



*A 40 day devotional...*

# **HIS Story + Our Story** **All for His Glory**



## Preface

It was Monday, August 21<sup>st</sup> and God put the idea of a 40-day devotional into my head that would run from Kick-Off Sunday until Pledge Sunday. Timing was a definite hurdle. I once heard the phrase: "If God grants the vision, He provides the provision." So, I prayed that He would provide the time to get them written and the people to edit and print them. And He did.

This will be similar to the Lenten devotional through John except that it won't fit in specifically with our fall sermon series. It is an overall study of key Old Testament history and stories. (God's Story) For those of you who are new to Bible study, it will be a simple start to understand God's story through the Old Testament. For those of you who are Bible study veterans, my prayer is that you approach these familiar stories with an open mind toward personal application. (Our Story) God's Word is alive and active, so I am trusting that the Lord has messages for each one of us.

I pray that this will be a rich time for the people of DR to soak up God's Word, as we pray to move forward in our story.

***Special thanks to the following people for their quick edits of this devotional: Gail Arnold, Stacy Bader, Jeff Lippert, Charles Luebke, Vicar Alex & Pastor Adam.***

May our story be all for His glory!

With joyful anticipation,  
Karen Lippert

*The Bible references are from the English Standard Version.*

*In the "Our Story" application sections, we know that we are not capable of following Jesus without the Holy Spirit's help.*

*Without Him, we can do nothing! John 15:5b*

## “Very Good”

*September 11, 2023*

**Genesis 1:26,27,31** Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” **27** So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. **31** And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Let’s start at the very beginning; a very good place to start! Yes, it was **very good**. Our triune God (notice the pronoun “our” in v.26) created everything in six days. Our creative God spoke everything into being! He spoke it and it was. Perfect. No weaknesses. No imperfections. No struggles. No pain. In a mere 144 hours, Paradise was completed.

The crowning jewel of creation was His people. On the first five days of creation, God saw that everything was good. On day six, He saw that the inclusion of people made His creation **very good**. People were made in His image, which separates us from the rest of creation.

How well are we living as the image bearers of our God?  
Are we loving and forgiving? Our goal is to be very  
good representations of God's image.

**HIS Story:** God's creation was perfect, and people were the  
crowning jewel of His work.

**Our Story:** We are called to represent God as His image  
bearers.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“From Very Good to Very Bad”**

*September 12, 2023*

**Genesis 3:8** And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

**9** But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” **10** And he said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” **11** He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” **12** The man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” **13** Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

How much time passed between Genesis 2 & Genesis 3? Hopefully, Adam and Eve got to enjoy their perfect paradise for more than a brief time. You know what happened next: SIN. Adam & Eve succumbed to the serpent’s lies and ate the forbidden fruit. After they realized what they had done, they were filled with shame. They even thought that they could HIDE from God!!

God knew where they were, yet He called to them. Notice the way that Adam AND Eve reacted to being questioned. They played the BLAME Game.

Adam blamed Eve and by insinuation, God. Eve blamed the snake. Life in Paradise was over.

How do you handle being confronted with your sin?

**His Story:** God gave Adam & Eve free will and sadly they used that to turn against their Creator.

**Our Story:** It's better to confess our sins than to play Hide & Seek and The Blame Game.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“The Warning”**

*September 13, 2023*

**Genesis 4:2b-7** Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. **3** In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, **4** and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, **5** but for Cain and his offering He had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. **6** The Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? **7** If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”

Have you ever had that uneasy feeling that you were out of control? That you were on the verge of doing something that you would later regret? You’re not alone. The first person born on Earth was Cain. He grew crops and brought an offering for God. The Lord had no regard for Cain’s offering. Why? Maybe it was a meager leftover and not a sacrificial gift. His younger brother, Abel, worked with animals and he brought the firstborn of his flock as an offering. His sacrifice was pleasing to the Lord. Enter sibling rivalry.

The Lord was so gracious to Cain. He posed a question, just like He did with Cain’s parents after they sinned in the garden. God warned Cain with the description that “sin is crouching at the door”.

Sin's desire is contrary to God's and we (with the help of the Holy Spirit) must RULE over it. Unfortunately, Cain didn't heed the warning and he killed Abel, which held consequences for the rest of his life.

Do you heed the warnings about temptation and sin?

**HIS story:** The Lord warned Cain about the sin that was crouching at the door.

**Our story:** We need to listen to God's warnings about sin.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.



## **“Walking with God”**

*September 14, 2023*

**Genesis 6: 5,6,9 The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD regretted that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart...<sup>9</sup> Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.**

How bad was the world in Noah’s day? Every thought was evil continually! The Lord’s heart was grieved, and He regretted that He had created people. How bad was it exactly? How different is our world today from then?

In both cases, sin was abounding. In our world today, we see sin being rationalized and legalized. It appears that we are close to every thought being evil continually. How then, do we live?

Look at Noah. In the midst of the chaos, Noah was righteous and blameless. Not perfect but seeking to please God in all that he did. It even says that “Noah WALKED with God”. What did that look like?

Noah had a vibrant relationship with his God. He talked to Him and heard His voice. He likely asked for God’s help to live in a righteous way even though everyone around him was evil. We know that he heard and obeyed God’s voice and built a gigantic ark.

How do we live in the midst of the evil of our day?

We walk with God.

Are you walking with God?

