

Stories You Have Believed

Series: Looking Back, Moving Forward

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Exodus 34 v6 - v7

Narrative Scripts.

And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “Yahweh, Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

Exodus 34 v6 - v7

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10 v3-v5

For the past few weeks, we have been leaning into the truth of this scripture. We start with the truth that we are safe and secure in God’s love. His faithfulness and forgiveness go on for thousands of generations and cannot be drowned. Nothing you did or your parents did, done to you, by you, or around you can drown out God’s love. Or as Paul puts it, nothing can separate us from the love of God.

With that security, I am inviting you to then become aware of the generational patterns that have been in your family. Because sin done by you, to you, or around you does impact you and if not dealt with is often passed on. So we are moving back through our generations not with the aim of judging our families of origin but with the aim of finding healing. Because what is inside always finds a way out and even gets in the way.

So what things do we carry through the family line:

1. Generational blessing - Firstly just who God is, runs down to all of creation. Also, unique family blessing too. Some of you are just good leaders coming from a family of leaders. Some of you have financial wealth and you come from families that just easily made wealth. Some of you come from families that did marriage well, so even though marriages can be hard sometimes you and your spouse seem to navigate well. Some of you come from the family that first accepted Christ in your clan that has now raised several church leaders in your family. Become aware of the blessing you carry and then remember we are blessed to be a blessing.
2. Generational Sin and Brokenness - Sometimes certain events, ways of living life, and attitudes are carried down from one generation to another. So we used the genogram to discover what key events have repeated themselves in our families. Divorces, deaths, occult practices, adultery. Which sins and brokenness repeat themselves in your family and even more importantly, which ones are you currently living into?
3. Relational Patterns - The other thing we get from our families is relational patterns. This I talked about last week. How you are in relationships forms early on in your childhood when you receive messages of what love and relationships look like. And some of these are often broken after all, even those who loved us deeply, were broken themselves. Do you see? Your family gave you a lot more as your inheritance.

And I have been reminding us that as disciples of Jesus, we are invited to grow up in order to become love. Discipleship and formation are not accidental processes. It is very intentional. Part of discipleship is learning to deal with our past. Spiritual maturity demands that we grow up emotionally too. And the way to do that is by first becoming aware and receiving healing for those places of wounding and stunted growth.

4. Narrative Scripts - Well today I want to talk about the fourth thing you get from your family of origin. Those are called, Narrative Scripts or the Stories you have believed about yourself.

Narrative Scripts

Human beings are narrative scripts. You live your life from a collection of stories you have believed. And one of the ways our families of origin are important is that they give us our narrative scripts. What you think about life, what you think about family, what you think about sexuality and God and the good life, is what truly informs how you live your life. These are the things called our narrative scripts or what I often refer to as stories we tell ourselves. So one of the ways our families of Origin impact us is by giving us our key stories of life.

These narratives scripts shape our identity. And for as far as they are untrue, then you live from a false identity.

We get narrative scripts from our families of origin and key life events. Our primary caregivers, parents, and guardians, really shape our emotions and view of ourselves from an early age. And key life events especially when you were younger and even now as you cruise through life shape your narrative of life and yourself and therefore your identity.

And one way to be aware of the narrative scripts you have is just by watching how you live.

Some of you, for example, live with a distrust of marriage. One of the narratives you believe in is that marriages do not work. Mostly because of our culture, which also gives us our narrative scripts and your family both sold you a story that they do not work.

Some of you constantly self-sabotage in relationships because fundamentally you believe that you are unlovable. We all live from a set of stories. These stories are either true or they are lies

When we did the series on Spiritual warfare, I told you that the enemy's biggest weapon that he has used from the beginning is lies. Ideas that are not true. And anytime we believe these untruths they form our narrative scripts. We begin to live as they are true. The enemy seeks to lie to us about God, us, and other human beings, and about what is right and wrong about the good life or true life.

The war for your true identity takes place in your mind all the time. But with the power of the Holy Spirit, there is the ability to demolish all the false narratives that are shaping our false identity, mostly picked from our families of origin. And replace them with truth from Jesus and enter into our true selves.

So what makes up a narrative script? Events, emotions, and interpretation. Can you say that with me, “Events, emotions, and interpretation?”

1. Events - Things that have happened to you or even repeated patterns. This could be just a parent yelling at you or taking you into their arms. It could also be as traumatic as a divorce in the family or a rejection from someone you held so close. Just everyday things. Or patterns of behavior like your parent always forgetting you at school.
2. Emotions - Feelings and thoughts around the said events. How did it make you feel? Whether positive or negative. Do not avoid or ignore any emotion. They place a critical role in your relational development. The longer you suppress and ignore the emotions the more stunted your growth even spiritually will be. Jesus deeply felt things and even experienced the world emotionally. Our God is one who feels. So emotions are not bad. They are very good messengers. But the above two on their own do not make up a script.
3. Interpretation. - The meaning you attach to the event because of how it made you feel. Your interpretation becomes a part of your identity.

