**A New Normal Part One**

Back to Normal?

**Do you remember normal?** A time without masks.A time when we would say hi to people and shake their hand. Going out to eat to a restaurant with family and friends. Going to the movies. Shopping at the mall or the outlets. Coming to Church. Going to work. Commuting. Sitting in a classroom. Having people over the house for dinner. Sitting at Starbucks. What about getting a haircut?! It’s only been two months since the Governor issued a stay at home order here in New York, but in many ways it feels like two years! In these past two months our world has been turned upside down as we adjust to our new normal.

**New Normal**

* Masks
* Social Distancing
* Church Online
* Curbside Pickup
* Home School
* Work from Home
* Zoom Meetings
* Clorox Wipes
* Hand sanitizer

**How many of us can’t wait to go back to normal? I know what a lot of us are doing is just waiting for this storm to go away so we can run back to normal. I’ve got some news for you. We are not jumping back into normal. It’s not like things are going to change overnight.** I know how much we desire normalcy, but I don’t know if I want to go back to normal. There are certain things I don’t want to go back to.

How many remember when we normal was:

* Busy
* Tired
* Depleted
* Running on E
* Overcrowded schedule
* Multiple kids activities
* Disconnected from family
* Distant from God
* Irregular Church attendance

We all want normal, but I believe that God does not want us to go back to normal in some areas of our lives. The biggest mistake we can make is to go back to the way things were and not allow what is happening to change us. We are all tempted just to wait out this storm and then run back to normal. **But, what if God doesn’t want us to go back to normal? What if God is using these trials and troubles to move us into a new normal?**

**God uses trials and troubles to refine us, mature us, and to grow us. Scripture tells us that God uses trials to change our relationship with Him and to change us from the inside out. If this is true, in this storm, God wants us to be different coming out than we were going in.**

Today, we are beginning a new Message Series called, “A New Normal.” **We are going to see how God uses trials as an opportunity to grow our faith, test our faith, and to transform our lives from the inside out** and we are going to do that by looking at how God moved and interacted with the Nation of Israel in the Old Testament.

**BIBLE:** In the Bible, God had a huge plans and blessings for His people. In 1876 BC, there was a famine in Canaan. Canaan was the land of blessing that God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob which was declared by God in Genesis 12. Israel had yet become a nation. God would change Jacob’s name to Israel and establish the nations through his 12 sons. They would be the 12 tribes of Israel. However, while they were in Canaan, there was a famine in the land.

Whenever you follow God and His plan, you will always experience some sort of trial or trouble that will test your faith. Jacob and his sons were tested. Instead of trusting God for provision, Jacob said in **Genesis 42:1,** “ 1 During the famine in Canaan, Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt. So he said to his sons, “Why are you sitting here doing nothing? 2 I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go there and buy grain for us so that we will live and not die!” 3 So ten of Joseph’s brothers went to Egypt to buy grain.

Sometimes in life, you will face trials, troubles and challenges beyond our control. God often uses those trials to test our faith. That’s what happened to Jacob. Instead of Jacob, trusting in God’s power to provide, he sends his sons to Egypt. Egypt was a pagan nation led by a pagan named Pharaoh. Instead of trusting in Yahweh, they decided to take matters into their own hands and turn to a foreign god for help.

**Eventually, Jacob and his sons left their land and settled in Egypt.** They were initially received favorably, but over time, they became slaves to the Egyptians. Instead of trusting in the One true God, they found themselves enslaved to a pagan god. Egypt is symbolic of the world. **When you turn to the world to satisfy your immediate needs, it will always lead to long term bondage.**

**The children of Israel were in bondage.** They were slaves. They worked every day without a day off. **They were mentally, emotionally, and spiritually in bondage to Egypt for over 400 years.**

I wonder how many of us can relate to the people of God during this time? **Slaves to busy, slaves to doing, slaves to this world, slaves to the enemy. They were human doing machines.** However, that was not God’s plan. God had a new normal for them. **That normal included New Normal: Rest, Trust, Surrender, Worship.**

**What is normal for us? Busy, overcrowded schedules, doing, on the go, no days off, no Sabbath rest, exhausted, depleted, distant and far from God, overworking, drained, and tired.**

God doesn’t want us to go back to Normal. He wants to establish a new normal in our lives which includes **rest, trust, surrender, worship.** God had something better for His people and God has something better for us.

**God has a Promised Land for each of us.** God has something great in store for you and for me. A better life, situation, happiness, and success. The promised land Has is greater than anything physical. It’s spiritual. It’s His presence. His goodness. His love.

**Exodus 3** we read, “**7**The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. **8**So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey...”

