

Faith in Real Life: Stories of Hope in a Messed-Up World
Part 2: How God Turns Our Pain Into Purpose (DISCUSSION)
Exodus 2 and 3

Summary: God can take the pain and heartbreak in your life and turn it into a powerful purpose that changes the world.

Main Ideas:

The world will break your heart, and you can't do anything about it.

When we look at the mess of our lives and the world, it's easy to wonder, "Has God forgotten us?"

Even in silence, God is already at work. Sometimes in ways we never expect... sometimes through us.

Our best intentions can create the worst outcomes.

God's silence isn't absence... it's preparation

God's way will always be more loving and amazing than our own.

Your heartbreak can be where God's healing begins.

Invitation:

Take your pain to Jesus

Ask:

- What breaks your heart?
- God, what do you want me to do?

Discussion Questions:

1. What's something happening in the world right now that breaks your heart, and why does it hit you so deeply?
2. Read Exodus 2:11-12. Why do you think Moses' heartbreak over injustice led him to act, but also led to failure?
3. Read Exodus 3:9-12. What might God have been teaching Moses during his 40 years in the wilderness after his failed attempt to "fix" things?
4. If God can turn Moses' pain into purpose, what might He want to do through yours, and what's one step you can take this week to trust Him with it?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

WE: What breaks your heart?

Have you ever been scrolling or reading headlines and found yourself overwhelmed by how messed up the world is?

- Story after story of injustice, hatred, violence

And we can turn off our phones and the tv, but then we have to face our own life...

- Another soul-sucking day at work, illness, strained relationships...

That's when we say, "Someone should do something!"

- And sometimes, b/c we're such good people, we decide that somebody is us.
- So we post, we vent, we make big promises, and jump in.

- And more often than not... just add another mess to the world.

As we go through life, we realize... The world will break your heart, and you can't do anything about it.

- Sometimes the pain is personal. Sometimes we feel it with others. Sometimes the whole world groans.
- And in all this, we ask, 'Where's God? Why doesn't He DO something?'"

And last week, we saw how God meets us when we're the ones who messed up.

But what about when the world breaks your heart and it's not even your fault?

When we look at the mess of our lives and the world, it's easy to wonder, "Has God forgotten us?"

This is a fair question. AND it's one God is used to.

But underneath all this heartbreak, God is already moving... and we see that in the story of Moses.

- A man who carried the pain of an entire nation and asked this hard question.

Set up the story: Last week, we saw how God promised Abraham he'd give him family, make them a nation, give them a home.

- And bless the whole world through these people.

Fast forward a few hundred years... Abraham's descendants ARE numerous.

- But they are far from their promised land
- And they are far from blessing anyone

They've been slaves to the Pharaoh of Egypt for hundreds of years.

And if they even remember the God of their forefathers... they are crying out, "Why have you left us here? What about your promise?"

- Maybe you've prayed the same prayer?
- Maybe you've sat in the hospital, wondered when relief will come, or watched as the same cycles of hurt happen over and over.

But, if we look at the story of Moses and the Israelites, we'll see...

- Even in silence, God is already at work. Sometimes in ways we never expect... sometimes through us.

GOD: Moses was born to an Israelite family at a time when the Pharaoh of Egypt was trying to keep his hold on them by killing all the newborn boys.

In a desperate attempt to save her baby's life, Moses' mom floats him down the Nile in a basket, hoping someone, anyone, will save him.

Of all people... Pharaoh's daughter pulls him from the water... and unwittingly hires Moses' own mom to raise him.

Moses grows up in a palace.

- But every day, he sees his people suffer.
- And one day, he decides: 'That's enough. I'll do something about it...'
- He seems like the perfect hero... using his royal privilege to fight for his people's freedom.

But as so often happens, when pain and passion for justice meet human nature, we get ahead of God's timing and just create more pain.

Exodus 2:11-12 (NLT) *Many years later, when Moses had grown up, he went out to visit his own people, the Hebrews, and he saw how hard they were forced to work. During his visit, he saw an Egyptian beating one of his fellow Hebrews. After looking in all directions to make sure no one was watching, Moses killed the Egyptian and hid the body in the sand.*

Moses sees the abuse. His heart starts pounding... and something snaps... he's had enough.

- Someone needs to do something.
- He's going to be that someone... and he acts.

Moses had such good intentions, he dared to make a stand, took matters into his own hands... and it took a horrible turn.

- Instead of bringing freedom... he brings death.
- He commits a worse crime than the one he was trying to stop.

Our best intentions can create the worst outcomes.

Pharaoh finds out about the murder and tries to kill him.

So Moses runs far away to the wilderness.

- He starts a new life.
- Gets married, has a kid, and works for his father-in-law as a shepherd.

Moses thought he was going to be the hero.

- He thought he was doing the right thing, protecting a fellow Israelite.
- He didn't hide behind his privilege. He didn't turn a blind eye.
- He stepped up, and it ruined his life.

Maybe you've been there?

- God, I did what I thought was right, and now look at this mess.
- I just wanted to help, and now everyone blames me
- I've been there a lot

Moses must have felt like a failure, rejected, forgotten, far from home.

- Knowing his people were still slaves, and he couldn't do one thing about it.

But God hadn't forgotten, and he was getting all the pieces in the right place...

One day, Moses sees a bush burning that won't burn up... When he goes to check it out... God speaks to him out of the bush.

Exodus 3:6-8a *I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” When Moses heard this, he covered his face because he was afraid to look at God. Then the LORD told him, “I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries of distress because of their harsh slave drivers. Yes, I am aware of their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land.*

God says: I have seen. I have heard. I am here. I have come down.