**HIS story:** God hates sin but loves those who seek to walk with Him.

**Our story:** We strive to walk with God. Everyday.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“The Tower”**

*September 15, 2023*

**Genesis 9:1, 11:1-4 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” ... Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. <sup>2</sup> And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. <sup>3</sup> And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. <sup>4</sup> Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”**

After the flood, God was clear. Be fruitful, multiply and FILL the earth. By Genesis 11, the people had a different idea. They wanted to stay in the land of Shinar and build a skyscraper to “make a name for ourselves.” There are two problems with this plan. Number one, they were supposed to spread out and fill the earth. Secondly, their pride was out of control! They didn’t want to be spread out. They wanted to build something that would honor themselves.

You know the story of the Tower of Babel. God “came down” and confused their language and then He scattered them throughout the earth. (Genesis 11:5-9) His purpose of filling the earth was fulfilled. God will not let evil and human pride prevail. He will intervene.

Are you striving to make a name for yourself?

**HIS story:** God is sovereign, and His purposes will prevail.

**Our story:** We seek to obey the Lord in humility.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## “The Call”

*September 16, 2023*

**Genesis 12:1-3 Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”**

Abraham may be the most prolific man in the Old Testament. After all, three major world religions have found their roots in him: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. His life fills 13 chapters in Genesis.

Abram (before God changed his name to Abraham) heard the voice of God telling him to leave everything he knew behind. That command was hard enough, but the Lord didn't even tell him where he was going! Wow! What did his wife Sarai think of that? He hadn't refused to ask for directions, he had none!

Could we do that? Leave everything behind and wait for God to show us where to go? Abram did and he was greatly rewarded for it. He fathered the Jewish nation; he was blessed with riches and his name is greatly known. God ultimately blessed Abraham's family line with the Messiah, Who has blessed all the families of the earth.

Is God speaking to you? Is He calling you to something deeper or different? As scary as it might be, answering that call could be the best adventure of your life!

**HIS story:** God calls His people to fulfill His purposes.

**Our story:** We seek to listen and respond to what the Lord calls us to do.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## “The Plan”

*September 17, 2023*

**Genesis 16:1-3** Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. <sup>2</sup> And Sarai said to Abram, “Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

Abram was 75 years old when he and Sarai (later renamed Sarah by God) arrived in the land of Canaan. As the years went by, the Lord reconfirmed His covenant with Abram and told him in Genesis 15 that he would have a child from his own body. His descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Ten years passed. No baby. Had God forgotten?

Sarai blamed God for her infertility and hatched up her own plan for a family. In those days, it was not uncommon for a servant to bear children for her master, so Sarai asked Abram to try that family plan. He obeyed. Enter Ishmael.

Waiting is hard. In our impatience, we often dream up our own plans. Often, these plans are disastrous. Ishmael led to the Arab nation, which would and is continually battling with the Jewish people. Islam was formed from his life.

Wait on God. Wait for Him to unfold the plan. His ways are perfect! Our plans can make life much more difficult.

Are you waiting on God or taking matters into your own hands?

**HIS story:** His plan is perfect.

**Our story:** We grow in our faith as we wait for God to reveal His plans for us.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.



## **“The Test”**

*September 18, 2023*

**Genesis 22:1-3 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” <sup>2</sup> He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” <sup>3</sup> So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.**

Isaac was born miraculously to Abraham and Sarah when they were 100 and 90 years old, respectively. God’s plan was fulfilled, and the wait was over. They named him “Laughter” (which is the meaning of the name Isaac) because of the laughing that occurred when they were told that they would have a son in their golden years. It seemed that life was finally where they wanted it to be. They had their boy.

Then God tested Abraham. He told him to go to Moriah to sacrifice his son there. WHAT?? What a minute! We waited 25 years for him and now you want me to kill him? Amazingly, Abraham obeyed. He even got up early!! He cut the wood, saddled his donkey, and took Isaac and two other servants with him.

Would you do it? Would you obey God even when it would rip out your heart? Abraham obeyed and God intervened at the last moment.

Is there an “Isaac” in your life that you need to sacrifice?

**HIS story:** God calls us to obedience and sometimes our faith is challenged.

**Our story:** We obey and follow the Lord, trusting in His faithfulness.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## “Isaac”

*September 19, 2023*

**Genesis 26:23-25 From there Isaac went up to Beersheba. And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, “I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake.” So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD and pitched his tent there.**

We know little about Isaac. We know that he was 40 years old when he married Rebekah. After a time of infertility, they had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. He and Rebekah each had their favorites, which led to deceit, jealousy, and division in their family.

Isaac's life was similar to his father's life in that he was a nomad. When he had traveled to Beersheba, the Lord appeared to him and confirmed the covenant that He had made with his father. God would be with him, bless him, and multiply his descendants. Isaac then built an altar and called on the name of the Lord.

Where and when can you “build an altar” and call on God’s name? In other words, think of a place where you can spend quality time with God. Once you have the spot identified, find a time that works in your schedule to read His Word and talk to Him in prayer. You won’t regret it. It will be time well spent!

**HIS story:** God promises to be with us and bless us.

**Our story:** We make personal time with God a priority.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“The Deceiver’s Dream”**

*September 20, 2023*

**Genesis 28: 12-15, 20-22** And Jacob dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! <sup>13</sup> And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. <sup>14</sup> Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. <sup>15</sup> Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

<sup>20</sup> Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, <sup>21</sup> so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, <sup>22</sup> and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that You give me I will give a full tenth to You.”

