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Overcoming The Storms Of Life
“Overcoming The Storms Of Crisis”
(Part 3)

Intro: There are various types of crisis we can find ourselves in. Financial / Relational / Physical / From tragedy – injury – sickness - even loss of a loved one / They can vary in intensity and duration. One thing’s for sure, nobody wants to be in one. Unfortunately, they seem to be inevitable. They eventually find us all. What do we do? How do we overcome the storms of crisis?

John 11: Story of Lazarus – Summarize – Mary and Martha had a crisis. Their brother Lazarus was deathly sick. These were some of Jesus’ closest friends. Jesus was at least 2 days away...

- 5 truths about God we need in the midst of crisis regardless of what type.

I. God Allows The Storms of Crisis For His Glory

John 11:3-4 “So the two sisters sent a message to Jesus telling Him, ‘Lord, the one you love is very sick.’ But when Jesus heard about it he said, ‘Lazarus’s sickness will not end in death. No, it is for the glory of God. I the Son of God, will receive glory from this.” (NLT)

A. God did not create the crisis you’re in (sisters didn’t blame Jesus for the sickness)

1. It’s easy to blame God for the storms we encounter. Since God has the power to stop whatever storm we face and He chooses not to, doesn’t that make it His fault? If God is so good why is my life so painful?
2. Whatever crisis you have faced or you’re currently facing, God did allow it, but He did not create it and it’s not His fault that you experienced it. WHY?
3. The storms of crisis originate from a variety of sources. Environmental factors – hurricanes / tornados / floods / - Biological factors – sickness / disease / death / physical pain – Free choice factors – God allows people to make evil choices that negatively impact our lives. (economy / drunk drivers / lie – steal-cheat – abuse)
4. These are all results of sin entering our world. Once sin became part of our world God chose not to remove the consequences of sin. They are going to play out around us all the time.
5. Jesus promised that in this world we are going to have storms (tribulation), BUT, take heart...I have overcome this world. How does He overcome it?

B. God does promise to use the crisis you're in

1. Just because sin is going to create storms, doesn't mean they have to destroy us. God says He will use them to bring Him glory. He will use them to accomplish His purposes. Not even the results of sin can stop what God wants to do in your life. No storm is strong enough to steal God's purposes from your life.
2. Even the hopelessness of Lazarus's condition can fit into God's plan to accomplish His purposes. "...it is for the glory of God."
3. The storms of crisis are going to happen anyway. No one gets to be sheltered entirely. The sooner we realize they are for His glory the better off we'll be.
4. We may not be able to see or comprehend anything good that can come out of what we're going through...But that's not our job. God can accomplish amazing things even in the most hopeless of situations. In fact He promises to

Rom. 8:28 "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." (NLT)

- Will you be willing to acknowledge God's glory in your storm?

II. God Often Waits Until It Seems Hopeless

John 11:11, 14 "Then He said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up...Then he told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead..." (NLT) Jesus purposely waited two more days before leaving. Why would He do such a thing? I thought this guy was one of His closest friends? He waited until it seemed hopeless! WHY?

A. Hopelessness creates a desperation in us

1. Sometimes God waits until every prop is knocked out from beneath us. God is not the One who is knocking out our props. Life will do that all by itself. There are times He purposely waits until everything we were trusting in is gone.
2. Some of you are thinking, "Why would God be so mean?" He's not being mean. He's just letting you exhaust all your options first. When all our options that make sense to us are gone, we become spiritually desperate.
3. We are now more spiritually attentive than we've ever been / our spiritual ears are tuned in / We are no longer spiritually distracted / God is now our only hope, our only option, and our only pursuit .
4. Something happens to us in a crisis. We are stripped of our resources / our self-reliance / our pride / our answers / of all false hopes / and we experience a brokenness before God that can only happen in the storms of life.
5. Now we have the opportunity to experience God in ways that will change our lives forever. You see, no one gets to this place and stays the same.

