

BASED ON A TRUE STORY

JESUS REVOLUTION

FROM THE CREATORS OF
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE



THE DEVOTIONAL SERIES

This four-part study guide includes reflections based on the historical Jesus Movement and the film **JESUS REVOLUTION**. Revival requires growth: not only in numbers of believers but personal growth: the kind of reckoning that leads to awakening. This series is intended to walk through what it looks like to shepherd the kind of personal growth that can spur revival.

PART 1

GROWTH IN DISCOMFORT

The book of James gives us an uncomfortable image of church life: and it challenges us to consider just who is welcome in our church and in our lives.

COMFORT THE AFFLICTED AND AFFLICT THE COMFORTABLE.

- This phrase was penned by Finley Peter Dunne over a hundred years ago. He was writing about the role of newspapers and journalism—but the parallel to the Gospel is clear.
- Jesus came to disrupt.
- *“Those who are healthy have no need for a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”*
Mark 2:17 (WEB)



THE HISTORICAL JESUS MOVEMENT WAS UNCOMFORTABLE.

- Anytime we have seen God move in the past, people have always been required to step out of their comfort zone. This was especially true with the Jesus Movement.
- What makes church comfortable for us? Routine, familiarity, songs we know, people we recognize, a schedule, and rhythm. Especially for those of us raised in the church.
- It's easy to preach open doors—all are welcome—and it can be hard to live it.

WHAT DO WE DO WITH OUR DISCOMFORT?

James 2:1-9 (WEB)

My brothers, don't hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ of glory with partiality. For if a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, comes into your synagogue, and a poor man in filthy clothing also comes in, and you pay special attention to him who wears the fine clothing and say, "Sit here in a good place;" and you tell the poor man, "Stand there," or "Sit by my footstool" haven't you shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers. Didn't God choose those who are poor in this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which he promised to those who love him?



But you have dishonored the poor man. Don't the rich oppress you, and personally drag you before the courts? Don't they blaspheme the honorable name by which you are called? However, if you fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well. But if you show partiality, you commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors.

- Let's break down this first-century scene. What do we see?
- What would be the contemporary parallel? Imagine someone coming into our church and their presence being shocking...how do we treat them? **Is anyone welcome in our church? Do I treat people the same? What makes me uncomfortable?**

GROWTH REQUIRES DISCOMFORT

- We cannot grow when we are comfortable and complacent.
- We grow when we face our fears and our failures.
We grow when we step out in faith and follow the lead of God.



PART 2

GROWTH THROUGH THE STORM

The imagery of the "storms of life" runs throughout Scripture: from floods to calming stormy seas, the Word of God reminds us that our Lord is with us in the storm.

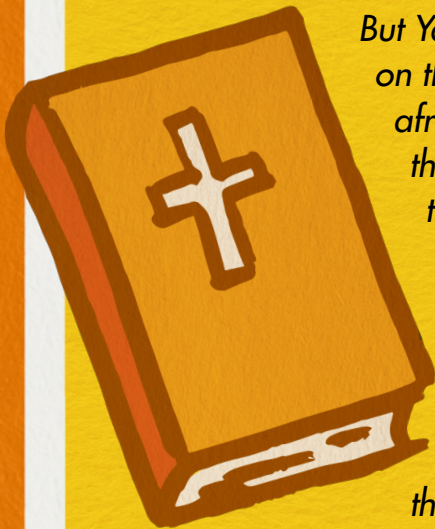
THE STORMS WILL COME: THAT MUCH IS INEVITABLE.

- Christians are not promised easy lives, free from storms and trouble. Consider Job and Jonah, Hannah and Naomi. Consider the apostles, all of whom were martyred for the faith except John, who was exiled to Patmos.
- It's not a question of will storms come but when—and what kind?

WE SERVE THE GOD OF HEAVEN, WHO CAN CALM THE RAGING SEA.

- One of the most iconic storms in Scripture is in the book of Jonah. God has commanded Jonah to travel to Nineveh—but he goes in the opposite direction.

Jonah 1:4-17 (WEB)



But Yahweh sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty storm on the sea, so that the ship was likely to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and every man cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone down into the innermost parts of the ship, and he was laying down, and was fast asleep. So the ship master came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God! Maybe your God will notice us, so that we won't perish."

They all said to each other, "Come! Let's cast lots, that we may know who is responsible for this evil that is on us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they asked him, "Tell us, please, for whose cause this evil is on us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? Of what people are you?"

He said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear Yahweh, the God of heaven, who has made the sea and the dry land."

Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "What have you done?" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Yahweh, because he had told them. Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may be calm to us?" For the sea grew more and more stormy. He said to them, "Take me up, and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will be calm for you; for I know that because of me this great storm is on you."

Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get them back to the land; but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. Therefore they cried to Yahweh, and said, "We beg you, Yahweh, we beg you, don't let us die for this man's life, and don't lay on us innocent blood; for you, Yahweh, have done as it pleased you." So they took up Jonah, and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased its raging. Then the men feared Yahweh exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice to Yahweh, and made vows.

Yahweh prepared a huge fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.