Jacob had tricked his father Isaac into giving him the birthright and the blessing. Esau was bitterly angry and was plotting to kill him, so Isaac sent him away to live with his Uncle Laban. While Jacob was traveling, he stopped one night to sleep and had the amazing dream of the stairway to heaven. God reconfirmed His covenant with the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation about being with him and blessing him with a large family and land.

What was Jacob's response? If God would come through for him, he would make the Lord his God, make the stone he slept on God's house, and give a tithe back to Him. This was a conditional response. Aren't you glad that God's promises aren't dependent on us?

**HIS story:** God's promises are unconditional.

**Our story:** Although our faithfulness is often conditional, we can trust God's faithfulness and live in response to His grace.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“The Dysfunctional Family”**

*September 21, 2023*

### **Genesis 29-30 (The sons are listed in birth order.)**

Sons of Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah,  
Issachar and Zebulun

Sons of Rachel’s servant, Bilhah: Dan & Naphtali

Sons of Leah’s servant, Zilpah: Gad & Asher

Sons of Rachel: Joseph & Benjamin

This family began with Jacob being deceived into marrying Leah. (After deceiving his father and his brother, he was the recipient of deception from his Uncle Laban.) Within a week, he also married his true love, Rachel. Can you imagine two sisters sharing one husband? It was as bad as it sounds. In addition to the marriage rivalry, a battle of bearing sons ensued. Can you scream: “DYSFUNCTIONAL?”

Although this family was a hot mess, God used these twelve sons from the two sisters and their servants to create the 12 tribes of Israel. The Hebrew nation was now formed, and each Israelite took great pride in his tribal lineage.

Is your family a hot mess? Is there strife, jealousy, and broken relationships? You are not alone. Often the deepest pain in our lives comes from those that we love the most. God can take messed up, broken people and use them for His glory. Trust in Him to work good in your family. He is able.

**HIS story:** God can use any family to accomplish His purposes.

**Our story:** I will trust God with the brokenness in my family.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.



## **“What’s in a Name?”**

*September 22, 2023*

**Genesis 32:22-30** The same night Jacob arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. **23** He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. **24** And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. **25** When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. **26** Then he said, “Let Me go, for the day has broken.” But Jacob said, “I will not let You go unless You bless me.” **27** And He said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” **28** Then He said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.” **29** Then Jacob asked Him, “Please tell me Your name.” But He said, “Why is it that you ask My name?” And there He blessed him. **30** So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.”

Names were very significant in the Old Testament. When Isaac’s twins were born, Esau, the first-born, means hairy. His brother was named Jacob, which means “he grasps the heel”, since that is what he was doing when he was born. It may also figuratively mean “he deceives”. Jacob lived up to that definition by swindling Esau out of his birthright and their father’s blessing.

Now it was time for Jacob and his large family to return home and that meant meeting his brother Esau. On the night before that fated meeting, Jacob was alone and wrestled with a “man” until daybreak. After a dislocated hip and with morning approaching, the “man” told Jacob that his name would now be “Israel”, which means “he struggles with God”. The nation of Israel had officially begun and through this nation, the Savior of the world would come.

Whatever your “name” was, God can transform it. Your old name is gone. You’ve been redeemed and your new life in Jesus has come!

Are you living with the shame of an old “name”?

**HIS story:** God can transform anyone.

**Our story:** God can redeem any past “name” that we may have.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“Pride Goes Before the Fall”**

*September 23, 2023*

**Genesis 37: 3, 5, 9, 23-24, 28b** Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors...<sup>5</sup> Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more...<sup>9</sup> Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, “Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me...”<sup>23</sup> So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore.<sup>24</sup> And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

The rivalry between Leah and Rachel bled into their children and was fostered by Jacob’s favoritism for his son, Joseph. This was made blatantly clear by the coat of many colors that Joseph was given. It appears that Joseph wore this fancy coat often. That sure didn’t help anything.

And then the dreams came. Two of them. Basically, they were foreshadowing his father, Jacob and the other 11 brothers bowing down to him. Having dreams is one thing, sharing them is another. Between the coat and the dream sharing, Joseph’s pride was on overload.

Finally, the brothers decided to remove their boasting brother. They took off his fancy coat and threw him into a pit. Ultimately, they sold him to Ishmaelite traders who took him to Egypt.

Pride leads to the fall. Always. Is there an area where pride is reigning in your life?

**HIS story:** God will deal with our pride.

**Our story:** Pride needs to be addressed and confessed.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“Attitude is Everything”**

*September 24, 2023*

**Genesis 39: 1-3, 23** Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. **2** The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. **3** His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands... **23** The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.

Joseph may have had issues with pride, but the next several years of his life humbled him greatly. He was sold to Potiphar as a slave. While in his service, he prospered and became successful. What kind of attitude do you think that he displayed? Grumbling? Blaming? Whining? It is doubtful that he would have been so successful if he had been grumpy all the time.

Then he was falsely accused of rape and sent to prison. He didn't deserve that, but God was continuing to develop Joseph's character and work out His purposes. While in prison, he succeeded. Once again, he must have been a pleasant, positive person in order to achieve a leadership status. Attitude is everything.

How has your attitude been? Have you been complaining, blaming, or just plain feeling sorry for yourself? Learn from a young man sold into slavery, falsely accused and imprisoned!