Here is how it works. An event occurs, for example, you walk up to me after church and I walk in the other direction. That makes you feel rejected. So the event is that I walked away, the emotions are one of rejection. Then you give that meaning. you decide that is an indication that the pastor hates you because you are not good enough. So from there onwards you stop coming to church. Do you see what has happened there? A narrative script has been formed.

Another example, is your parents get divorced when you are quite young. The emotions are hurt and rejection. And because our child’s brains only see the world through the lens of we are the center of the world, we assume they left because of us, meaning we are unlovable and people always leave. We grow up with false identity and we are covered in shame. A narrative script has been formed.

So as we do this series, we started by talking about key events that may have happened in your family and your life. One of the practices in community groups is becoming aware of both your traumas and your redemptive moments. That is just an invitation to notice the events that have shaped you. As some of you now even remember events you did not pay much attention to, some painful some very good memories. Today I am inviting you to become aware of the meaning you attached to them as they have shaped your identity. Is that meaning given bringing out a false identity or your true self?

If you are bitter or hate yourself or think yourself unlovable and unwanted, you are living from a false script. If you are struggling with something and you have told yourself that you could never be free from it, that is a false identity. Some of these things, you don't actually say them out loud; But they are seen in the way you live with your spouse and siblings. The way you are relating to your boyfriend or girlfriend. The way you are responding to your boss and colleagues.

And where do these scripts live? Most of them live in your memory. So I have always wondered why certain memories stick and are prominent and others aren't. There are certain experiences with your family or just in your life that are just with you. You remember how mom talked to you that fateful day, you remember your dad walking out of the door. You remember your teacher calling you that name.

Then there are memories that may come up from time to time. Maybe even this series has triggered certain memories of your childhood or just life that caused a certain reaction to it. Sometimes you are in prayer or enjoying silence and solitude or taking a walk and a memory comes up.

Truth is there are some things we do not even remember but you can but because our bodies themselves remember and keep scores, you can see yourself living out a certain way.

I often pray and ask Jesus why the memory has come up. I try and see what it made me feel or how I feel when it comes up. Then try and see what meanings I attached to those memories. That is how you become aware of your narrative scripts.

So how do things turn around?

A good story is comprised of reinvention and redemption. The journey of discipleship under Jesus is one in which we get a different narrative. One that is reinvented and redeemed. Say "Redeemed".

That is what the divine power that Paul was referring to allows us to do. We first become aware of the scripts, we own them, and then one by one we demolish every false narrative that has been a stronghold.

The Holy Spirit through his power moves us from a place of 'I once was...' to a place of "But not anymore.". 'I once believed this about myself, but now I know this to be true.'

So you take a false narrative and you replace it, not with any other narrative from the world or your family but, with truth from Jesus.

There was a guy called Paul. He is one of the followers of Jesus we first called apostles. Now, Paul comes to the scene in a very unique way. He is a religious zealot. He goes around at least overseeing the persecution and even killing of followers of Jesus. That is a pretty big and key pattern of repeated events. It shaped his identity.

Paul then has a powerful and very transformative encounter with Jesus. After several years, Paul gets into ministry and starts planting churches all over their world. Now imagine for a moment you are Paul, how do the Christians first receive you when you come to their camp? They are in hiding because of you and others like you. In fact, Paul had a friend, who goes before him and stakes his reputation on Paul saying, "You can trust him, he is a changed man."

This is the man who wrote to us that when you are in Christ, you are a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come. This truth is a big deal for Paul. Because he is living a totally different life and identity. In fact, even the name he goes by changes from Saul to Paul. Talk about a different narrative script. He even changed the title of the story.

But how many times do you think Paul had to fight back against old patterns of lies and untruths about himself? Lies told by others about him during times of conflict, of which there were many, and lies he had believed trying to resurface, which he writes about. But in Prison where he knew he would die he once wrote, he has fought a good fight and has finished the race. He could now look forward to the crown. How did he fight the false narrative scripts?

So maybe here is a glimpse of how Paul did it. This is an excerpt from a letter he wrote to one of the churches he planted. They had written to him asking him a bunch of questions and there had also been accusations raised against Paul about how he was living. Look at how Paul fights...