B. Hopelessness sets the stage for the miraculous

1. God just has a flare for the dramatic. This just seems to be a Biblical pattern. He waits until all hope is lost, the circumstances are impossible and the people are desperate, then He rides in and saves the day! God knows how to set the stage.

2. Lazarus has been dead for 4 days! He purposely waits so nobody going to think that he slipped into a coma / merely woke up / He waits until he's physically decaying!
3. When God waits until the situation is hopeless, people acknowledge the intervention coming from God and not from anywhere else. How often have you heard people give someone or something else the credit? How often have you heard, "Boy, that was sure lucky!" This is why He waits until "luck" is impossible!
4. The story tells us that as a result of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, many believed in Jesus. This is the result of trusting Jesus in the storms of crisis. You will be forever changed, but so will others. Others will trust Jesus because of what Jesus did in your life.
5. If you're waiting today and feel hopeless, hang on...help is on the way! God ahs not abandoned you. His timing is perfect! While we wait...

III. God Is Not Offended By Our Questions

John 11:21 "Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." (NLT)

John 11:32 "When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell down at His feet and said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." (NLT) Implication: Where were you! You could have stopped this!

A. Sometimes we just don't understand

1. Because we don't understand the painful events in our life or why God appears to be silent, we question Him. Haven't you ever questioned God? I have heard some preachers say that you should never question God.
2. I wish I could be so spiritual. I don't believe God is offended by our questions. He wasn't with Mary and Martha. He didn't rebuke them for wondering why he didn't show up on time.
3. There have been plenty of times over the years when I have questioned God / told Him I don't understand / don't get it / doesn't make sense / don't like what He is allowing / don't see anything good in it.
4. God understands our humanity. I believe we're just being honest with our pain and frustration in the midst of a storm. I believe this is how we process our emotions honestly before God.
5. There are plenty of examples in scripture where people didn't have a clue what God was doing / they didn't understand / and they took that frustration to Him.

B. God understands our limited perspective

1. As a parent, I didn't expect my children to understand every decision I made as their dad. Sometimes, their limited perspective as children hindered them from even comprehending the reasons behind it. I didn't get angry with them for this.
2. God sees our first day and the last. God sees our life as a whole; we only see the past and the part that we are living right now. God knows how this crisis is going to

change us for the better. We only see the pain.

3. Our lives are like a priceless oil painting. There are a variety of colors that make up the masterpiece. Some are bright, happy and expressive. Others are dark / they create shadows and contrast. BUT together they create something priceless.
- You may be in the middle of some very dark colors on the canvas of life right now.
 4. Only God sees the finished product. He understands this. Therefore He has tremendous grace for us in the midst of the storms. He has grace for our questions. He even has grace for our anger. Are you taking it all to Him? He can handle it!

IV. God Cares Deeply About Our Pain

John 11:33-35 “When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, He was moved with indignation and was deeply troubled. ‘Where have you put him?’ he asked them. They told him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Then Jesus wept.” (NLT)

A. Our pain matters to God

1. This is an amazing part of the story to me. He knew what He was going to do. He knew in a few minutes they would be rejoicing. In moments there would be a miracle that would change lives, yet Jesus was so moved by people’s grief that He wept. Their pain mattered to Him.
2. We need to remember that the pain we feel in the midst of the crisis matters to God. Even though He knows what He’s going to do, how it will grow us, the beautiful end result, our pain and sorrow actually moves Him.
3. Why is this so important? How can you draw close to someone in the midst of a crisis if you believe they don’t care about you?

Ps. 56:8 “You keep track of all my sorrow. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.” (NLT)
4. God has seen every painful event of your life. He has made note of every tear / every wound / every disappointment / every heartache. AND, they all matter to Him.
5. If you’ve been running from God because you think He doesn’t care for you, maybe today it is time to believe what is true. He hurts for you. Your pain matters to Him.