**HIS story:** God calls us to be positive influences in our spheres of influence.

**Our story:** We strive to represent Jesus with our attitudes.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“Forgiveness”**

*September 25, 2023*

**Genesis 50: 17-21** “Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.” And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph wept when they spoke to him. <sup>18</sup> His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, “Behold, we are your servants.” <sup>19</sup> But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. <sup>21</sup> So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Betrayal. Sold as a slave. Falsely accused. Put in prison. 13 years passed from when Joseph was sold as a slave until he became 2<sup>nd</sup> in command in Egypt. Plenty of time to plan revenge, especially after his brothers fulfilled his dream and knelt before him.

Now the brothers are begging for forgiveness. Joseph could see that although they had hated him and wanted him dead, the Lord used his slavery and imprisonment to develop him into the leader who would plan well for the famine that was coming. God took their evil and worked it for His good.

Forgiveness can be one of the hardest things to do. It doesn't excuse the behavior or forget that it happened. It doesn't mean that the relationship should be restored either. Forgiving our offender releases us from a prison of bitterness.

Who do you need to forgive?

**HIS story:** Because He freely forgives us, God calls His people to forgive those who offend us.

**Our story:** We need to forgive those who have hurt us.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.



## **“Excuses”**

*September 26, 2023*

**Exodus 3:11, 4:1, 10, 13 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”**

**Then Moses answered, “But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you.’” ... But Moses said to the LORD, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” ...But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.”**

After Joseph died, the Hebrew people were enslaved in Egypt for 400 years. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush with the directive to go to Pharaoh to ask for the release of the Israelites from slavery. Moses tried three different avenues to get out of the assignment: Who am I, they won't believe me, and I'm not good at public speaking. Finally, he blurted out: “Please send someone else!”

While you probably haven't experienced a burning bush with the audible voice of God, you do know His voice. It comes from a devotion, prayer time, a friend's words, or from the still, small voice of your conscience. Have you made excuses for not obeying what God has been saying to you? Do you just want Him to send someone else?

Moses acquiesced after God gave him Aaron as a mouthpiece and he ultimately ended up leading the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. Is there an area in your life where you need to obey the voice of God?

What are your excuses?

\*I'm too busy?

\* It's too hard!

\*I am not talented enough!

\*Please God, just send someone else!

**HIS story:** God speaks to His people in a variety of ways.

**Our story:** We listen for His voice and obey.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“No Way Out”**

*September 27, 2023*

**Exodus 14:10-14** When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD. <sup>11</sup> They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? <sup>12</sup> Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” <sup>13</sup> And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. <sup>14</sup> The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

After God sent 10 plagues on the Egyptians, Moses led the people out of Egypt. All too soon, however, Pharaoh realized that his free labor was gone. He sent his army to retrieve his prior slaves. The Egyptian army backed the Israelites up against the Red Sea. There was no way out.

By this point, Moses has grown in his faith and his leadership. He boldly told the Israelites: 1. Don't be afraid. 2. Stand firm. 3. You won't see your enemies again. 4. The Lord will fight for you.

Then the impossible happened. The Lord split the Red Sea open long enough for the Israelites to cross and then the Egyptian army was drowned as the waters returned.

Are you feeling like there's no way out of something in your life? Don't be afraid; stay firm; the Lord will fight for you.

**HIS story:** God can deliver His people from impossible situations.

**Our story:** We believe that God can deliver us from things that look impossible.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## “#1”

*September 28, 2023*

### **Exodus 20:3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.**

Three months after the Israelites were freed from Egypt, they arrived at Mount Sinai. The Lord met Moses on the mountain and gave him the Ten Commandments, along with other laws and ordinances. The first commandment is the only one listed here. The more that we get #1 right, the easier it is to obey the other nine.

Idolatry is just as prevalent today as it was in Moses’ day. We may not worship graven or carved images of stone and wood, but we can find many other things to take ultimate importance in our lives.

The God of the Universe commands that we should put no one and no thing above Him. What competes for 1<sup>st</sup> place in your heart? Is it your money and your stuff? Is it your family? Is it power and prestige? Is it yourself and all that YOU want in life?

**HIS Story:** God commands that we keep Him first.

**Our Story:** We need to repent of our idolatry and set our hearts and minds on Him.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## “Unbelief”

*September 29, 2023*

**Numbers 13:27-28,30, 14:32-34** And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. <sup>28</sup> However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. <sup>30</sup> But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.”

<sup>32</sup> But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. <sup>33</sup> And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. <sup>34</sup> According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.’

Sometime after the Israelites left Mount Sinai, they settled in the Desert of Paran. While there, Moses sent 12 spies (one from each tribe) to explore the Promised Land of Canaan. The land was exactly as God promised it would be: a land flowing with milk and honey. However, the people and the cities were large and well protected. Panic and fear set in. The verdict: unbelief.

Caleb and Joshua believed that God would give them the ability to win against superior people. They knew that their God was sovereign. After all, He had recently freed them from the power of Pharaoh! Because of their unbelief, the 10 unbelieving spies died, and the entire Hebrew nation would suffer with 40 years of wandering in the desert.

Are you operating in unbelief? You're missing out on the victories God has in store for you!

HIS story: God calls us to believe that He can win despite what appear to be overwhelming odds.

Our story: We believe God and ask Him to help our unbelief. (Mark 9:24)

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.



## **“Disobedience”**

*September 30, 2023*

**Numbers 20: 7-12 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>8</sup>“Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.” <sup>9</sup>And Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he commanded him.<sup>10</sup> Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” <sup>11</sup>And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. <sup>12</sup>And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in Me, to uphold Me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.”**

Moses had been leading the stubborn, rebellious Israelites through the wilderness for years. The people had complained countlessly about a myriad of things (like wanting to be back in Egypt!) and Moses was weary. Weariness can easily lead to uncontrolled emotions.

