

# **Stories of Healing**

*How God has Worked in Our Church Family*

**A Videography with Discussion Guide by Matthew Allen and Cain Atkinson**

## Lesson 1

# Our Stories to His Glory

## Introduction

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Galatians 6.14

It has been said that the eternal primary strategy of the church is to ‘gather the people, break the bread and tell the stories.’ When we come together physically, mentally and spiritually as members of the same spiritual family this is and always will be our simple goal. We come together to share life. We share in the bread of life, Jesus, and his sacrifices when we do this. We share in the stories of who he was and what he did in our own lives as well.

Each of us comes from a different place in life. We all have different stories. In Christ though, all of these diverse stories become connected by the Greatest Story Ever Told. Jesus lives in everyone who trusts in him and follows his pathway to Heaven. He is the tie that binds us, and he has promised to be with us always “to the very end of the age.”<sup>1</sup> He still works to help us, he still reigns to lead us, and he is coming again to save us.

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8.28

For the disciple of Christ, God is very active as he moves through creation providentially to guide us through life in a positive direction. If you are a believer and you’re reading this, now might be a good time to reflect on your life. Where was God working from beginning to end? What might he be doing in your life right now? What has he redeemed out of the struggles? For what victories could he be given glory?

## Through the Valley and On the Hill

### *Through the Valley*

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

John 16.33

Many products are marketed today as wonderful cure-alls to the major ills of life. Get this streaming service and your kids will love you. Grab this low calorie snack and look like an Olympian. Buy this toaster and fix your marriage. (Somehow.) A sad result of the influence of a consumeristic culture is the that churches can start to ring out the same sort of

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 28.20

messaging. “Come to our church, get baptized and place membership, and then your whole life will come together just the way you think it should.” Christ does not offer this promise, though.

The question is not whether or not we will have challenges in this life, the question is how often and how hard we will be hit by life’s challenges. The promise of the gospel is not to erase our challenges. The promise of the gospel is to give us a way of redemption through those challenges as they come. Christ has promised to be with his followers through our difficulties. He brings greater clarity as to how suffering shapes our souls by the pen of Paul in his letter to the Romans.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 5.3-5

It is good for us then to take stock of the difficulties we face and learn to both lay them at the feet of God and acknowledge the reality of his providential hand. That Romans 8 promise that all things will come together for the good of those who follow Jesus is just as true in the valley as it is at the top of the Hill. Can we learn to think about life through that lens? Can we see our stories that way? Can we sing praises in the valley?

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me

Psalm 23.4

### *On the Hilltop*

At the same time as we are guaranteed great joys in the Christian life, it is very likely that we will experience amazing highs as well. Through life we can encounter people whom we grow to trust and love. We can experience the joy of serving others. We can experience delicious food, songs that tug at our heart strings, and even come to enjoy the work we do. We are sometimes are blessed in the material things that we have as well—certainly more than we could deserve or ask. So, who gets the credit for all of these blessings?

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

James 1.17

There are times of clarity, peace and breakthrough that come as God moves through our lives. It is appropriate in many of these occasions to allow ourselves to both experience and express joy. Often

times we look back over a season we have just exited and we see that it all happened for a reason. Perhaps we suffered, but we also learned priceless lessons. Other times, we experience a period where it seems like some new, exciting blessing is around every corner. Those moments of catharsis are a wonderful time for celebration and glory-giving.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

Philippians 4.4

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118.24

Our lives will certainly be full of hills and valleys, but as we walk with Christ we have the knowledge and the hope that we are going in a generally upward direction. It is often a challenge, but as we learn to see God through the hills and valleys of life we will begin to develop a deeper commitment to love him and give him glory.

## Promises You Can Bet Your Life On

Despite the ups and downs that we undoubtedly face in our life here on earth, there are plenty of rock-solid promises that come down from Heaven for us from our Father. Through these promises and many more, we can have supreme confidence in our Good Shepherd that leads us into a brighter plane.

- **He will lead us lovingly.** “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.” Psalm 32.8
- **He will create a place for us to land when we stumble.** “The LORD makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand.” Psalm 37.23-24
- **He will bring us to an ultimately good place.** “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8.28
- **He will help us when we are afraid.** “For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.” Isaiah 41.13
- **His love will not fade.** “Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” Isaiah 54.10
- **He will give us wisdom.** “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” James 1.5
- **The enemy will run when we walk with him.** “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” James 4.7

- **He will bring whoever believes in Jesus to eternal life.** “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3.16
- Many more... promises to advocate for us, give us shelter and redeem our lives.

## **Walking with God in the Rhythms of Life**

Knowing that the God of the universe has his eye, his hand and his heart pointed to us is an amazing blessing. He is consistently pursuing us and revealing himself to us through our daily lives, we need only open our eyes and see all the wonderful things he is doing. Not only do we want to make a habit of seeing the good God is bringing through the valleys and on the hilltops, we also want to remember our part—our walk.

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true, and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

Ephesians 5.9-10

While we are not saved by our works, we are certainly saved by our allegiant faith to Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Our lifestyles will naturally begin to synchronize with the rhythms that Jesus walked in, and that he taught his disciples to walk in as we dive deeper in our faith.

- In prayer through highs, lows and the mundane.
  - On the Hill... When he rejoiced greatly at his disciples' work. (Luke 10.21)
  - In the Valley... When he cried out in anguish in the garden. (Matthew 26.36-42)
  - In-between... As he made a habit of retreating to pray regularly. Luke 5.16
- Living in and utilizing the scriptures in the face of every challenge as in his temptation in the wilderness. (Luke 4.13)
- Seeking the people who need the love of God. (Luke 19.10)
- Sharing the good news of the kingdom and inviting people into a covenant community on a heavenward trajectory. (Matthew 3.2)

## **Tell Your Story... That Became His Story**

We should learn to tell our stories, not for our glory, but for the glory of God. When we are weak, he gives us strength. When we are alone, he comes to our side. He is near to the broken hearted. Even when we are against him, he pursues us. He gives hope and purpose to people who know that they are broken. When we share our stories, it makes the power of the gospel real to people. Imagine the boldness of the Apostle Paul. He knew the power of sharing what Christ had done in his life when he stood before a King saying;

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<sup>2</sup> see Ephesians 2.8-10, James 2.14-26

“As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.’ And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.

“And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing by me said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. And he said, ‘The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’

“When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance and saw him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.’ And he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

Acts 22.6-21

What might happen if we all started unashamedly and boldly sharing our stories the way that Paul did? Lives can be changed, real connections can be made and the light of the gospel can be magnified through us.

In this class, we will be following a series of videos of the stories of people who have encountered Jesus, trusted in him and walked in his way. We will hear how his teachings and providential will has impacted the lives of those people. Hopefully, we will be stirred to see God in our own lives a little more, and to tell others about all the wonderful things he has done.

## For Thought and Reflection

1. How did you come to faith? Who were some of the key players that influenced you?

2. Where have you seen God working in your story in the victories of your life?

3. Where have you seen God working in your story through the trials you've faced?

4. Can you remember a time where you received a very clear answer to a prayer and it changed the trajectory of your life?

