not who you are//Slave to liquid//That's not who you are//Pill addicted//That's not who you are//Voiceless victim//That's not who you are//That's not who you are//Found forgiven, this is who you are//Joy for living, this is who you are//Bought, beloved, this is who you are

Ephesians 1:3-4

Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. For He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before Him.

Who are you? If someone asked you that, how would you answer? No, not your name. Who are you? What makes you, *you*? Get past what music you listen to, what sports you play, what food you like. What words come to mind?

Are they words that other people have called you? Stupid. Worthless. Annoying. Are they words that you've come up with? Failure. Disappointment. Ugly. Or maybe who you think you are comes from the choices you've made. Addict. Quitter. Angry. Or even from what others have done to you. Victim. Abandoned. Forgotten.

What you believe about yourself shapes what you do. You will act like the person you think you are.

But what does God say about you?

After all, He's the One who made you. On top of that, if you're part of His family, He not only created you, but He recreated you, making you a new person through Christ. No one else has done that for you. Your circumstances and decisions certainly don't have that kind of authority. Even you don't have the power to define yourself because you didn't make yourself. God actually has the final say to the question, "Who are you?"

And what does He say?

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ.

Now that you belong to God, He sees you as in Christ. All the love and joy He has toward Jesus, He directs towards you. He counts Christ's perfect life as your perfect life. He counts Jesus' death to sin as your death to sin. He counts Christ's resurrection as your resurrection to a new life. God feels about you the way He feels about Jesus because He placed you in Him.

You are made in God's image (**Genesis 1:26-27**). You were created by God to one day rule the world with Him. Though your sins had separated you from God, you are now bought back for Him by Jesus' blood (**1 Corinthians 6:20**). You are forgiven and Satan has lost all claim to your life (**Colossians 2:13-15**). You are a member of God's family, His church (**Ephesians 2:19**). God is your Father and you are His child (**1 John 3:1**). You are kept by God for God (**Jude 1:24**). You are part of God's kingdom and are destined for joy forever (**Revelation 5:10**).

This is just a sample of all that God says about you. God's opinion of you may be very different than yours. The question now is, who will you believe? Who will you think is right? You or God? Others or God? You have to choose, sometimes moment by moment that you will believe God - that you will believe the truth about yourself.

You may be disappointed by what you see when you look in the mirror. God is not. That's not to say you're perfect, that you've got it all together. In fact, that may be far, far from the truth. And God loves you now, as you are. He is happy to be called your Father.

Ephesians 1:4

For He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before Him.

Who are you? You are chosen by God. Before you existed, He had His eye on you. And He loved you then like He loves you now. You are holy. You are blameless. You are loved. That's who you are.

QUESTIONS

- 1. WHO HAS HAD THE LOUDEST VOICE IN DEFINING YOU? YOU? ANOTHER PERSON? OR GOD?**
- 2. WHO ARE YOU? DOES YOUR DEFINITION OF YOU LINE UP WITH GOD'S DEFINITION OF YOU?**
- 3. WHAT TRUTH DO YOU NEED TO BELIEVE ABOUT YOURSELF MOVING FORWARD?**

READ ON

1 JOHN 1:1-3

1 PETER 2:9-10

MATTHEW 5:13-16

HOLY GROUND DAY 4

In the midst of the glory//Of the heavenly throne room//There are creatures who never cease to praise//The Creator of all things//And the Lamb who is worthy//Of the kingdom that never fades away//Thrones and dominions//All will be given//To the Ancient of Days//Blessing and honor//Glory and power//To the Lamb who was slain//At Your feet I bow//You are the One thing I seek//This is holy ground//Come lay your crowns at His feet//You are the One thing//You are the One thing//You are the One thing I seek//In the midst of the lamp stands//To the stars in His right hand//Sounds the Word of His mouth a piercing sword//And the passion of His voice//Like an echoing chamber//Resonating the chorus of His love//Feet like a furnace//Eyes like a fire//I fall down at His gaze//Angels and elders//Bow down in reverence//How could I turn away?//We're standing on holy, holy ground//At Your feet I lay my crowns//What else could I want?//You're the treasure I found//We're standing on holy, holy ground

Exodus 3:4-5

When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses, Moses!" "Here I am," he answered. "Do not come closer," he said. "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

Have you ever seen something so amazing that it took your breath away? The Grand Canyon? a majestic mountain? That split second right before a half-court shot swishes through the hoop? These moments seem to be bigger than us, greater than our ability to take in. They stick with us for life.

The Bible describes the ultimate "take-your-breath-away" moment. All who experienced it responded the same way. They fell on their faces. Why? They saw God. They all realized that they were in God's presence. God was showing Himself to them in a way that they could understand, and He was unlike anything they had ever known.

At least, they saw Him to a certain extent. Here's what God told Moses:

Exodus 33:20

But He added, "You cannot see My face, for humans cannot see Me and live."

God is so holy (different than us) that we, with our sinful natures, simply cannot handle looking at God on our own. We are finite. He is infinite. But God did personally reveal Himself many times in many different ways to many different people. Check out how three different authors from the Bible describe seeing a vision of God:

Ezekiel 1:27-28

From what seemed to be His waist up, I saw a gleam like amber, with what looked like fire enclosing it all around. From what seemed to be His waist down, I also saw what looked like fire. There was a brilliant light all around Him. The appearance of the brilliant light all around was like that of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day. This was the appearance of the likeness of the LORD's glory. When I saw it, I fell facedown and heard a voice speaking.