In this case, there was no water. Again. Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the Lord and He commanded them to SPEAK to the rock to bring forth water. Moses gathered the people, called them rebels, asked if he and Aaron should bring them water and then he struck the rock twice. Bad ideas. His frustration and pride led him to disobey, and it cost him dearly. Moses would not get to set his sandals on Promised Land soil.

Disobedience is costly. Forgiveness is freely given, but God doesn't always remove the consequences from us. Moses paid a high price for his unbelief and disobedience.

**HIS story:** Obedience brings blessings. Disobedience brings consequences.

**Our story:** The Holy Spirit guides us in our obedience.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## “Courage”

October 1, 2023

**Joshua 1:6-9 Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. <sup>7</sup> Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. <sup>8</sup> This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. <sup>9</sup> Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”**

Moses died on Mount Nebo with a view of the Promised Land. Joshua was his right-hand man and was one of the 12 spies who believed that they could conquer the inhabitants of the land that God had promised them. The baton was handed off to him and the Lord spoke words of strength and courage to him. He repeated the words: “Be strong and courageous” three times. Joshua had big shoes to fill along with the overwhelming task of leading the Israelites into the Promised Land.

In the midst of these encouraging words, God commanded Joshua to meditate on the Book of the Law day and night, which would aid him in obeying. How do we obtain strength and courage? We remember the promises of God in His Word.

Are you strong and courageous or are you living in fear?

HIS story: God's Word brings strength and courage in the midst of overwhelming circumstances.

Our story: We meditate on God's Word and receive strength and courage.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“Standing Stones”**

*October 2, 2023*

**Joshua 4:1-7** When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, <sup>2</sup>“Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, <sup>3</sup>and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests’ feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’” <sup>4</sup>Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. <sup>5</sup>And Joshua said to them, “Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, <sup>6</sup>that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ <sup>7</sup>then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

In the same fashion that God split the Red Sea for the Israelites to cross, He split the Jordan River so that the people could pass through it (at flood stage!) to the Promised Land. Once they had passed, one man from each tribe went to get a stone from the middle of the riverbed. These stones would later be displayed as a

reminder for future generations. Our God is a God of the Miraculous!

Do you have “standing stones” that you could set up? Maybe it’s a photo of a special memory. Maybe it’s a specific date or year that God came through for you. (Jeff and I reflect on God’s financial provision to us in 1997 often.) Find a way to remember and celebrate what the Lord did in your life! It will build your faith for the challenges to come. When has God shown you His power?

**HIS story:** God wants us to remember what He has done for us.

**Our story:** We should remember the miracles that we have seen. (Starting with our salvation in Jesus!) It will encourage us for the future.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“Who will you Serve?”**

*October 3, 2023*

**Joshua 24:14-15 <sup>14</sup> “Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. <sup>15</sup> And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”**

Joshua was nearing the end of his life. The Promised Land had been claimed by the Israelites and divided into tribal territories. As a final leadership task, Joshua asked the people for a renewed commitment to the Lord. He encouraged them to fear the Lord and remove any idols that they may have had. Ultimately, he told them to choose: the gods of other nations or the God of Israel. Then he boldly declared: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Salvation is a free gift of grace from God. However, He gives us the free will to reject that gift. Are you able to boldly announce that you and your household will serve the Lord?

**HIS story:** God wants His people to boldly live for Him.

**Our story:** With the Holy Spirit's help, we commit ourselves to following the Lord.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.



## **“How Quickly Things Change”**

*October 4, 2023*

**Judges 2:10-12,14-16** And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110 years. And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that He had done for Israel.<sup>11</sup> And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals.<sup>12</sup> And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, Who had brought them out of the land of Egypt.<sup>14</sup> So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And He sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies.<sup>15</sup> Whenever they marched out, the hand of the LORD was against them for harm, as the LORD had warned, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.<sup>16</sup> Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them.

Joshua and his generation passed away. And then what? The next generation didn't know the Lord or what He had done for Israel. REALLY?? How could that happen so quickly?

There are two possibilities. Maybe that first generation didn't teach their children about the Lord and all that He had done for them.

The other option is that the second generation chose to ignore, reject, and ultimately forget the God of their fathers. The Lord then raised up judges who saved them from their enemies and reminded them of the God of their fathers.

Are you intentionally sharing your faith with future generations?

**HIS story:** God wants future generations to be taught about Him and His works.

**Our story:** We share our faith with our family and friends.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## “Sacrificial Love”

*October 5, 2023*

**Ruth 1:16-18** But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. <sup>17</sup>Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.” <sup>18</sup>And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.

During the time of the judges, there was a severe famine. A Jewish couple, Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons relocated to the country of Moab. While there, the sons married Moabite women. Eventually, all three men died, leaving Naomi with her two daughters-in-law. Orpah went back to her family, but Ruth would not be persuaded. She said the famous words sometimes used at weddings: “Where you go, I’ll go...”

Ruth was willing to leave everything to stay with Naomi. She left her family, her culture, and probably her “gods”. She would move to a foreign country with her mother-in-law and adopt her people and her faith. Returning to Israel with Naomi would bring a difficult life. In those days, widows were at the bottom of society, scraping by just to survive.

Ruth's new life forced her to work hard in barley fields to provide grain for her and Naomi. Eventually, she was noticed by Boaz, married him, and became a part of the lineage of the promised Messiah! All because a Moabite woman sacrificially loved and served her mother-in-law.

