

Coping with Crisis

Today we will talk about something that will hit each of us at some point. For some of us, it will happen many times; while others may find themselves sheltered from the storm of life we will call a crisis.

Our passage opens with Lazarus of Bethany being sick, with him were his 2 sisters Mary and Martha. They lived in a quiet little village called Bethany which was about 2 miles out of Jerusalem. A town where Jesus often went to find R&R when He needed a break from the pressure and stress of his responsibilities. And as Jesus unwound, He was able to get to know and love a brother and his sisters.

But this particular day; Bethany wasn't very peaceful. Lazarus became sick, and with Mary and Martha seeing death near, in desperation, the sisters sent for Jesus saying, "*Lord, the one you love is very sick!*"

READ scripture: John 11:1-15, 38-44

Like Martha & Mary. We all will face a major crisis sometime in our life. It could be an illness or an accident in our own lives, or in the life of a person we love, a crisis that'll cause deep desperation.

1. But to help us handle a major crisis in our life, here's 2 essential facts we must understand!

Time & perspective.

A. During a crisis, we must understand God's timing: In other words- God is never late, although God often delays!

- When you're late, it means you should have been somewhere earlier.
- When you delay, it means you purposely planned to come later. When the Lord God said no to the request, He wasn't late in arriving. He purposely delayed the timing for a better reason.

Our faith will be strengthened when we understand that God doesn't work according to our timing or schedule; although **we often think that God should!**

How often do we give God a deadline as to when a prayer should be answered?

And when the prayer isn't answered according to our timing, we become disillusioned, we pull our trust and belief away from God and maybe even become bitter toward God. We think, God doesn't hear or God doesn't care – but in reality, is as simple as God's timing not being the same as ours. Mary and Martha still had to learn that truth.

B. The second fact to remember in a crisis is perspective.

There are 2 different perspectives we can have throughout life.

***Human.**

***Or Divine.**

If you were Martha and your brother was sick. **Human perspective would pray like this;**

Lord, my brother who is sick. I want him to be healed because he is too young to die. I know you can heal him, and I know you ought to heal him. So please heal him now and put him back on his feet. *That's human perspective.* That's dictating to God what God should do.

Now here's Martha's prayer from a **Divine perspective.**

Lord, I'm facing a crisis with my brother. I know I can trust you and I want to trust you. So I choose to believe that you will do what is best for my brother. I want him to live, so we enjoy life on earth together. But Lord I submit myself to your plan & with great expectation I wait for your answer.

The divine prayer is the better of the 2, but it's hard. It's easy to sit in this sanctuary and say – that's how I'll handle a crisis when it comes into my life. That would be marvelous if you would and we should because:

That's a sign of a mature Christian.

The ability to handle things in life from the divine perspective.

AND YOU CAN DO IT! With faith and trust in God! Trusting that with God there are no accidents and God is never late. Even if the Lord's plan involves death or delay, or if it change my plans – I will accept it.

Now we can go to the next step:

2. Preparing for the crisis.

Now, knowing that Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus, you'd think Jesus would drop everything & come running – **right?**

But He didn't go! As a matter of fact, verse 4 says that he delayed going. Jesus took 4 days to make a 2 day trip to Bethany.

Why? Was Jesus too busy? Was he attending to other more important things? **No, Jesus didn't go because he had a better plan.**

- **What could possibly be better than healing a sick loved one?**

1. The first reason is found in verse 4,
“That the Son of God may be glorified.”
2. The second reason we can find in verse 15,
“That our faith may be strengthened.”

➤ Who could possibly grow stronger in faith if every time you asked for something, you got it?

- **We find a good example in verse 16 where the disciple Thomas needed his faith strengthened.**

When Jesus said He was going back to the place where Jewish leaders tried to stone him earlier. Thomas said, “Let’s go along with the Teacher, so that we may die with Him!” You can just hear the pessimist Thomas imply, “Dress in black guys, the Jews are going to stone Jesus and we’ll never make it through this one.”

Thomas is depressed, he’s discouraged and frustrated...

Let me point out to you that the test of faith comes during a crisis! Proverbs 24:10 says, “If you fail under pressure, your strength isn’t very great.” *A crisis is a time of proving the strength of your faith.*

But also, the time for preparing for a crisis comes before the crisis hits. If your cruising through life thinking that you can handle life’s problems when they hit, but never prepare yourself in heart and soul - in prayer and meditation of God’s Word and spend time in fellowship with God.

I can guarantee that when the life rears its ugly head and crisis hits, you’ll go under and your weak faith will fail you! **You see - the time to prepare for crisis isn’t during a crisis, you prepare before time! *The time is now!***

- **Now Mary and Martha were not ready for a crisis**

By the time Jesus finally arrived in Bethany 4 days after he received the message, His arrival sparked reactions of disillusionment and anger in the sisters.

It’s very important to notice that Jesus never criticized or rebuked either one of them... he heard them out and gave them a calm assurance. Oh, we can learn from this!

I believe we can see ourselves in the sisters’ response.

In verses 21 and 32, both Mary and Martha see Jesus and say the same thing, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” But even though their words were the same, their actions weren’t!

Martha ran to Jesus - while Mary fell at His feet.

Because the sisters needs were different, Jesus reacted differently for each one.

- Martha was the logical one, the thinker. She needed words to encourage her. That's why Jesus said in verses 22-26 that her brother would rise again, and he was the resurrection and the life.
- But Mary, she wore her heart on her sleeve, she needed emotional support. When Jesus came to her, verse 35 read, "Jesus cried."

Mary needed to know that Jesus was in control, while Mary needed to know that He cared. Without a critical word, Jesus met each sister where she was. He met their needs, all they needed to do was open their hearts and let Him help.

In the midst of a crisis, do we go to Jesus and open our hearts, do we spill our innermost feelings to God and let Him comfort us? Or do we pull ourselves together and suck all the pain in; never receiving the comfort and healing. Jesus just waits for us to open our hearts and pain to Him; and then allow Him to comfort us, just as He did for those 2 sisters!

3. The better plan!

In verse 39, Jesus told the people to remove the stone. He prayed... so that those watching would know that God sent him. He then shouted out, "Lazarus, come forth!"

I believe that if he had not called Lazarus by name, everyone in that cemetery would have walked out of their tombs. And in verse 44, Lazarus came out. Back from beyond, just think of the stories he could tell.

Just think of what it must have been like for Lazarus to hear the voice of His friend, the Lord and Giver of Life call his name and free him from the grave?

As a result of this miracle, many believed!

So we're left with a choice. We can learn from the people who walked with Jesus – or we can ignore the Good News that God offers us today.

- **We can remember 2 truths God offers us today:**

1. That we must remember that when an answer to our prayers are delayed, it's because God has better timing and a better way.

When God say's no to your timing, it's because God has a better time and a better way of handling your problem.

2. When a crisis or even death occurs, it's because God has a better plan and a better purpose. That includes when my daughter who died at birth. God had a better plan and that includes your loss too. When God says no, He has every right and a better purpose for saying no.

Prayer