Daniel 10:6, 8-9

His body was like beryl, his face like the brilliance of lightning, His eyes like flaming torches, His arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of His words like the sound of a multitude. ...I was left alone, looking at this great vision. No strength was left in me; my face grew deathly pale, and I was powerless. I heard the words He said, and when I heard them I fell into a deep sleep, with my face to the ground.

Revelation 1:14-15, 17

The hair of His head was white as wool -- white as snow -- and His eyes like a fiery flame. His feet were like fine bronze as it is fired in a furnace, and His voice like the sound of cascading waters. ...When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. He laid His right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid. I am the First and the Last..."

Do you see what's common in all these accounts? Ezekiel, Daniel, and John all fall facedown on the ground when they see Him. This isn't, "Oh, I guess I should probably bow down since this is God and everything." They don't really have a choice. They are so struck with awe, their knees give way and strength leaves their body.

Your entire life is leading up to one moment - when you open your eyes and see your Creator. It will happen whether you like it or not. Those who refuse Jesus will see Him and be terrified, but for those who belong to Him, there will be awe infused with joy beyond description. Every sorrow will melt in the light of His glory. Every other experience will prove to be a shadow compared to this. He will wipe away your tears. This is Who you were made for. This is holy ground. One day everyone will bow. One day everyone will realize and confess that Jesus is actually the rightful King of the world. But what about you? What about today?

Jude 1:24-25

Now to Him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, without blemish and with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time, now and forever. Amen.

QUESTIONS

1. HAVE YOU EVER SEEN SOMETHING IN NATURE THAT REALLY AMAZED YOU? WHAT WAS YOUR RESPONSE?
2. WHY DID EVERYONE WHO SAW A VISION OF GOD FALL ON THEIR FACE?
3. IF YOU BELONG TO JESUS, WHY IS SEEING GOD A GREAT THING INSTEAD OF A BAD THING?

READ ON

JOSHUA 5:13-15

ISAIAH 6:1-7

JOHN 14:8-9

BELONG TO ME DAY 5

Crying//Looking out the window as the day goes by//I'm trying//To keep it all together even though I ain't together//I'm lying//Could it really be I feel this way//I'm dying//Could it really be I'm in last place//Now it won't be long//Forgetting all the lyrics to my favorite song//Telling people secrets but they just don't care//Meet me at the movies but they just weren't there//Now I'm at the end//And I can't count on my messed up friends//It don't have to be this way//I hear You say//You know I wouldn't lie to you//I'll never say goodbye//I'll take your fear far away yeah yeah yeah//And when you go to sleep//And pray the Lord your soul to keep//You've found a Friend who will stay//'Cause You belong to Me, Yeah//You belong to Me, Yeah//Even when your heart can't see//You belong, You belong to Me, Yeah//Now I'm up too late//Wishing that my body could ignore my brain//Worries make me worry if my mind's alright//Hoping it'll leave me by the morning light//Looking past this fear//This is when it matters if the truth is real//I need to know if You're true//And what to do

Isaiah 43:1

Now this is what the LORD says -- the One who created you, Jacob, and the One who formed you, Israel -- "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine."

The book of Isaiah will make your head spin. Most of the book is God speaking to His people Israel, through the prophet Isaiah. On one page, God is calling out His people's sin and predicting their judgment through invading armies. On the next page, He is promising to punish the pride of those same armies. Then He is promising Israel that though they will be forced out of their land, one day He will bring them back, and there will be peace like never before. It's a lot.

Through all the twists and turns of this book, two things become crystal clear. First, Israel, God's chosen nation was really messed up. The book starts like this:

Isaiah 1:2

Listen, heavens, and pay attention, earth, for the LORD has spoken: "I have raised children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against Me."

God brings a charge against His people and He has the proof to back it up. He paints word pictures to illustrate Israel's behavior. Rebellious children. An unfaithful spouse. An unfruitful vineyard.

God had chosen Israel to be an example to other nations, but instead they blended right in with them. They worshiped their gods. They fought with each other. They were proud, boasting in their own prosperity and ignoring people in need, worshipping God with their mouths but not with their hearts.

Israel's leaders were just as bad or worse. For years after King David died, Israel had been led by a few good kings, but mostly really, really bad ones. These kings would do whatever they could to make the fake gods of other nations happy. One even burned his own son in a fire, copying a worship ritual of another nation. God was angry and He couldn't ignore what was going on. This is a thread that runs throughout the whole book.

A second thread that runs through this book is: God will bring His people back to Him. When was enough, enough? These things were going on for hundreds of years. The people would turn back to God for a while, but sure enough, would wander back to their sins again and again. Why didn't God just give up, maybe pick another nation that would do better?

Isaiah 43:1a

Now this is what the LORD says -- the One who created you, Jacob, and the One who formed you, Israel

God chose them. They didn't first choose Him. They didn't make a spreadsheet list of all the available gods to worship, then make a rational decision to serve only the One, True God. No, God made Israel His people and God doesn't change. He is not in the habit of flip-flopping or reversing His decisions or keeping His options open in case things don't work out. When He is committed to someone, He is committed to them for good, period.