Are you loving others sacrificially?

**HIS story:** God calls His people to put others' needs in front of our own.

**Our story:** Following Jesus' example, we live to sacrificially love and serve others.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“The Last Judge”**

*October 6, 2023*

**1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 3:10, 19-20** And the LORD came and stood, calling as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears.”  
**19** And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. **20** And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the LORD.

Samuel was a boy born to Hannah and Elkanah. Hannah had been barren for years. When she and Elkanah were in Shiloh to worship and offer a sacrifice, the high priest Eli, saw Hannah praying in deep distress. She told the Lord that if He would give her a son, she would give him back to the Lord in service.

Shortly afterward, Samuel was born. Once he was weaned, he was presented to Eli, the high priest, who put him into the Lord’s service. One night, the Lord called to Samuel three times. Once he realized that it was the Lord, he responded and listened. Samuel became a mighty man of God. He was a prophet and considered to be the last of the judges. He anointed the first king, Saul and then David, the shepherd boy. His tasks were often difficult, but he faithfully obeyed His Lord and died as a hero of the faith.

God doesn't always give His people easy assignments.

What is God saying to you? Are you responding in obedience?

**HIS story:** God speaks to His people through His Spirit, His Word, prayer, people, and circumstances.

**Our story:** We listen and respond to God's voice.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## “Tall Saul”

*October 7, 2023*

**1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 15:22-23** And Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. **2<sup>3</sup>** For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.”

The Israelites were weary of having judges ruling over them. They wanted a king like the nations around them. Samuel warned them that this was a terrible idea, but they insisted, and God relented. Saul from the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. He was handsome and stood taller than anyone else. At the onset, he was quite humble. When it was time to be anointed king, he was hiding among some baggage! (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 10:22)

Over time, however, Saul grew into his role as king, and he was eventually controlled by pride. He executed his own plans, even when God told him to do something different. In a battle with the Amalekites, he was told to destroy all the people and their animals. Unfortunately, he kept some of the best animals alive, along with the King of Amalek. Saul tried to explain his actions by stating that the animals would be used for sacrifices.

The Lord is more interested in our hearts than in our offerings. God had had enough. Samuel was sent to inform Saul that the Lord had rejected him as king.

Rebellion has consequences.

Is pride reigning in your life?

**HIS story:** God wants full obedience to His commands.

**Our story:** Rebellion brings discipline and damage. We are called to obey the Lord.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.



## **“A Boy, a Stone & a Strong Faith”**

*October 8, 2023*

**1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 17: 45-47** Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. <sup>46</sup>This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, <sup>47</sup>and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.”

After Saul’s rebellion, Samuel anointed David to be king when he was young. However, it would be years before he would be coronated. As a young boy, he was sent by his father to bring supplies to his older brothers who were in Saul’s army fighting the Philistines. The Philistines had a 9-foot giant named Goliath who taunted the Israelite army for 40 days. David heard his ranting when he arrived at the enemy line. He was appalled that an enemy of God would defy Him and His armies in such a humiliating way.

He offered to fight Goliath. He had no armor, Saul’s coat of armor was much too big for him, so he settled for what he knew. A slingshot and some stones...and the courage given to him by the God of Israel. He was not

afraid, and everyone present saw the greatest upset of all time.

Goliath was killed and beheaded by David. Then the Philistines were routed by the Israelite army.

What giant is facing you today? An illness? Relationship challenges? Struggles at work? Financial concerns? Pray for the faith of David because the battle is the Lord's.

**HIS story:** God fights our battles so that He gets the glory.

**Our story:** We trust God even when giants come against us. He is able.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“Doing the Right Thing”**

*October 9, 2023*

**1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 26: 21-25** Then Saul said, “I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake.” <sup>22</sup> And David answered and said, “Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and take it. <sup>23</sup> The LORD rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, for the LORD gave you into my hand today, and I would not put out my hand against the LORD's anointed. <sup>24</sup> Behold, as your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the LORD, and may he deliver me out of all tribulation.” <sup>25</sup> Then Saul said to David, “Blessed be you, my son David! You will do many things and will succeed in them.” So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.

After Saul was told that he was rejected as king, he became filled with insecurity and jealousy. David had become extremely popular after being successful in battles, fueling Saul's envy of him. Saul's solution was to kill David and remain as Israel's king. He hunted him for years.

David had the chance to kill Saul twice. The first time, he cut off a corner of Saul's robe in a cave, unbeknownst to Saul. The second time he was able to steal his spear and his water jar while Saul slept. Each time, David's men encouraged him to kill Saul.

It appeared that the Lord had delivered Saul into David's hands. Despite his men's pleas, David would not take Saul's life. Saul was the Lord's anointed king and David would wait for the Lord to deliver him.

Are you doing the right thing even when it's hard?

**HIS story:** God wants His people to trust and obey Him even when it's difficult.

**Our story:** Sometimes doing the right thing is difficult and may not always make sense to others.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“David’s Downfall”**

*October 10, 2023*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 11:1-4** In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. <sup>3</sup> And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, “Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” <sup>4</sup> So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. <sup>5</sup> And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.”

Eventually, Saul died in battle and David became king. He was a man after God’s own heart, he was successful in battles, and he ruled in godliness. Most of the time.

During a springtime, David sent men to battle, but he stayed home. (1<sup>st</sup> mistake.) Then he was walking on his roof and looked at a woman long enough to see how beautiful she was. (2<sup>nd</sup> mistake.) Then he inquired about her and was told that she was married. He didn’t care and had her brought to him. (3<sup>rd</sup> mistake.) He slept with her, and she became pregnant.