- This is such a popular Bible story for children that we often miss the lessons we can learn from it.
- What we see in this passage is the power of our God, who can control the raging sea—and make the raging stop.
- We also see a remarkable moment of **repentance** and faith—Jonah knows who controls the storm. And he is not afraid.

WILL YOUR ANCHOR HOLD?

- There's an old hymn called "We Have An Anchor" written by Priscilla J. Owens—

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
 when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
 When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
 will your anchor drift, or firm remain?
 We have an anchor that keeps the soul
 steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
 fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
 grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!



- Do we have the faith to face the storms head on? To sail into the storm anyway?
- "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil." Hebrews 6:19 (WEB)

LET THE STORMS COME: WE KNOW WHERE OUR FAITH LIES.

- God is our refuge and strength,
 a very present help in trouble.
 Therefore we won't be afraid, though the earth changes,
 though the mountains are shaken into the heart of the seas;
 though its waters roar and are troubled,
 though the mountains tremble with their swelling. Psalm 46:1-3 (WEB)



PART 3

GROWTH THROUGH PRAYER

Prayer is essential to the Christian life. But so often prayer becomes whittled down to memorized dinner table lines and recited prayers in services.

PRAYER CAN BE DIFFICULT FOR US: WHY?

- Distractions.
- The ongoing excuse of “time.”
- Selfish reasons for praying.
- Lack of spiritual discipline.
- Feeling awkward.
- Fear that prayer doesn’t do anything.

PRAYER IS POWERFUL—DO YOU BELIEVE THAT?

Let’s return to our friend Jonah, who we left in the raging sea.

After he’s thrown into the ocean, he’s swallowed by a great fish, and the story picks up here in chapter 2.

Jonah 2:1-10 (WEB)

Then Jonah prayed to Yahweh, his God, out of the fish’s belly. He said,

“I called because of my affliction to Yahweh.

He answered me.

Out of the belly of Sheol I cried.

You heard my voice.

*For you threw me into the depths,
in the heart of the seas.*

The flood was all around me.

All your waves and your billows passed over me.

*I said, ‘I have been banished from your sight;
yet I will look again toward your holy temple.’*

*The waters surrounded me,
even to the soul.*

The deep was around me.

The weeds were wrapped around my head.



I went down to the bottoms of the mountains.

The earth barred me in forever:

yet have you brought up my life from the pit, Yahweh my God.

"When my soul fainted within me, I remembered Yahweh.

My prayer came in to you, into your holy temple.

Those who regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

But I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving.

I will pay that which I have vowed.

Salvation belongs to Yahweh."

Then Yahweh spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah on the dry land.

- What can we learn here from Jonah's prayer?
- He believes and knows that his God will hear him.
- In his time of great distress, he is in open communication with God.



PART 4

GROWTH THROUGH SERVING

Faith without works is dead. We can study doctrine and attend Sunday services, but if we do not live out a radical love, the kind that makes people say, "I want what they have," then where is the love? Where is Christ in us?

SERVICE SHOULD MAKE US UNCOMFORTABLE.

Let's return to the book of James.

James 1:14-20 (WEB)

What good is it, my brothers, if a man says he has faith, but has no works? Can faith save him? And if a brother or sister is naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you tells them, "Go in peace. Be warmed and filled;" yet you didn't give them the things the body needs, what good is it? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead in itself. Yes, a man will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

You believe that God is one. You do well. The demons also believe, and shudder. But do you want to know, vain man, that faith apart from works is dead?

- How many times have we genuinely done this: seen someone cold on the side of the highway and just driven by? Are we not living out this exact passage in contemporary America?
- It's uncomfortable to share what we have, be it time or money or food or donated clothes and toys. It takes effort. But we are called to care for those in need in our communities.

SERVICE IS HOW WE WALK THROUGH THE STORMS OF LIFE WITH EACH OTHER.

- A strong component of the historical Jesus Movement is that the church welcomed people who were struggling, be it from addiction or temptation.
- In the movie **JESUS REVOLUTION**, we see church members serving each other in practical and immediate ways: providing meals, welcoming people suffering from mental health issues and addiction. People are given warm places to sleep and literally welcomed into the family and community.

SERVICE SHOULD BE DONE PRAYERFULLY.

- Service is not about proving our faithfulness or looking like a good Christian.
- We need to adopt a prayerful attitude toward service, that our intentions may be honorable and aligned with Scripture.
- Service humbles us: when we look back at Jonah, we see that he did not want to go to Nineveh, partly because he feared God would be merciful. And he thought those people didn't deserve mercy. Are we ever like that? Afraid that if revival comes, some people in this country won't deserve it?



A Jesus Revolution cannot be manufactured by human will or desire—we cannot snap our fingers and bring about another Great Awakening. But we can assess our own lives. We can ask ourselves the hard questions: who’s really allowed in my church? Is my prayer life rich and rewarding? Am I giving back with what I have? Am I demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ in my life?

“Won’t you revive us again, so your people can rejoice in you?” — Psalm 85:6 (WEB)

Jesus Messiah, we profess that You are Lord and we long to see every knee bow and every tongue confess. Revive us again. Revive our hearts, our families, our churches, our cities, our nation. Let Your Spirit move in this place and equip your church to be the light to the lost. Amen.



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