When the world feels dark, injustice is rampant, and the hurt is overwhelming, it's easy to think God's not there.

- Not listening. Too busy watching his soaps to care about us.

But in reality... God's silence isn't absence... it's preparation

Imagine a small child wakes up in the dark, alone and afraid.

- She calls out for her parent.
- The house seems silent, and fear grows for a second... but as she starts to cry out again, the door opens and her parent comes in, and wraps her in a big hug.
- The child's cries weren't ignored. The parent wasn't uninterested.
- In fact, the moment she woke up, the parent, attuned to their kid's noises, heard it on the baby monitor and were already on their way to comfort their kid.

Even if he's silent, God is moving... usually in ways we can't see.

And more often than not... he's preparing us to be part of the solution.

Remember young brash Moses... ready to take matters into his own hands and fight for the freedom of his people?

- God has used Moses' years in the wilderness to bring him to a place where he's ready to listen to another solution...

Exodus 3:9-12 *Look! The cry of the people of Israel has reached me, and I have seen how harshly the Egyptians abuse them. Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt.” But Moses protested to God, “Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?” God answered, “I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain.”*

After years in obscurity, God knew Moses was ready.

- But now Moses wasn't so sure.

- He had failed once... who would listen to him now?
- He had lost his opportunity.

But that's just who God needed.

- Someone who was willing to give up their own plans, their own ways of doing things, and follow him... no matter what.

Moses had wanted to rescue his people his way... right away

- The way that made the most sense in his world.
- Violence, force.

But God had a different way. A way that would show the Israelites and the world not only his power but also his love and care.

- It would show them that they were never forgotten and that he sees the oppressed and cares about their lives.
- It was a way of love... giving Pharaoh and the Egyptians chance after chance to change their ways and choose good.

Moses wanted to fix it with force.

- God wanted to change the world through grace, patience, and real freedom.
- God's way will always be more loving and amazing than our own.

When Moses finally accepted God's invitation...

- God used him to do amazing things, things we still make movies about...
- And ultimately rescue the Israelites and carry on God's promise that through Abraham's descendants the whole world would be blessed.

Like Moses, before we act, we need to be ready for God's way

When we see the hurt and brokenness around us...

- We want to rush in and fix it. We want to make a stand. We want to make sure we are on the right side of history.
- Those aren't bad feelings. It means you care and that you haven't hardened your heart with apathy.

But if we act without first waiting for God to lead the way... it will often lead to disaster and more brokenness.

God still sees the oppressed. He still hates injustice. And he is still working to set captives free.

It's why Jesus came...

Luke 4:17-21 (NLT) *The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD's favor has come." He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them. "The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!"*

Jesus is the blessing God promised would come through Abraham.

He is the rescuer that Moses was pointing to.

- He showed us who God really is, he died to ransom us from sin and death, and rose again, conquering the power of evil and proving he is the true king of the cosmos.
- Freeing us to fight injustice and hatred

He sees you.

He sees your pain, and he is ready to do something about it.

- God is not distant. He hasn't forgotten you.
- You may not know him personally yet, but Jesus listens and cares in your suffering.

He hears you, even when your prayers are shouted or just felt in pain and confusion,

- God works in his timing.
- Even when we can't see the answers, God is already planning to act.

He also sees the pain of those around you and wants to do something about it... and in some way (whether big or small) he wants to use you to do something about it.

- And what he is planning is always better and more effective than we could imagine.

YOU: My invitation this week is this...

For those of you struggling with your own pain today... whether you call yourself JF or not...

Take your pain to Jesus

Tell him honestly what you're struggling with... even if you're not sure he's listening.

- He already knows.
- Giving it to him is your first step in trusting he's with you.
- Maybe even write it out

And if you're still not sure if he cares... look at the cross, look at the empty tomb.

Now, for those of you struggling with the pain in the world today...

Let me ask you... **What breaks your heart?**

- What is it that every time you see it... a certain injustice, hurt, situation... You feel like yelling, "Someone should do something!"
- That passion was probably put there by God.
- And he is preparing to do something through you
- So name it.

And ask... **God, what do you want me to do?**

- And be ready for the answer, no matter if it's bigger or smaller than you initially wanted.
- It might be simply waiting, like Moses did, but setting aside regular time to pray specifically for this issue
- It might be volunteering/raising awareness/researching with others whose hearts break for the same thing
- It might be donating time and/or money
- Or it might be something that completely turns your life upside down.

Whatever it is... when you are ready to wait on God's timing and his way, he will use you to do something.

For hundreds of years, the Israelites waited for God to do something... convinced he had forgotten them.

- But the whole time, he was preparing everything and everyone to set his people free from Egypt forever.

And he still keeps his promises...

- And he has said he will rush to the side of anyone who calls on him.
- Like the parent in the middle of the night
- We can trust him and rely on him
- And allow him to use us in his way and timing.

WE: Imagine a life where you don't have to face heartbreak alone

Where the Creator of the universe loves you unconditionally and walks with you in everything.

What if you didn't have to react to everything people posted... You don't have to be outraged at everything “THEY” say you should be.

- But you could trust that as you walk with Jesus, stay connected to him, he will give you passions, he will break your heart for what he needs your heart broken for.
- And then he will show you what he needs you to do to be part of the solution.

Imagine a people freed from helpless outrage, ready to love and serve with courage... because we know the God who heals and saves

It's why he created the Church... to be his hands and feet to heal the hurt and be a solution to the brokenness.

The God who brought the Israelites out of Egypt is still at work today... moving through you, healing through you, leading through you.

Are you willing to stop running ahead or turning away, and instead trust God's way... even if that means waiting, praying, serving, or speaking up?

Your heartbreak can be where God's healing begins.