After 400 years of slavery, God saw the misery of His people and heard their cry. So He raised up a leader, whose name was Moses. God sent Moses to go to Pharaoh who was the King of Egypt and demanded that he let God’s people go. Pharaoh refused, and his heart grew harder. God sent 10 plagues. After each plague, Pharaoh refused, until the last plague. The firstborn of every household, including Pharaoh’s would die. God instructed his people to sacrifice a lamb and paint the blood on the doorpost of every home and the angel of death would pass over. This was the first Passover. After the first Passover, Pharaoh let God’s people go.

They leave full of faith and excitement because of God’s great deliverance, until they reached their first obstacle, the Red Sea. Now they are at a crossroads. **They were leaving not just a place, but a way of thinking, a way of living, a way of relating and they were moving into a new normal which involved faith and trust. At that moment, Pharaoh had second thoughts, so he begins to purse the people of God once again to enslave them.**

**Exodus 14,** “**10**As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. **11**They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? **12**Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”

The Children of Israel joyfully marched out of Egypt because they had trusted God. They had been covered by the atoning blood of the Passover Lamb and escaped the angel of death through believing His word - they had been set free from the bondage of slavery, by grace through faith.

But having made their exodus from Egyptian oppression, the children of Israel suddenly found themselves hemmed in on every side. Their fearsome enemy was closing in from the rear, the impenetrable mountainous heights towered to the right and to the left and the deep waters of the Red Sea abruptly halted their forward march to freedom.

**Once they reached their first challenge, they immediately wanted to go back to normal.** **What was normal?** Bondage and slavery. **God was introducing to them a new normal, one of faith and trust. What did that require of them? Faith and trust that God was going to bring them through what they were going through. God is introducing us to a new normal. It is one of faith and trust.**

They had to exercise faith in order to cross over from the old and into the new. That crossover took place by faith. God wants us to cross over into a new normal. How are we going to cross over into what God has for us? By faith. Believing that what God brought them to, He will bring them through. Notice, their first response was to go back to the normal which was slavery, however, God had something better for them, God had a purpose and a destiny for their lives. He prepared a place flowing with milk and honey.

God told Moses to extend his staff, and at that moment, the Red Sea parted and they crossed over to the other side.

**God will always make a way where there seems to be no way. He is the Waymaker!**

This was their new normal. Trusting God as their waymaker!

COVID 19 has not cancelled God’s plan and purpose for our lives. We must exercise faith over fear in order to walk into what God has already prepared for us**. We are about to cross over to the other side into a new normal of faith and trust.**

What does a new normal look for us? Faith and Trust! **Normal was doubt and fear… the new normal was faith and trust.**

What is God teaching us? He is **Waymaker, Miracle Worker, Promise Keeper, Light in the Darkness!!!** That is not just what He does, that is who He is! C’mon now!

**What was normal before COVID 19?** Trust in government, trust in money, trust in possessions, trust in stuff. Now, this is our new normal, God I don’t know how we are going to get through this, but I trust you. If you parted the red sea for the Children of Israel, I know that you are going to do it for me. I know that God you are going open doors, make a way, lead me and guide me. I don’t know how we are going to get through this Pandemic, but I am going to trust you.

**13**Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. **14**The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” **15**Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. **16**Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.

**Normal was doubt and fear… the new normal was faith and trust. God says, don’t be afraid. The new normal is trust. Will you trust me for your deliverance? You will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today.**

**The Lord will fight for you, you need only to be still. The normal was busyness, rushing, frantic, depleted, but our new normal is Rest, Trust, Surrender, Worship.**

Moses extends his staff, the sea parts, and they cross over to the other side and a begin a 40 year journey into the wilderness. **Right before God brings us into his promised blessings, he often will lead us into a wilderness.** It’s in the wilderness where God leads us into a new normal.

Tests show us where our trust lies and tests show us where our faith is real.

I know we hate tests. We want out of tests. Test expose us. We often think that’s a bad thing. God wants to use a test to expose our faith and to grow our faith. We can discover what area of our lives are strong and what are weak.

It’s only when our weaknesses are exposed that a new normal is possible.

Tests show us what stands between us and God. The idols that stand between us and Him.

God uses the wilderness to lead us into a new normal.

My wilderness experience. Normal was stressed, normal was tired, normal was busy… God led me into the wilderness to create some new normals in my life.

This is a time to look back and evaluate your life and see if there are any changes God wants you to make. Is there something that needs to change. Is there something you need to leave behind.

**Questions:**

* **What has COVID 19 taught you about your faith? Where are you strong? Where are weak?**
* **Have you trusted God more or less in the last few weeks?**
* **Where in your life do you believe what God wants to do some work?**