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corrinthians 10; 3-5

See here is the thing, our biggest battle even as you move forward will be constantly putting down the lies the enemy will throw at us. And so here Paul is giving us a way to do it. He is saying oh by the way, the battle is not with flesh and blood and in this context, it is not even with the fathers and mothers that came before us, whether or

not they apologize or even turn away from the lives they lived. Our biggest battle is with one principality in high places and how we do that is by taking captive thoughts and submitting them to Jesus.

Actually, let me say that in a large way even how the demonic gets hold of people or curses and sin is by us believing and partnering with these true ideas. The word principalities Paul uses refers to demonic power animating cultures, traditions, and family systems.

Paul is saying hey

1. We are in the world - so things in the world will impact us. Some people are so Spiritual they want to assume that this world impacts them. It does. Your family of origin also does. Their successes and failures, their blessings and curses, their sins and obedience.
2. We, the people of Jesus, respond differently. In that time war was the order of the day. If you disagree with someone you attack them. Today, people use power to fight back against those who have hurt them. So whatever it is we are up against, we do not go against it the same way the world does. In this case, we do not shame or shun our families. We do not attack or persecute people for brokenness or sin. neither do we ignore it and assume it is just natural or normal. We are not unaware of the enemy's schemes.
3. We have weapons that are filled with divine power. Heavy tones from the scripture I have been quoting all through. It is not by power nor by might but by the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord. Because we have the Spirit of God in us, this is how we go up against these things. And we demolish strongholds. Whatever, they are in your family or your life
4. And that is by guarding against false narrative scripts that even allow entry for the enemy.

We do this by taking every thought captive. This is war. So how do you do this? When something happens and it triggers certain feelings and it makes you start thinking a certain way, you take those thoughts and you ask Jesus what He thinks because only His truth counts. A memory comes up and it made or even makes you feel a certain way and you realize how you have thought of yourself because of it. You present it to Jesus and ask the Lord what He thinks.

You submit every thought you have of yourself and others, God, and the world to the truth of Jesus. How do we know God's truth? Because God speaks. First and foremost through scripture. If there are thought patterns about yourself like you are not lovable. Hold them up against scripture. If they are inconsistent with scripture, they have to go and you choose to believe and speak truth over yourself.

So everything you have believed and therefore how you are living out your life; marriage, sexuality money, politics, all of it. Hold it up against scripture and choose to believe God's truth over lies from the devil, your flesh, and the culture.

How else does God speak? Through the Holy Spirit. This is why I said prayer is the very medium of our spiritual life. Ask the question, Jesus what do you really think about this? And then listen. Write down what comes to your mind trusting that you can hear the voice of God. If you are His sheep, you know his voice. We all can hear God and He is speaking to you and us.

Now here I invite you to be very careful. None of us fully hears and always clearly hears the Holy Spirit. We are full of stuff that makes us foggy. Be wary of people saying they heard from God but have no accountability. Paul encourages us to test every spirit and every prophecy. We have seen how people and especially leaders can use this to be manipulative and controlling.

So if you feel you have heard from the Holy Spirit, hold it up against scripture. The Spirit of Jesus will never say anything that contradicts the revealed truth. Then secondly, submit to a faithful trusted few for co-discernment. Let others who love you and love Jesus affirm God's truth in you and even speak it over you.

Now, as move closer to the end of this series. I know hard things may have come up for some of you. Or harder still, you have noticed patterns in your own life and you feel stuck. Wondering what the worth is and if anything can really change. Is transformation possible? Is freedom really possible?

Take, heart. It really is. I stand here as someone who has journeyed through things I never thought I would find freedom from. Some of which I did not even think were a problem. I also stand here as someone who is still waiting for freedom in some areas of my life. And the freedom God has brought me in the past creates faith in me that I am finding freedom now.

I have told you all stories of how irritable I was in my perfectionism. My face would just angrily stare down people when they messed up and I did not even know about it or even how it hurt my teams. I can confidently say I am a much calmer person even when things are going wrong. Not all the way there but I am amazed at who God has made me into.

I battled a porn addiction for many years. You know this and other sins that church people do not confess. and I tried everything to get myself freedom even as your pastor. I woke up one day just a few years ago and realized, wait a minute, that is gone. Not even the desire for it remains. Now from to time when I am tired, I have thought about it and every time I am still free. The other day I am making a plan that

I wanna share with you for this church which includes getting a kids' playground in this place and so I search and a porn site showed up. Because the internet is weird. I had always dreaded the day such a thing would happen and once again, the freedom Jesus has given me still holds.

Freedom is possible. Transformation is possible. Our job is just to constantly remain in Jesus and let Him do what only He can do. And one of the ways to do that is by bringing our thoughts into submission to His truth. As the Spirit does His work in you. One day you will wake up and those untruths have no hold on you.

Let's Pray