

Coach House Church BEACONS

REFRAME YOUR PAST

29TH JUNE 2021

A frame for a piece of art is very important. It helps you focus on a painting. It helps you pick out important parts of the art and shows it off. It separates it from the rest of the world and highlights it. Sometimes a frame can be found in surprising places like one I saw on Facebook around a child's drawing on a wall.

When we think of our past we can often focus on the wrong things. Sometimes we think about times we think were good, whether they really were or not. We wish we could go back to them when we are experiencing something difficult. Sometimes we focus on our failures and that makes us feel really down on ourselves. Sometimes we can see the bad things that have happened to us and we think why would God let such a thing happen to me? Why would I go through such suffering?

We had someone from Open Doors speak to us on Sunday. He told us all about the suffering that people in some countries are going through, just for being a Christian. They were being killed or imprisoned unjustly. But they kept faith in God and the churches were growing anyway. More and more people were finding faith, even in what seemed to be an impossible situation.

Romans 8:28 says "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." This was written to people in a church in Rome by Paul. This is unlike a lot of the other letters in the New Testament. There was no particular event that caused him to write and he didn't personally know the church well. He had never been to it. The Roman church hadn't yet experienced full on persecution but would see it a few years afterwards.

What this verse tells me is that every situation is under God's control, however difficult it feels. Everything eventually will have a purpose in the big tapestry that is life. Sometimes it is hard to see that purpose, because we are struggling in the midst of it, but God knows.

We can go through really tough times but what we need to try to do is reframe our past. We need to see it through God's eyes.

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If we think about a difficult situation we went through, we need to thank God for bringing us through it and try to see what characteristics it has developed in us. What did we learn from going through that? Can we empathise with others better now? Did it help us develop some of the fruit of the spirit?

If we've made a mistake we need to fully understand that God has forgiven us. Again, this should lead us to thanking God. Thanking Him that this mistake wasn't the end of us, but that He has forgiven us and wiped the slate clean once again. Thanking Him that we are purified, no matter how we feel in the moment.

If we are struggling now and we are looking back on a good time or looking at someone else's life, once again we need to thank God. We need to thank Him that we had that good experience, or that someone we know has had it and thank Him that we are now being developed into something more than we were. Thank Him that we are closer to Him now than we have been before and move on to where He is taking us rather than looking back.

We need to change our mindset. We need to choose to think differently. We need to change those thoughts that we have about the past to something that praises God, that leads us to glorify Him more. We need to let go of anything that doesn't help us do it. Shed it as a snake sheds its skin. Move on from it. Leave it behind. This can be so difficult to do in practice but we need to keep going and keep asking God to help us. As Philippians 4:4 tells us "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again:

Rejoice!" We need to rejoice in the relationship that we have with God. He uses all suffering to develop us into who He wants us to be.

There was a study done by an American psychologist called Jonathan Haidt. He gave a summary of a life story to the participants. Then he said that they were to imagine that this was their daughter's life story. She wasn't born, but this would be her life. Participants were told to edit her life, to erase anything that they liked.

Now we hate to think of others suffering, especially someone we love like a daughter or son. But what if that suffering is the thing that they need? What if that bad day at work was the thing they needed to set them on the path God wants them on? What if that experience was what they needed to relate to someone that needed them? What if suffering in the right way was enough for someone else to see that example and find a saving relationship with God?

He has taken all our sin on Himself

We will never see the full story while on this earth but God knows it. Atheists often say that a large piece of evidence against God is that He can't be totally good and totally powerful because if he was totally good and powerful He would eliminate suffering and because suffering exists God is either not totally good or not totally powerful. But what if He knows better than us? What if He knows that suffering is sometimes the best thing, either for us or for His plan as a whole?

The final thing we need to remember is that God understands. He has been a human and can sympathise with all the pains of being a frail human being. He has taken all our sin on Himself so has felt the shame of wrongs. He knows what it's like to go through the ups and downs in life. He understands where we are coming from. He doesn't ask anything from us that He hasn't done Himself. So we know we can do it. It is possible.

God understands

So keep going. Look back and thank God. Even if what you are thinking isn't positive, reframe it, turn it around and use it to praise and thank God. Thank Him for rescuing you and developing you and moving you closer to Him. Thank Him that He understands and He will give you the strength to get through anything. He will never leave you alone.



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