If you belong to Jesus, then hear this: God chose you. You didn't first choose Him. God made you. God rescued you. God brought you into His family. He was under no obligation to do so, yet He did it anyway.

But what about on your worst day? When your friends drag you down or ignore you altogether? When you do the thing you hate? When you can't sleep and you lie awake feeling worthless? What does God say to you then?

Isaiah 43:1b

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine."

Don't miss this. God's perfect love dispels your fear that He might just leave you when He finds out what you're really like. He already knows. And He loves you. He says, **"You were My idea. You are in My family because I chose you. You are Mine."**

Has anyone else ever loved you like that?

QUESTIONS

- 1. THINK ABOUT ANY STORY IN THE BIBLE. THINK ABOUT YOUR LIFE. ARE PEOPLE MORE COMMITTED TO GOD OR IS GOD MORE COMMITTED TO PEOPLE?**
- 2. WHY DOES GOD TELL ISRAEL NOT TO BE AFRAID IN ISAIAH 43?**
- 3. IF GOD CHOSE YOU BEFORE YOU CHOSE HIM, HOW DOES THAT CHANGE THINGS? DOES IT MAKE YOU LESS SCARED THAT HE'LL GIVE UP ON YOU?**

READ ON

MATTHEW 28:19-20

JEREMIAH 31

ZEPHANIAH 3:14-20

NO MORE SHAME DAY 6

The scars of my forgiven sin//Are marks of beauty now//For Christ has set a crown of grace//Upon the sinners brow//For every song of hell composed//To silence me with shame//I raise my voice above the noise//With melodies of grace//There is no more shame//There is no more shame//My trampled sin still sings of His mercy//There is no more shame//Now who can say what Christ has done//Was never mine to plea//If Jesus died for sinners lost//Then Jesus died for me

1 Timothy 1:15

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" -- and I am the worst of them.

The apostle Paul had a strange life. Not only was his life full of unusual events, but it was split in two, with Jesus as the dividing factor. Paul spent the first half of his life working his way toward God by doing what he believed was right. He strictly observed the law that God gave to Moses for His people.

He had a brilliant mind that he used to defend the cause of His religious group, the Pharisees. And he ruthlessly persecuted men and women who were followers of a Man from Nazareth, a Man who claimed to be God's chosen Rescuer for His people.

Then he met Jesus. Or, more accurately, Jesus met him. On his way to throw these Jesus-followers in prison, Jesus appeared to him in a vision, literally knocking him off his high horse. Everything changed for Paul. For the rest of his life, he spent every conceivable ounce of energy proclaiming that Jesus was who He said He was and that though He was dead, He was now alive! The passion to destroy Jesus had been transformed and flipped around into a passion to serve Jesus.

But Paul had thrown real people in prison. And those real people had families. Can you imagine the awkwardness Paul must have felt while facing the people he had formally persecuted?

Even worse, now Paul was serving the One he used to hate. When Jesus met Paul, He asked him, **"Why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4)**. Jesus made it clear that persecuting His followers was equivalent to persecuting Him. How could he now worship the One that he had hurt, offended, and angered? How could he pray to this Jesus without the faces of those imprisoned Christians coming to mind?

Who have you hurt, offended, or angered? Does it hurt to remember? Is there anyone you have wronged so badly that you can't stand thinking about them? Or maybe it's something someone else has done to you. Even though it wasn't your fault, it feels like it was. Your mind tells you that you could have stopped it, that maybe if you had just spoken up, or shut up, things would be different.

If you belong to Jesus, you know all that stuff isn't just about those people. Sin is ultimately against God. God hates sin. And even though you can hide some of your dirt from people, you can't hide it from God.

Knowing that you can't change the past, that you are not what you should be, produces an emotion. It's that feeling that you just have to get away, that you can't talk about, that you can't even think about, - that feeling has a name.

Shame.

Shame is anger, embarrassment, and disappointment that you feel about yourself. Sometimes it stems from your real sins, something you shouldn't have done or should have done differently. Sometimes it wasn't your fault at all. But the feeling is there all the same.

Back to Paul. How does he address his former self? In a letter to his good friend, Timothy, he is quite open about his past. He calls himself, "**a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man**" (1 Timothy 1:13). He doesn't play denial and pretend that those things never happened. Nor does he take his sins lightly and act like they weren't that big a deal. They were. So what does he say?

1 Timothy 1:15

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" -- and I am the worst of them.

Jesus died for sinners. Are you a sinner? Have you made a mess of things? Do you regret your past and wish you could do it all over? You are exactly who Jesus died for!

God knew every sin you would ever commit and every sin that would be committed against you and He loved you anyway. He chose you before the world began and refused to change His mind about you. Paul's flow of thought is: "If Jesus died for sinners, then Jesus died for me, because I am a sinner!"

Jesus transforms the shame that you feel about your past into landmarks of His grace. Does Satan remind you of what you did? You can respond, "Yes, I did that. And Jesus forgave me. Now I just remember His mercy." You can look back and see guilt or you can look back and see grace. There is no more shame for the child of God.