It became a terrible mess. David had Bathsheba's husband killed. Then they got married. (Even though he had 6 other wives.) Then the baby died. Disaster after disaster.

Are you facing temptation? RUN!

**HIS story:** God's people will be tempted.

**Our story:** We need to recognize temptation and run to our Heavenly Father in our weakness.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## “The Wise Guy”

*October 11, 2023*

**1<sup>st</sup> Kings 11:3-4 Solomon had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. <sup>4</sup> For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.**

David had many sons, but God chose Solomon to succeed him as king. (His mother was Bathsheba, by the way.) After David died, God told Solomon to ask for whatever he wanted, and it would be given to him. Incredibly, he asked for wisdom. The Lord was very pleased with that answer, and he became the wisest man who ever lived. People came from afar just to hear him speak. (Like the Queen of Sheba).

Despite this, Solomon wasn't perfect. His biggest mistake was marrying foreign women, probably to create alliances to ensure Israel's protection. He went a bit overboard, though. His harem had 1000 women in it!

Tragically, Solomon was led astray to idol worship to please his foreign wives. His heart was turned away from the God of Israel and it cost him. Dearly. The kingdom would be split in half after his death. Israel would never be the same.

God was clear in the very first commandment. You shall have no other gods. Period. End of story. Even the wisest guy blew that one.

Are you worshipping an idol?

**HIS story:** God wants first place in the hearts of His people.

**Our story:** We are commanded to identify and reject any idol that seeks our attention.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.



## **“Good Advice”**

*October 12, 2023*

**1<sup>st</sup> Kings 12: 1, 13-15a** Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.... And the king answered the people harshly and forsaking the counsel that the old men had given him, <sup>14</sup> he spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.” <sup>15</sup> So the king did not listen to the people...

Solomon’s son, Rehoboam became the next king of Israel. The people asked their new king for a reduction of taxes and forced labor. Rehoboam sought advice from two different groups of people: older men and young contemporaries. The older men encouraged him to answer favorably and win the people over. The younger men told him to make their lives even harder. Rehoboam chose poorly.

Ten tribes rebelled and formed the nation of Israel under the leadership of Jeroboam. Two tribes (Benjamin and Judah) followed Rehoboam as king and became known as the nation of Judah.

It's imperative for us to receive good, Godly counsel. All of us need to seek out the wisdom of other Christians. Find someone who has more life experience than you and ask for their insights. Then, employ the good counsel in your life situation.

Who would give you good advice?

**HIS story:** God provides good advice from wise, Godly people.

**Our story:** We need to seek and follow good advice.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“Powerful Prayer”**

*October 13, 2023*

**1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18:36-39** And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. <sup>37</sup> Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.” <sup>38</sup> Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. <sup>39</sup> And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God.”

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was rotten to the core. Their first king, Jeroboam set up golden calves (really?) at the northern and southern ends of the kingdom and encouraged them to worship these gods instead of Yahweh. So, they did. King after king practiced idolatry. As went the king, so went the people.

Elijah was called by God to bring the Israelites back to their faith in Yahweh. He challenged the prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth to a blazing battle. Each “god” had a chance to send fire to consume their sacrifices. The prophets of Baal went first and

they spent the day trying to conjure up a spark.  
Nothing happened. (of course)

Then Elijah PRAYED. Not only did the fire fall, but it consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stone, the dust, and the water that had been added as a trench around the altar. After this miraculous display of power, the people recommitted to follow the Lord.

How often do we forget the power of prayer? We have access to the sovereign King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16b)

**HIS story:** God calls His people to pray prayers of faith.

**Our story:** We bring the Lord all of our petitions and wait for His answer.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“Open our Eyes”**

*October 14, 2023*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 6:15-17** When the servant of Elisha rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” <sup>16</sup> He said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” <sup>17</sup> Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Elijah was faithful to his calling as a prophet. His life ended with a fiery chariot and horses taking him to heaven while his successor, Elisha watched with amazement. His mentor was gone, and Elisha picked up the role as prophet to the Northern Kingdom.

The king of Syria was tormenting Israel, but the Lord kept revealing his battle plans to Elisha so that Israel could be warned. The king sent an army to capture Elisha to put an end to his insights. When Elisha’s servant got up early, he saw Syrian horses and chariots surrounding the city where they were. He panicked! Elisha, however, remained calm. He prayed that his servant’s eyes would be opened so that he could see the spiritual army of fiery horses and chariots positioned to defend them.

We often forget about the spiritual forces all around us. God has sent angels to protect His people. Lord, open our eyes to see and trust You!

Are your eyes open to the unseen, spiritual battle?

**HIS story:** God has an angelic army watching over His people.

**Our story:** We remember that we are in a spiritual battle. However, we know that we have the ultimate victory in Christ!

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## “Consequences”

*October 15, 2023*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25:8-11** In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup>And he burned the house of the LORD and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. <sup>10</sup>And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. <sup>11</sup>And the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, together with the rest of the multitude, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed in 722 BC by the Assyrians. In the meantime, Judah had a total of 20 kings, 8 were good and 12 were evil. As with their brothers to the north, the Southern Kingdom fell prey to idol worship. After years of tolerance, the Lord let Babylon invade them in 586 BC. The temple was destroyed, along with the walls of Jerusalem. Most of the people who were left were carried off into exile. The Babylonians only left the very poor.