B. God draws close in our pain

Ps. 34:18 “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.” (NLT) Maybe this is how you feel today...emotionally crushed.

1. God doesn’t abandon us in the pain of crisis. It is His desire to draw close and rescue us. Some of you may be wondering where God is today. He’s right next to you.
2. In a crisis, we can blame God / be angry with Him / we can withdraw from Him / and cut ourselves off from the only one who can rescue us. His choice is to be close to us when we hurt. What will your choice be?
3. If you’ve been running from Him / resisting Him / even blaming Him / you may

think that you've moved far from Him. The reality is that He has been with you all the time. You may have tried to leave Him. But He has never left you. He's right where you are waiting for you to turn to Him.

4. If you're willing to turn your life back in His direction, there is one more key...

V. God Moves Miraculously When We Remove The Stone

John 11:39-41 "Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them. But Martha said... 'Lord, by now the smell will be terrible because he has been dead four days. Jesus said, 'didn't I tell you that you will see God's glory if you believe?' So, they rolled the stone away." (NLT)

A. Pain causes us to create emotional tombs

1. When we experience deep emotional wounds from a crisis, often we feel as if something has died within us. Maybe we see it as irreparable damage / areas where we can never trust again / never forgive / never feel whole / never have hope /
2. We take these wounds (this deadness) and create tombs and then we roll a big stone in front of them. We never want to look at them and we never let anyone else see them either. Those things are dead / rotten / decaying pieces of our lives.
3. We are convinced these wounds will never change / never be healed / always negatively impact our lives / we'll never get over it / therefore we build a tomb and bury them.
4. Now, Jesus shows up in your life and He says, "Roll away the stone." We say, "Lord, it's been dead for a long time. You should have been here earlier. It's really stinks in there." Jesus says, "You want to see the glory of God in this area of your life?" "You want to see resurrection?" Trust me!
5. If we are willing to expose these areas of our lives to Jesus...the ones we thought were dead...something amazing will happen.

B. Exposing these tombs to Jesus results in resurrection

II Cor. 1:9 "Indeed we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead." (NASB) Sometimes we can feel that sentence of death upon our lives because of pain.

1. This is how the damaging effects of a crisis can bring God glory. If we are willing to expose our devastation to Him, our pain / wounds / those things we believed were dead / He will resurrect them if we place our trust in Him.
2. Jesus said that He is the resurrection and the life. This is true not only in the physical sense someday; He is the resurrection and the life to whatever we expose to Him and trust Him with. Whatever we invite Jesus into He brings life to it. He brings resurrection, not death!
3. Some of you have embraced this sentence of death because of the pain of crisis and have created tombs in your lives. They are different for every person.
 - Some of you have created a tomb because of past mistakes and failures. I'm useless to God. He could never use me. I guess that part is dead.

- Some of you have rolled a stone in front of your marriage. You've concluded it is dead and there is no hope. Why try anymore?
 - Some of you have rolled a stone in front of your resentment / unforgiveness / You are just too wounded to ever forgive. I've buried it
 - Some of you have been severely hurt by others / abuse / betrayal / broken trust / and you've concluded you can never trust again. Something is dead.
 - Some of you have created a tomb because of some physical issue / problem / handicap. You've let that kill your dreams / future hopes / I'll just burry those dreams I had. They're dead.
4. Some of you may be thinking, "What does resurrection look like?" If I allow God to bring new life to these dead areas of my life, what does that look like. ANSWER: I don't know! I believe it will unique and tailor made just for you. I do know this...you won't be disappointed. Resurrection doesn't disappoint.

Rom. 10:11 "Anyone who believes in Him will not be disappointed." (NLT)

- Casting Crowns video: Praise You In The Storm
- If you find yourself in the midst of a crisis, will you acknowledge that He will use it for His glory / God may be waiting on purpose / God is not offended by your questions / God cares deeply about your pain / Don't create a tomb...a grave...You will see the miracle of resurrection if you will remove the stone.