Your sin is great. His grace is far, far greater.

QUESTIONS

1. WHAT ABOUT YOUR PAST IS TOO PAINFUL TO TALK ABOUT? HAVE YOU EVER TALKED ABOUT IT WITH GOD OR WITH A PERSON YOU TRUST?
2. HOW DID PAUL FIGHT AGAINST FEELINGS OF SHAME CONCERNING HIS PAST?
3. PAUL NEVER PRETENDED THAT THOSE THINGS IN HIS PAST NEVER HAPPENED. WHY WAS HE SO WILLING TO TALK ABOUT THEM?

READ ON

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

ROMANS 5:1-11

LUKE 7:36-50

TEACH US HOW TO PRAY DAY 7

The door is open, the curtain torn//The curse is broken, new life is born//
There is freedom to approach His throne//Free to call Him Father and His
life my own//I'm free to call Him Father and His life my own//Abba Father,
we seek Your fame//Our heart is beating to announce Your name//Give us
power for the race we run//To live only for Jesus and the kingdom come//
To live only for Jesus and the kingdom come//(Pray)//Hear You each day//
(Pray)//Lead in Your way//Elevate our hearts to love You and obey//In Jesus'
name we pray//So teach us how to pray//Come on!//Fear to freedom and
death to life//Holy Spirit pushing back the night//All our praises light our
faith aflame//We believe the battle won in Jesus' name//We know it's
already done in Jesus' name

Luke 11:1

He was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of his disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples."

Have you ever tried to pray but didn't know what to say? Or maybe you've been intimidated by someone who seems to have the prayer formula down, so you just stayed quiet. Prayer can just be...hard.

If you feel that way, you're in good company. When Jesus' disciples watched how Jesus prayed, they must have asked, "How does He do that? Why aren't my prayers like that? He makes it look so easy!" So they asked Him, "How do you do that?"

Jesus did not answer, "Well, it'll take you guys years to get to My level of praying. You just got to put in the hours, man!" Nor did He say, "Sorry, you'll just never be at My level. You guys just aren't spiritual enough. Especially you, Peter. You just don't get it."

And thankfully, He didn't say, "Just do it. It's easy!"

No, Jesus' response doesn't put us down. It fills our hearts with hope that we, that I, really can pray in a way that changes things. His answer is such good news because His model prayer for us is so simple. He doesn't make a relationship with God seem like something only the super-spiritual can hope for. He brings it down to our level.

Luke 11:2-4

He said to them, "Whenever you pray, say, Father, Your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone in debt to us. And do not bring us into temptation."

Why does He make it so simple? Because He actually wants you to pray. You can pray this way if you're 5 or 95, whether you've been a Christian for years, or if you're just beginning your life with Jesus.

You may not be an expert pray-er. But genuine prayer isn't about becoming a prayer master - it's about talking with The Master. It's not really about you, but about the One you're talking to. In this prayer, Jesus gives us a way to think and pray like He did.

1. Father, Your name be honored as holy

Express to God your love for Him and ask that others would love Him, too. What would that look like in your family? In your community? In the world? Imagine. Then ask for it!

2. Your kingdom come

Jesus taught us that God's kingdom starts in our hearts and works its way out. This request reflects God's desire to make the whole world look like our hearts - brand new. Every evil uprooted. Racism gone. Grudges released. Fear broken. No one hungry. No one oppressed. Everyone full of joy. This kingdom will really, fully come when Jesus comes back to earth as its rightful King, and we pray for that day to come soon. Until then, how might you ask God for His kingdom to show up in you and in the world around you?

3. Give us each day our daily bread

What do you need today? Sometimes it's easy to forget that everything we have is from God. This request reminds us that the next breath we take is a gift and we are humbly depending on God to give it to us. This also teaches us to live for God today and let Him worry about tomorrow. "Give me what I need today because that's where I am. You'll take care of the future."

4. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone in debt to us

This is a checkpoint. Who are you refusing to forgive? It may be that someone has truly wronged you, scarring you in the process. Forgive them, not because they deserve it. Forgive them because God has forgiven you.

5. And do not bring us into temptation

Our hearts will run away from God unless He helps us. What is pulling your focus, love, and obedience away from God? Ask for help with it!

If you feel uninspired or overwhelmed by prayer, join in with the disciples and ask, "Teach us how to pray!"

QUESTIONS

1. HAS PRAYER EVER SEEMED TOO HARD? IF SO, DID YOU JUST TRY HARDER OR DID YOU GIVE UP?
2. WHY DID JESUS MAKE PRAYER SO STRAIGHT FORWARD FOR US?
3. GOD ACTUALLY WANTS TO TALK WITH YOU? HOW DOES KNOWING THIS CHANGE THE WAY YOU TALK WITH GOD?

READ ON

MATTHEW 6:5-15

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

JAMES 5:13-18

AGAIN DAY 8

My heart says//That the healer in the gospels//Can do it again//My soul leaps//Because the One who reached the hostile//Can do it again//You can do it again//Make me clean//Your promises attested//Would You do it again?//When You breathe//I am resurrected//You would do it again//Could you heal again?//Make it real again?//God I need You now more than ever//Could You fight for me?//Rewrite the story?//God I need You now and forever//Break my chains//Of the things that have enslaved me//Again and again//You take my shame//And the pain that is within me//Leaves again and again//Living God let me see You move//Heal my spots, make my lame soul move//Living God let me see You move//Break the chains like only You can do

1 Kings 18:37

"Answer me, LORD! Answer me so that this people will know that You, the LORD, are God and that You have turned their hearts back."

