

Sidelined by Circumstance

Intro: Stefan Duerksen – Lead Pastor of Southland Church

Hi to those online! We are so glad that you joined us. 😊

RECAP: Tactics of the Enemy – P. Lorne led us through a couple of more tactics of the enemy! The temptation to RATIONAL-LIES & how we get AMBUSHED by APATHY. Excellent!

We have looked at how the enemy seeks to deceive us, trap us in offense, emotional apathy, compromise and more!

To begin the year, we talked about giving the Lord a blank cheque YES – today we are going to look at another tactic of the enemy to keep us from living this out.... To sideline us by circumstances!

Whether its: a tragedy... a death... a disability... abuse you suffered... depression and anxiety that has gripped your heart... chronic pain... a broken marriage... a sin struggle you cannot overcome... sickness... circumstances... busyness...

The enemy seeks to use discouragement and disillusionment to sideline us in our circumstances!

Many people are left disillusioned by their lives. Whether they have known Jesus their entire life, or put their faith in him later on, they cannot reconcile his goodness and love with their circumstances.

- Trauma they experienced when growing up
- Sickness or chronic pain
- Relational brokenness
- Anxiety and depression
- Hidden sin inside...

If we aren't intentional, We get SIDELINED BY OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

Today, I want to focus on turning circumstances from tragedy to opportunity!

A. Sidelined by Circumstance

What are your current circumstances? Bad? Good?

Two questions to ask:

- 1. Are you being sidelined by your circumstances?**
- 2. Do you see your circumstances as a tragedy? Or, opportunity?**

The REAL story of St. Patrick's Day: St. Patrick's Day is celebrated every year on March 17, but why? Many who celebrate have only a vague idea that there was a real man — a Christian — named Patrick. He was born in Britain to a Christian family, but he didn't accept Christ until after he was kidnapped at age 15 by Irish pirates and sold to a harsh Druid man in Ireland. Patrick was forced to work as a

herdsman by his captors, - he was a slave! During his time as a slave... he learned to pray and pursued his faith. At age 22, he escaped and returned to Britain. But several years later, he had a dream calling him back to Ireland to minister to its people... it's reported that he hesitated to answer the call at first because he felt inadequate for the task God was calling him... finally, heeding this call, Patrick journeyed throughout Ireland, sharing Christ until his death, thought to have been around March 17, A.D. 461 – he made a big impact and is thought to have been responsible for bringing the Gospel to Ireland!

A few things to remember:

- He had a good family... but was kidnapped – TRAUMA
- How did those pirates treat him? He was 15! Vulnerable! – TRAUMA
- Sold into SLAVERY, separated from his family! TRAUMA!
- And yet... it was in the middle of his darkest hour that he met JESUS.
- He gets an opportunity to leave... he escapes! AMAZING!
- Only to sense God calling him to go back and witness to his captors!
- How does he feel? DETERMINED, CONFIDENT, BOLD? NO!
- He didn't have the right education! The right training! He felt INADEQUATE!
- Yet... finally he OBEYS!!! Why?????? What secret did he possess?

Was Patrick sidelined by circumstance? NO! Patrick and stories like his... cause us pause and should make us WONDER. What did he do differently? Was it just his personality? Or a special calling?

Patrick turned his Circumstances into an OPPORTUNITY!

Truth #1: PURPOSE: Our primary purpose is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

1 Corinthians 10:31: So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God

TRUTH #2: You can fulfill your purpose in any and all circumstances! Every circumstance you face is an OPPORTUNITY TO GLORIFY GOD.

Definition: Glorify God – Know, Love, Worship, Obey Jesus

B. Glorify God IN your current circumstances!

One of the biggest hindrances I see in MYSELF and others... we are waiting for our CIRCUMSTANCES to change before we really start to live to glorify God!

E.g. New Years – THEN I am starting a diet! THEN I will get in shape. Just have to get through this season

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

This is an amazing verse! That has encouraged countless believers! And is also, probably, the most out of context used verse in the Bible!

- Many people read this to believe that God’s plans are all to make you FEEL GOOD.

Jeremiah 29:2-14 This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the eunuchs, the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the metal workers had departed from Jerusalem. The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. It said: “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the Lord.

“For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

- The Lord’s GOOD PLAN included their exile into an evil nation!
- And he wanted them to plant their roots there and glorify his name amongst the Babylonians!

This is the key to living a purpose filled, victorious life! EVEN IF YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES LEAD TO DEATH...

Matthew 10:18-20 and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

PLAY JONI VIDEO –Tragedy into Opportunity! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVXJ8GyLgt0>

Seemingly tragic circumstances became an opportunity for Joni!

C. Jesus will redeem your painful circumstances IF you let him!

1. Enabling us to better minister to others

2 Corinthians 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

- Jesus did the same thing! **Hebrews 4:15-16** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Imagine that! Even Jesus allowed himself to suffer – one of those purposes was to make himself more relatable to US! Wow! Of course he could relate to us without needing to suffer. But he made himself more relatable on our end.
- Joni has a worldwide ministry that fulfills the Great Commission by reaching out to those with DISABILITIES! She can reach them in a way that many others CAN'T!
- Those that have gone through grief, are better equipped to minister to those grieving.
- Those having gone through abuse or struggles with mental health.... Are better equipped to love and minister to those going through the same thing!

2. Display HIS GLORY through your weakness!

2 Corinthians 4:7-11 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

- People that smile and have joy and peace when their life is perfect? We just assume their circumstances are behind their strength. “love those who love you” ANYONE!
- But when someone faces death... and has this PEACE that surrounds them...
- Or goes through physical pain... injury... disability... or sickness and continues love God and love those around them – that’s IMPOSSIBLE
- Joni – Patrick – do you see weakness? Yes, but we see JESUS!
- **2 Corinthians 12:9-10** But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
- I am 100% fine with being a cracked pot.

3. Refining us and preparing us for eternity!

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Joni’s life fulfilled ALL THREE! And she says she wouldn’t trade it for ALL THE WALKING IN THE WORLD!

PRACTICAL: Turning tragedy into opportunity to glorify God! “Splashes over of heaven is finding Jesus in the middle of your hell.” “To find Jesus in your hell on earth is ecstasy beyond compare! And I wouldn’t trade it for ANY amount of walking in the world” – Joni

1. What are you currently going through? Tell Jesus what you are struggling with
2. Surrender your circumstances to Jesus. Invite him to use your pain.
3. Meditate & Memorize: 2 Cor 1:3-11; 2 Cor 4:7-18; Mt 6:25-33; 1 Cor 10:31

4. Glorify God in your current circumstance – know, love, worship & obey Jesus
 - Worship Jesus in your circumstance – open your heart and sing his praise! Do it every day! Don't let your heart go cold.
 - Ask him to reveal himself to you in your current circumstance and struggle. Wait.
 - Ask him if there is anything he wants you to do in your struggle. Obey.
 - LOVE OTHERS – be intentional to show the love of Jesus to those around you

MARANATHA!! Come soon Lord!

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SC CHURCH WIDE PRAYER REQUESTS 2023

Cruise ship → → → → → Battleship

1. **Life on Mission** (Mt 28:18-20, Mt 22:37-40): Love, serve & disciple people to Jesus
2. **Next Gen** (Ps 78:7-8): Encounters with Jesus, strong mental health, boldness & belonging
3. **Persecuted Church** (Lk 21:13): Faith, fortitude & wisdom “to not waste the opportunity to share the Gospel”
4. **Heart of Prayer** (Ps 27:4): Every generation to find Jesus & learn to bring their needs to Him in prayer
5. **Church Renewal**: Directors for India and other new countries & many global disciple makers