

**WARM UP**

1. Can you describe a time you lost something (or someone) and then had the lost item (or person) returned to you?
2. Describe a time when you created, build or bought something spectacular and you were proud of, but then somehow something bad happened to it? *This could something that you made for someone; you may have baked a cake, but it sank or was inedible; you drew or painted a picture, but it got damaged; you could have bought a gift but then it was stolen.*
3. How did either of those events affect you? Did they provoke any kind of change (if so what)?

**WORD**

“So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you.”-Joel 2:25.

During July 26<sup>th</sup>'s morning service, John and Janie Birdwell shared a powerful testimony for part 1 of “Restore” in our Re: Series. Their testimony highlighted a journey from brokenness, to healing, and onto the restoration of their relationship with and Identity in God, and then restoring their marriage. The Birdwell’s testimony is evidence that God is faithful to comfort us in our pain; He is strong enough to carry our burdens (Matt 11:28); and He is capable to bring healing and salvation to our families. Today we will discuss 1) how crisis reveals the reality of God and ourselves, 2) the effects of intimacy with God, and 3) the two paths we are faced to choose between: destruction or redemption.

**1. Crisis Reveals Cracks**

Have you ever lost a best friend, a family member, or a loved one? Have you ever been rejected your spouse or someone who you think one day would be our spouse? Have you ever been betrayed by a loved one, and it shattered your entire world? Most, if not all, of us have experienced loss and/or rejection at some point in our lives. The loss of a family member, a best friend or an unfaithful spouse reveals our personal weaknesses, insecurities, as well as our foundations (what our life and identity is built upon). Often in a crisis, we turn to people for comfort, entertainment to distract the mind, or work to keep us busy from confronting our loss. These and other types of escapism can eventually cause us to hide from God and lead us into a life of sin (choosing to do what we know is wrong) and loneliness.

The apostle Paul wrote:

**“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

But there is good news! If we keep reading:

**...we are justified by His grace as a gift,  
through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..."** -Romans 3:23-24

God does not want us to be alone, nor does He want us to live forever in our sin. He does not want us to hide from Him but to boldly call upon Him so we can be in union and communion with Him. Since sin separates us from God, God made union with Him possible by sending His Son Jesus to reconcile (or restore relationship) us to God through Jesus's perfect life, voluntary death on the cross, and resurrection three days later by the Holy Spirit. That same spirit is available to those who believe the truth about Jesus (Romans 8:11). Therefore, when we face crisis, we can remember that God is always near; He will never leave us or reject us; He can comfort us and provide for us because He's already provided the difficult task of salvation (restoration into God's family).

The apostle Paul was having a tough time dealing with a struggle that the Lord would not take away for him. But he heard Jesus minister to him with these words:

**"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."**  
2 Corinthians 12:9 (first portion)

This then emboldened Paul to write to the Corinthian church:

**"Therefore. I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness, so that the power of Christ is manifested in me."**- 2 Corinthians 12:9 (latter portion)

Proverbs encourages its readers to:

**"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight."** Proverbs 3:5-6

We sometimes forget the "submit to Him" portion, and get disillusioned if our path is not straight. However, even if we are in the toughest of situations, if we know we are submitted to God, then in time He will make the pathway straight. We may not know why it's all happening, but we don't lean on our own comprehension, but Trust God has his restorative plan in the forefront of his mind. As we grow our trust in the Lord, our intimacy or closeness with him grows too.

## **2. Intimacy with God empowers passion for God.**

When King David was confronted with his sin (of adultery and conspiracy to murder) by the Prophet Nathan, he immediately repented. He knew the devastating consequence of his sin was separation from God. We can read his lament in Psalm 51.

**“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me, cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and withhold me a willing spirit.” Psalm 51: 11-13.**

David boldly asks the Lord to not remove him from His presence, nor take away the Holy Spirit, but restore the joy of his salvation. David trusted in God to bring His future salvation. He was restored to the throne and remained the king of Israel until his son Solomon was crowned king before his death. Many years later, a descendant of King David’s would be God’s Messiah to procure the forgiveness of sins for humanity and defeat the evil powers that keep us enslaved to sinful habits and thought patterns. The death of Jesus (the Messiah) on the cross demonstrates God’s hatred for sin, and His resurrection demonstrates God’s restorative plan for humanity.

Humanity has a real enemy. That enemy wants to take away our worship of God. He does this through many means; a couple are: 1) using entertainment to distract our mind; 2) using our past sins and mistakes to condemn and shame us. These can prevent us from studying our Bible or singing to God. However, when we worship God, particularly in the middle of our crisis, it honours Him by confessing who He is. Through our intimacy with God in the Word and with praise, He will restore our discernment, our purity, and our passion for God.

**“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” – James 4:8**

**3. Broken Paths can lead to one of two paths:**

**A.) Destruction and Devastation or B.) Redemption and Restoration**

The journey to restoration can have obstacles and roadblocks along the way. Temptation to sin is often appealing because it is easy and accessible; the harder choice can be choosing the right thing. It is also equally easy to stay angry, bitter, and unforgiving towards the people who hurt us. If we remain in our anger and continuing in living it, we may not experience the freedom and joy that God has for us. In fact, if we chose to follow this path, we are heading into a destructive life with devastating outcomes.

**“For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life and only a few find it.” – Matthew 7:11 (NIV)**

However, if we choose to worship and follow Jesus, it is possible that God will empower us with a redeemed mind, renewed passion for righteousness and a restored relationship. God also gives us each other to fellowship with and support, encourage, correct and exhort one another, as we share the love of Jesus with each other and those far from God. God will restore us the time we have lost with a better and brighter future with Him if we trust in Him and His power to do so.

**“I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit, apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:15 (NIV)**

## APPLICATION

1. Discuss with each other if there is a crisis in your life that is exposing cracks in your life that God may want to bring renewal and restoration.
2. How can we encourage each other to actively worship and follow Jesus each day, at home, at our workplace/school, and in our community (going to restaurants, grocery store, and other public access places)?
3. Which of the two pathways is your life headed towards? Why would you say that?
4. Why do you think it could be important to have mature men/women in our lives that we can be open and transparent about with struggles we are facing?

## Prayer

1. Pray for God to restore and renew people's relationship with God. Pray for any specific crisis and cracks that have been discussed and submit them to God to have His way.
2. Pray for young (and young at heart) men and women to have support networks that encourage each other to grow in our trust, love, and knowledge of God.
3. Pray for our church, connect groups and our ministries to encounter God afresh. Pray God would draw each person closer into a more intimate relationship through His word, prayer and worship.