It was a bleak time in Israel. The wicked king Ahab was on the throne, along with his murderous wife, Jezebel. They led the people away from the Lord their God by setting up altars to idols all over the land. If they wanted something from their people, they took it.

This was not the "promised land" that God had in mind when He delivered His people from the land of Egypt centuries before. The people had forgotten who they were and who their God was. They needed a wake-up call.

Because of His great grace, God has a way of getting our attention when we forget about Him. Sometimes He blows us away with His mercy. Sometimes, He lets us feel some of the weight of what our sin is doing - not because He is cruel, but because He is kind. It would be cruel to let us walk away from Him. But our God is like a good shepherd who constantly chases after His clueless, wandering sheep.

So in response to the prayer of the prophet Elijah, God held back the rain for over three years. Everything came to a standstill. Crops died. Animals died. People were on the verge of starvation. This drought was supposed to reveal to the people the condition of their hearts: a dry, dusty wasteland where nothing good can grow. But nothing happened.

Ahab, Jezebel, and the people looked to a false god, Baal, to make it rain. Baal was powerless to help them. Finally, God sent Elijah to confront King Ahab and the people.

1 Kings 18:21

Then Elijah approached all the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him. But if Baal, follow him."

But the people didn't answer him. Elijah had had quite enough of this flip-flopping. He called for a showdown. God vs Baal. He brought Ahab, the people, and Baal's "prophets" to a mountaintop, set up altars, and issued a challenge.

1 Kings 18:24

"Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The God who answers with fire, he is God." All the people answered, "That's fine."

Baal's followers cried out all day for fire. They waited. They begged him over and over. No fire. Nothing.

1 Kings 18:29

All afternoon they kept on raving until the offering of the evening sacrifice, but there was no sound; no one answered, no one paid attention.

In the evening, it was Elijah's turn. He prayed a simple prayer and fire fell from heaven and consumed his sacrifice on the altar. The people woke up.

1 Kings 18:39

When all the people saw it, they fell facedown and said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!"

When you look around you at your family, at your community, at the world, is there anything inside you that screams out, "This is not how it's supposed to be!?" If so, you're right. Sin ruins everything it touches. We were created for life with God and when something gets in the way of that, we feel it.

In the Bible, story after story recounts how God turned His people back to Him. Miracles, healings, and repentance. It's as if the people were sleepy, incoherent, barely able to function, then all of a sudden, someone introduces them to coffee. Zap! Now fully awake, they live life the way it was meant to be lived. Sometimes it happens to an individual. Sometimes it happens to a nation.

Read through the story of Elijah, of David, of Ezra and Nehemiah. Read about Jesus' life, about how He changed everyone who came in contact with Him. Then pray with all your heart, "God, do it again!". Your prayer is never insignificant. Keep praying. Keep believing that God loves to turn people's hearts back to Him.

QUESTIONS

- 1. WHAT DO YOU SEE AROUND YOU THAT YOU WISH YOU COULD CHANGE? HAVE YOU EVER TALKED WITH GOD ABOUT IT?**
- 2. DO YOU EVER FEEL LIKE THE PROBLEM IS TOO BIG? HOW DOES ELIJAH'S PRAYER ENCOURAGE YOU TO KEEP PRAYING?**
- 3. PRAYER IS OFTEN HOW GOD ACCOMPLISHES HIS WORK ON EARTH. WHAT MIGHT GOD ACCOMPLISH THROUGH YOUR PRAYERS?**

READ ON

1 KINGS 8

DANIEL 9:1-19

LUKE 18:1-8

OFF THE MAP DAY 9

I'll follow You wherever You will go//You lead me off the map//Far away from what I know//Take a step, I see the next one//Take a breath and follow You to//Find what You call me to//I'm gonna follow You//Like a shepherd leads his sheep//You will always go before me//The defender of the weak// You're the author of this story//I am following You now//In the silence of the valley//Your deliverance a shout//When my enemies surround me//I defy the voice of fear//You are with me where You send me//There are trials coming near//But You're able to defend me//You are able to defend me

Luke 9:57-58

As they were traveling on the road someone said to Him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus told him, "Foxes have dens, and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head."

Put yourself in this man's shoes. You've seen Jesus heal incurable diseases. You've heard Him speak like no one else ever has. You think, "Maybe this is Him - the One we've been waiting for, the One who will set our people free from oppression." So you decide to follow Him and to learn from Him, but when you try, Jesus basically says, "Are you sure? Because you're going to be homeless." Probably not the response you expected.

Normally, the way to win followers is to promise rewards. Most stores have some sort of rewards program for spending more money than you probably should. Sports teams tell their fans, "This is our year! Just keep being our fan and you'll see." And most politicians promise voters something like, "If you vote for me, all of your wildest dreams will come true."