Most people don't like to think about God's justice. People thrive on talking about our God of love, but many hate the idea of His justice.

Yet, He has both, in perfect balance. He warned His people, over and over, through His prophets that destruction was coming if they didn't repent. He was patient, but nothing changed. He allowed the Babylonians to conquer Judah. Their sin brought consequences.

Are you mindful of God's justice?

**HIS story:** Our God is both loving and just.

**Our story:** Rebellion against God's law brings pain and difficulty into our lives. God's love brings the grace that heals our brokenness!

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.



## **“Another in the Fire”**

*October 16, 2023*

**Daniel 3: 16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”**

The Babylonians took the brightest and the best to Babylon. Three of those men were: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were wise young men that showed an aptitude for learning. They were taught the language and literature of the Babylonians. After three years of training, they were to enter into the king’s service.

All was going well until King Nebuchadnezzar built a 90-foot god of gold. All of the people were commanded to worship it. If they refused, they would be thrown into a blazing furnace. These three wise men would not bow down. They would not worship an idol. When questioned, they said that their God was able to save them. Even if He chose not to, they would not commit idolatry.

They were thrown into an extra hot furnace and then there was a 4<sup>th</sup> man with them that looked like a son of the gods! They were not burned. They didn't even smell like smoke. God had intervened.

Would you be ready to die instead of bowing to anything other than God? Our God is able to deliver us from any and all evil.

**HIS story:** God gives courage to His followers. He is with them in the fires of life.

**Our story:** God gives us the faith to boldly follow Him.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## **“Hanging out with Lions”**

*October 17, 2023*

**Daniel 6:20b-23** The king declared to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?” <sup>21</sup> Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever! <sup>22</sup> My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.” <sup>23</sup> Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego weren't the only wise guys deported to Babylon. Daniel was among them and he earned a prestigious leadership position in Babylon for his exceptional qualities. This infuriated other leaders and they plotted to get Daniel killed. They knew that he prayed three times daily to the God of Israel. They tricked King Darius into writing a decree that anyone who prayed to a god other than the king would be thrown into the lions' den.

That didn't deter Daniel. He continued to pray three times daily. The king tried to save him, but the new law couldn't be altered. The king didn't sleep all night and checked on Daniel at first light. He was unharmed! The Lord had shut the mouths of the lions and honored Daniel's faith.

Do you have a courageous faith?

**HIS story:** God is sovereign. No thing and no one is greater than Him.

**Our story:** We hold firm to our convictions and put our faith in God.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## “Beauty Queen”

October 18, 2023

**Esther 4:13-14** Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. <sup>14</sup>For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Esther was another captive who was carried into exile when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. Her cousin Mordecai raised her after her parents died. King Xerxes had banished his queen for refusing one of his orders. He decided to hold a beauty pageant that would bring all of the available women from the kingdom for him to choose from.

Esther was chosen, but Mordecai had told her to keep her Jewish heritage a secret. She was successful and all was going well until there was a plot to kill all of the Jews. Mordecai heard about this and then approached Esther to intercede with the king on the Jews' behalf. He then uttered the famous line: Maybe you've become queen ***for such a time as this.***

There is a reason that you are alive now. For such a time as this, God placed you on the earth. There is no coincidence in the kingdom of God!

Do you know what your purpose is?

**HIS story:** God has a purpose for each person's life.

**Our story:** We live out the purpose for which God called us to faith in Jesus.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.

## “Rebuilding”

*October 19, 2023*

**Nehemiah 4:15-16 So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. <sup>16</sup> And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.**

Nehemiah was living as an exile in service to King Artaxerxes. While serving the king, he heard about the ruined walls and temple in Jerusalem. The remnant who were living there were vulnerable and in great distress. Nehemiah wept when he received this news. Then he prayed for success in approaching the king about returning to rebuild. God granted Nehemiah favor and he returned to Jerusalem. He inspected the walls at night, organized the priests and had the gates rebuilt first. Then he dispersed the people to work on sections of the wall. This work was met with opposition, but Nehemiah stayed the course. He had half of the crew rebuilding the walls while the other half held weapons to defend themselves. Throughout the process, he prayed fervently for direction and wisdom. The walls around Jerusalem were rebuilt in 52 days! Israel’s enemies were in awe and left them alone.

What needs to be rebuilt in your life? Nehemiah gave us a great example of how to be successful. Pray. Plan. Execute. Pray some more!

**HIS story:** God answers prayers for wisdom.

**Our story:** We seek God's help in rebuilding the broken areas of our lives.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.



## **“Promise Keeper”**

*October 20, 2023*

**Malachi 4:5-6 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. <sup>6</sup> And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”**

Our 40-day journey through God’s story in the Old Testament is complete! We’ve walked from Creation through the patriarchs, the prophets, the judges, the kings, the destruction of both kingdoms and the rebuilding of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Whew! Through it all, we have seen the faithfulness of God despite the unfaithfulness of His people.

These are the last two verses in the Old Testament. The Lord promised to send “Elijah” to His people, and he would bring revival. After that promise, 400 years passed. God seemed to be silent, but the plan for the Messiah was unfolding. John the Baptist was born to an elderly couple and he prepared the way for Jesus. “Elijah” came just as God promised he would.

What promise of God do you need to cling to today?  
(Check out Romans 8.)

**HIS story:** God fulfills all His promises. Always.

**Our story:** We can trust our faithful God.

Dear Jesus:

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In Your name we pray, Amen.