That's why it's so strange to read about Jesus' reaction to crowds. His powerful teaching and incredible miracles attracted many. People began to follow Him, rightly believing that He was the Messiah - the Rescuer God had promised them from long ago. But Jesus routinely said things that disappointed, angered, or even grossed out the crowds.

Now Jesus does promise His followers rewards, greater rewards than we can comprehend - forgiveness, unconditional love, a family, comfort, peace, joy, eternal life, and more. But He brings selfish disciples to a decision point with His blunt statements.

Mark 8:34

Calling the crowd along with His disciples, He said to them, "If anyone wants to follow after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me."

"Take up your cross" is not a nice saying. At all. It means, "If you want to follow me, know this - you are following Me to My crucifixion." Many of the people who followed Jesus believed that He was going to help them overthrow the Romans, the people occupying their land.

Instead, Jesus tells them plainly that He is going to be killed by them, and they should expect it to happen to them as well. He came to defeat their sin, not the Romans.

Luke 14:25-26

Now great crowds were traveling with Him. So He turned and said to them: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters -- yes, and even his own life -- he cannot be My disciple."

Jesus is not saying to literally hate your family. God commands us to love and honor our families (**Colossians 3:18-21**). So why is Jesus telling the crowds to hate them? When you follow Jesus, you will make decisions that prefer Him over your family.

Your family may not understand why you are choosing Jesus over them. Chances are, they won't feel loved by you. They may feel hated, even though you actually love them. Jesus is commanding His followers to choose Him over family. Every time.

John 6:53

So Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves."

At first glance, this is gross. Eat His body? Drink His blood? What is He talking about? Jesus is purposefully putting off a crowd that was following Him for selfish reasons. Jesus had just fed over five thousand people with just a few loaves of bread and two fish.

Some of that crowd kept following Him, hoping for a free lunch! Jesus made it clear that following Him isn't about free food. "I am the bread of life," He said. We follow Jesus to get...Jesus! Not just the stuff He can give us.

Jesus knew His followers' hearts just like He knows our hearts. His words exposed their real intentions and they expose ours too. He is calling out for any and all to follow Him to find real life! Will you follow Jesus? It will be hard. It means giving up what is good for what is best.

Yes, He may lead you "off the map". But here's the good news: following Jesus is always, always worth it. And He has promised to be with us wherever He leads us.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." (**John 10:11a**). He is able to lead you on any path, no matter how difficult or painful. No one who has truly followed Him has ever looked back and said, "I wish I had my life back to do things my way".

Following Jesus is not a path to a better life. It is the path to life itself.

QUESTIONS

- 1. WHAT WERE SOME WRONG REASONS THAT CROWDS HAD FOR FOLLOWING JESUS?**
- 2. WHY DOES JESUS HAVE SUCH STRANGE RESPONSES TO THESE CROWDS?**
- 3. THOUGH JESUS GIVES MANY REWARDS, WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE REASON FOR FOLLOWING HIM?**

READ ON

PSALM 23

JOHN 14:1-7

LUKE 18:18-23

CROWN OF THORNS DAY 10

Oh mark of sin that troubles men//The bitter root of cursed ground//Borne upon His sacred head//As thorns became our Savior's crown//Given o'er to sinner's hell//Bearing what our sins begot//He refused to save Himself//Wearing shame that Adam wrought//The crown of our Lord//Was a crown made of thorns//The curses of man//Were the curses He bore//And He overcame//And He reigns forever//Upon the soil where He stood//Did the blood of Abel cry//Of our broken brotherhood//And of a race condemned to die//Still His blood would louder speak//Of redemption soon to come//Mercy grew from Abram's seed//Grafting in His scattered sons//Come and adore//Jesus the King//Come and adore our Savior//Glory and praise//Jesus the King//Glory and praise forever//Oh what a love, He became like us

Genesis 3:17-18

And [God] said to the man, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it': The ground is cursed because of you. You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field."

If you've ever tried to grow any kind of plant, you've probably run up against one of the many frustrations that plague gardeners and farmers everywhere. The plant doesn't get enough water? It's dead. Too much water? Dead. Wrong amount of sunlight? Wrong kind of bugs find it? Wrong temperature? Dead, dead, dead. Even those with the greenest of thumbs have to battle the elements to sustain life.

Then there's the issue of weeds. Some plant that you don't even want is stealing nutrients from your precious marigolds and it's growing ten times faster. Where did it even come from anyway? It's you against the world and all you've got is a tiny shovel. It's not fair.

The Bible presents weeds, thorns in particular, as a key part of humanity's story. God placed the first people, Adam and Eve, in a garden called Eden. Their God-given goal was to keep Eden beautiful and extend that beauty all around the world. They were builders and gardeners, God's king and queen image-bearers on mission to make the world all it could be.

If that sounds like a boring job, there's a catch. Work was fun - all of it, all the time. All that God made was good and work was no exception. There were no weeds messing up their flowers and no bugs eating up their vegetables. There was nothing directly opposing their work. There was nothing to frustrate their plans. Imagine a job like that - any job - where all the bad parts were gone and the good parts were way better. It was paradise.

Then they gave it all up. They quit their jobs so to speak, hoping that a certain serpent would be a better employer. He wasn't. Adam and Eve chose to eat the fruit of the one tree in Eden that God had forbidden. They thought that God was holding out on them, that if they could assert their own authority, then they could really be in charge of the world around them. But choosing something over God (sin) never ever delivers on its promises.

God had mercy on Adam and Eve, but the damage had been done. A curse fell on the whole of their world and everything felt it. It's as if sin got roots deep down and spread out over the whole planet, wrapping itself around everything. Work. Relationships. Families. Life.

Everything was affected by this curse. Adam and Eve's job stayed the same, but now it would be hard. God introduced Adam to something called thorns. They weren't there before, but now they are, and they get in the way of everything. Things that were easy will now be frustrating. Things that were fun will now be stressful. Thorns were God's symbol for Adam of the curse - what life looks like when you prefer creation over Creator.

Fast-forward some few thousand years. Another Man was commissioned by God to tend His world. Unlike Adam and Eve (and every other person after them), this Man actually succeeded. He always chose Creator over creation. Everywhere He went, He made the world around Him look more like God originally wanted it to look. He healed sickness. He commanded demons to flee and they did. He demanded justice for overlooked individuals. He had the same job as Adam, but did His work with people instead of plants. Where Adam failed, this Man Jesus succeeded.

But there were many who weren't interested in what Jesus' had to say and they sentenced Him to death as a revolutionary. They beat Him and mocked Him, bowing pretentiously before this "King". They even went so far as to place a crown on His head. A crown of thorns.

Thorns - the symbol of sin's curse was cutting through Jesus head and brow with bloody agony. Our King wore the pain of our sin like a crown. He took Adam's failure and put it on Himself for all to see. The fault of bitterness and greed. The guilt of lies and lust. The shame of murder. He bore it openly. He lived like people should have and died with people's guilt attached to Him. But He didn't stay dead. God brought Him back to life to lead a new kind of people, a people that will finish God's original plan: to spread the knowledge of His glory over the whole earth.

Are there still thorns? Yes. But one day, there won't be. The curse will be lifted completely. No more pain. No more sin. No more thorns.

QUESTIONS

1. WHAT ARE SOME "THORNS" THAT SHOW UP IN YOUR LIFE AND IN PEOPLE AROUND YOU?
2. HOW DID JESUS SUCCEED WHERE ADAM FAILED?
3. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT ONE DAY THE CURSE OF SIN WILL BE DONE AWAY WITH? WHERE DID THE CURSE GO?

READ ON

MARK 15:16-20

MATTHEW 20:17-19

REVELATION 21

ALL ABOUT JESUS DAY 11

You were focused on you but now it's all about Jesus//All the good and the bad//All seasons are God seasons//Now it won't be long until you're with God's people//Singing holy, holy, holy is the Lord//Can you trust Him no matter the reason?//You need His power 'cause you feel so broken//Tell Him you need Him, you can't live without Him//Show me Your glory, glory Lord//We all have baggage, the cycle of shame//Same old chapter, the same old game//But God is before you, and He's growing you for glory//So you can sing holy, holy, holy is the Lord//Oh how I love Jesus//Oh how I love Jesus//Oh how I love Jesus//Because He first loved me

Genesis 50:20

"You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result -- the survival of many people."

Joseph had a lot of brothers. And they all hated him. He was Daddy's favorite and wouldn't shut up about weird dreams he kept having where he was in charge of everyone. He wouldn't stop getting on their nerves. Finally they had enough. They devised a plan, a rather extreme one, to silence their annoying brother forever. They sold him as a slave to some merchants heading to Egypt. Ouch.

Things actually went pretty well for Joseph in Egypt. He worked his way up and became the right hand man of a wealthy Egyptian. That is, until his master's wife falsely accused him of rape. Joseph got the boot again, this time right into prison.

But Joseph so impressed the guard, that he was put in charge of the prison. And people found out that Joseph had an unusual ability to interpret dreams. Eventually Pharaoh found out about it and asked for Joseph's help in understanding some particularly troubling dreams. Pharaoh was so amazed with Joseph's ability that he promoted him to second in command over all Egypt. A major upgrade.

Joseph helped guide Egypt through a serious drought, providing food for all in need. Before long, Joseph's brothers traveled all the way to Egypt in search of food. Joseph immediately recognized them, but they had no idea that this powerful Egyptian was actually their long-lost brother.

What would you do? How would you feel? The people responsible for your pain, are standing right in front of you, at your mercy. If anyone had a reason to be bitter, it was Joseph. He had quite a list. Family issues. Sold into slavery. Wrongfully thrown into prison. Joseph never made light of these things. His life had been marked by mistreatment. But how did he process all this pain?

Genesis 50:20

"You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result -- the survival of many people."

Joseph saw God's hand actively working through all his misery, not for Joseph's pain, but for the good of many. He looked back over his life through lenses of grace - God had been working his whole life, with a plan to rescue others.

God takes the worst of our baggage and transforms it into hope. Your life may have tragic events, but it is not a tragedy. You may have been victimized, but you are not a victim. God can use the good and the bad and everything in between to save people.

That's how all-encompassing His power is.

Romans 8:28

We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.

All things? Really? Yes, all things. This doesn't mean that everything that happens to you is good - far from it. God is so good, so strong, and loves you so much that He won't let your suffering go to waste. He will redeem it one way or another.

All of the seasons of life that we go through are God's seasons. He decides them and gives us what we need to get through them. If God is the One working in your life to bring about good from the good and the bad, then ultimately, it's not about you. It's about Jesus.

Your pain? God wants to use it to show Jesus to a world that needs Him.

Your joy? The same.

Can He be trusted in this, like 100% of the time? Yes. He is able to make the whole of your life a picture of His grace given to us through His Son. It really is all about Jesus.

QUESTIONS

- 1. IF YOU BELONG TO JESUS, WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT HE HAS REMOVED OR IS REMOVING FROM YOUR LIFE?**
- 2. HOW MIGHT GOD USE SOME OF YOUR PAIN TO GIVE HOPE TO OTHERS?**
- 3. CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW GOD MIGHT BE WORKING IN YOUR SITUATION RIGHT NOW?**

READ ON

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

MATTHEW 4:18-22

JOHN 6:66-69

OH THE POWER DAY 12

On the night of His betrayal//At the supper of His passion//The Savior's friends looked down on Him//As He knelt to wash their feet//The commander of the army//Of the host of heaven's angels//Said I must bow to wash you now//Or you have no part in Me//He stood before accusers//He was silent in His trial//Where they broke the law in order to//Fulfill it's every word//The crowd proclaimed their judgment//On the Alpha and Omega//And the Bread of Life endured our stripes//And bore the sinner's curse//Oh the power of the rock I stand upon//To keep me through the flood//Oh the power of the spotless Lamb of God//To keep me through His blood//On a hill outside the city//As He suffered in the darkness//Rejected and suspended in//Between the earth and sky//They raised a branch of hyssop//To the door of our salvation//And He tasted death with every breath//As He drank the bitter wine//The One who spoke to Moses//From the middle of the fire//Embraced the flame of sin and shame//As sorrow filled Him up//And His cry rang out to heaven//Father why have You forsaken?//When the weight of sin fell down on Him//To never fall on us//And the earth began to tremble//With the sound of resurrection//And the grave expelled its captives held//And our exodus began

Isaiah 53:12

Therefore I will give Him the many as a portion, and He will receive the mighty as spoil, because He willingly submitted to death, and was counted among the rebels; yet He bore the sin of many and interceded for the rebels.

Jesus isn't like other leaders you've read about. He never once clamored for authority. He didn't try to climb the ladder of popularity. He was always saying counter-intuitive things that would leave people scratching their heads, like:

Matthew 16:25

"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will find it."

To go high, go low. To become rich, become poor. To find your life, give it away. These aren't the sayings of a high-powered, Type A, get-things-done leader. And these certainly aren't the teachings of the Rome-overthrowing Messiah that they were expecting. Jesus didn't fit into their box.

Jesus didn't just teach this - He lived it. The road to the cross is Jesus' ultimate example of losing your life to find it. Reading through the gospel accounts of Jesus' trial and death, something becomes crystal clear: He's not trying to stop it. He's not saying, "Wait, this is all a big misunderstanding. I'm just trying to help!" Nor does He say, "Let me tell you guys why this is a bad idea." He has the authority at any moment to call down innumerable angels to fight off His captors. But He doesn't. The prophet Isaiah describes Him in this way:

Isaiah 53:7

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, He did not open His mouth.

Just like a lamb is led out to be slaughtered, quietly following her owner out to her own death, Jesus went through His arrest, illegal trial, and public humiliation, barely saying a word. God in the flesh was silent as evil men falsely accused Him. He didn't fight back when they hit Him and spit on Him.

He obeyed when Roman soldiers put His cross on His back and told Him to carry it. He endured the greatest injustice the world has ever known - quietly.

He didn't go to the cross because He was lacking in power. He went to the cross because He was full of power. Only Jesus had the ability to obey God perfectly, something we could never do.

He laid down His rights as the Son of God and took up the dirt and grime of human pride and shame. He willingly submitted to death. That's real power.

Jesus showed us what it really means to lose your life. But what about finding it? Didn't He say that if you lose your life, you'll find it?

Isaiah 53:11-12

After His anguish, He will see light and be satisfied. By His knowledge, my righteous servant will justify many, and He will carry their iniquities. Therefore I will give Him the many as a portion, and He will receive the mighty as spoil, because He willingly submitted to death, and was counted among the rebels; yet He bore the sin of many and interceded for the rebels.

God raised Jesus out of His grave and rewarded Him with eternal life for Him and all who believe in Him. Jesus' example is our example. And Jesus' life is now our life.

Jesus still has His perfectly-under-control power. And with that power, He keeps you.

He helps you. He refuses to let you go.

QUESTIONS

- 1. HOW IS JESUS DIFFERENT THAN OTHER LEADERS?**
- 2. IF JESUS COULD HAVE ESCAPED ANY TIME HE WANTED TO, WHY DID HE STILL GO TO THE CROSS?**
- 3. JESUS' POWER WAS DISPLAYED THROUGH HIS WILLINGNESS TO BE WEAK. HOW MIGHT THAT SAME POWER BE DISPLAYED THROUGH YOU TODAY?**

READ ON

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

HEBREWS 13:11-13

EXODUS 12

Devotions written by Jesse Colucci

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