

Russell Kelfer

The Creativity of a Crisis

510-A

Series: Promises and God's Word

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

The Creativity of a Crisis

In the previous series on mentoring, we saw that God told Moses, “But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before the people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.” God is telling Moses to hand over the mantle of leadership to his disciple once and for all. He gave Moses three specific instructions as the rod of responsibility changed hands:

- 1- He was to charge or instruct him,
- 2- He was to encourage him,
- 3- He was to strengthen him.

That verse holds the key to the process of mentoring that we have just completed.

INSTRUCTION OF THE MIND

By way of review, to properly instruct the mind, three things are necessary. In the last lesson we looked at a scale that had a plus and minus on each side. There was something undergirding it all.

- 1- The command of God is the plus.
- 2- The warning of God is the minus.
- 3- It is undergirded by the principles of God.

It is one thing to understand the specifics that God tells us to do in our lives. It is another thing to understand the reason behind it, so that we can make wise decisions and have discernment in every kind of circumstance in order to do the will of God. We can do this when we understand the principles God sets forth in His Word. Moses was told to instruct Joshua in the principles of the Word.

ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE EMOTIONS

There are four reasons that Christians get discouraged. The following are the reasons we mentioned in the last lesson.

- 1- Personal rejection

The Creativity of a Crisis

- 2- Spiritual warfare
- 3- Guilt
- 4- Our own failures

There are at least three sources of encouragement that uplift our emotions.

- 1- Encouragement from the Word (Psalm 119)
- 2- Encouragement from other Christians
- 3- Encouragement from personal communion with God.

Remember the incident with David as He came back to the city that had been plundered. David's wives and children were taken from him and from all his men. The people, instead of responding properly, decided to stone David as they blamed him for their problems. David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

When you are encouraging another Christian, you need to bring God into the central focus. The three things you need to call to his attention are God's Word, His Works, and His Worth. We are to remind others of what God has said, what He has done and who He is. But as we remind others of God's Word, remember there are at least two principles concerning rebuke that we can learn from God: a) don't rebuke in anger, and b) rebuke should always be followed with love (I Peter 5:10).

STRENGTHENING OF THE WILL

We also learned that there are at least three kinds of weakness that God turns into strengths.

- 1- Character
- 2- Circumstances
- 3- Capabilities

Concerning character weaknesses, there are negative traits that appear to be weaknesses, but are nothing more than stepping-stones to a positive quality. For example, a judgmental spirit can be turned into a discerning spirit. This gives us some background of review. Instructing the mind, encouraging the emotions, and strengthening the will were the three keys to mentoring. If you missed this series or would like more information on this topic, request the lessons on mentoring.

PRINCIPLES OF PERSONAL GROWTH

As we begin our lesson, turn to Joshua 1. This is a familiar passage to many. We began many lessons ago to take a side trip studying the principles of discipleship that we called transfer of life. We will take up with another set of principles found in Joshua concerning personal growth. We will begin with the principles found in the first 9 verses of Joshua 1.

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying:

“Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel.

Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.

From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.

No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” (NKJV)

Let's consider three basic principles involving spiritual growth that are found in verses 1-9, but in particular verses 1-4.

- 1- The creativity of a crisis
- 2- The awesomeness of God's authority

The Creativity of a Crisis

3- The process of claiming promises

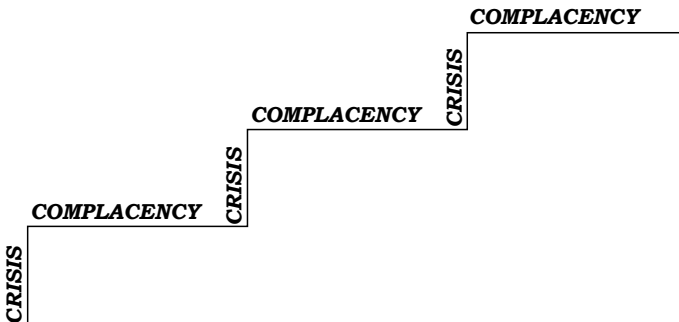
We will begin by dealing with the first words of the chapter:

1 Now after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass.

In the lives of the children of Israel, there was a deep tragedy. Their leader was gone. He had led them in ways and through circumstances that the people of God had never been through before. He was always their man. He was always their leader. He was always available to God, but now he was gone. To the people, it was a tragedy and a loss; but, to God, it was a chance to put a man to rest who had labored hard. It was a new beginning. God had a new assignment for Joshua as a leader for His people.

In the same way, picture the disciples on the Emmaus Road. Christ was gone. Tragedy had struck. Crisis had intervened with that which seemed to be the norm. As the disciples wandered down the Emmaus Road, they were gloomy and discouraged. The Master came along beside them, and from the crisis came the creation of a promise.

Let's take the example of a stair step. Draw a set of stairs on a piece of paper. At the peak of each step, write complacency. Where the line comes straight across and begins to go up, write crisis. Go up to each step and where each step levels off, write complacency. Where the step begins to take off and go up, write crisis.



IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS

What is a crisis? A crisis can be different things for different people. A crisis to one person is when the cookies burn, whether you are the cook or the cookie lover. To another person, a crisis is deeper and much more earth shaking than that. A crisis is

The Creativity of a Crisis

something we cannot control which calls attention to the need for dependence.

As we look at the picture of the stair steps, we will see a picture of most of our Christian experience. I call it the “plateau syndrome of Christianity”. What it really means is that every time there is a crisis in our lives, a good one or a bad one, we become awakened to spiritual truth. We begin a spurt of faithfulness to grow. We hit a peak, then all of a sudden complacency sets in because we have experienced a great feeling of growth with God. We then level off into the same old things and fall into the same old habits for a period of time. God then allows a new crisis to come into our lives. Zoom! We are off and running again.

Most of us will find that God got His children’s attention more perfectly through a crisis than any other way. Look at the burning bush in the life of Moses. Look at how God got Jonah’s attention through the use of a whale. Look at Noah and the flood. Look at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The course of history and the lives of men have been changed through crises.

There are good crises and bad crises. The birth of a child is a crisis, but it oftentimes causes our hearts to melt. During a crisis we make vows and commitments to God. A stirring message at church or at a retreat that calls for a response in our hearts is often a crisis. We then go home and take action based upon our response to the crisis.

There are also negative crises, tragedies. These crises are stepping stones that wake us up so God can get our attention.

In the past few days and weeks we have experienced crisis. Some have experienced it more deeply than others, but for all of us there have been crises. There might have been grief and even disbelief regarding the circumstances. We have been stunned, convicted, emotional and determined. The question I pose to you before we continue, in the light of this concept of the creativity of crisis is: “Where are you today in relation to the crisis you have just passed through as an individual?”

Look at the triangle of the mind, emotion and will. These are the instructions for the purpose of change. Let’s suppose the crisis we face is the death of a loved one. Emotions react first. We begin to feel shock. We then feel grief and compassion for those more close to the situation than we. We have a motivation to change our lives

The Creativity of a Crisis

and a desire to change our priorities and sensitivities.

Our mind comes into play. We begin to reason. We reason that in the light of death, eternity is a much more real and vital thing that we need to pay attention to. We reason that temporal things pass away, and they are not really as important as all of the time we have spent on them. We reason with our minds that God is sovereign. He owns life, and He owns death. He owns the circumstances of this world. He knows best. We reason with our minds that the priorities of life need to be rearranged, so that people are what is most important.

With our emotions we feel, and with our minds we reason. What happens to most of us is that two years from now there will be a crisis that comes into our lives. We will experience something similar to the situation we just have had, and we will sit down and say, "Let me tell you what is going through my heart." We will begin to share the same things we are sharing now. Eternity is so much more real than it was before. Temporal things are not as important as they were before. God is sovereign. We realize that the priorities of life need to be rearranged.

There is a third end of the triangle. It is called the will. When our emotions feel a need for transformation, and our mind reasons that things need to be changed, with our will we need to first decide and then secondly, begin to do that which God has convicted us to do. If we have been particularly convicted about the reality of eternity, we realize that there are people that we know and deal with who are lost. The reality that everyone is going to spend eternity somewhere, and that apart from the blood of Jesus Christ, that eternity will be spent lost and without God; there is a change or transformation that causes us to make a decision. We need to decide to do something about ministering and praying for those we have been convicted about in a moment of crisis. We have been convicted about the transience of temporal things and with our emotions we feel convicted, with our mind we reason it out, with our will we need to determine to do something about it.

Maybe you need to sell something that has become an idol for you. Maybe you need to sell something to become financially free. Maybe you need to get yourself out from under the bondage of a circumstance or a job that is taking the place of Jesus Christ and people in your life. The point is, as you are convicted, you need to change so that you do not have to come back a year or two later

The Creativity of a Crisis

with the next crisis in order to make that decision. The purpose is to do something about it now so that the crisis will have depth in its meaning.

You may be convicted about the need for priorities in your life. You may be convicted that they haven't been the way they ought to be. What are you going to do about it? With your will, sit down and make a list of what is important. Write down the names of people you promise in your own heart to minister to, but don't seem to have time to. Now scratch whatever activities and change whatever you need to, so you can begin this week to be available to these people. Then pick up the phone and call whoever is on your list and make an appointment to meet them in order to get to know them better. What is most important is people. To be convicted about it and to know in your head what you need to do is not enough; change needs action.

The Scripture says that we are not to be hearers of the Word, but doers also. The reason for the crises that come into our lives is that God wants change. It was after the death of Moses that God appeared and spoke to Joshua. It was a tragedy, but God said, "Joshua, we need to press on. Here is what I want you to do. This is what I want you to learn."

I want to give you five steps in dealing with crises in order to make them fruitful.

Step 1– God gets your attention. God turned to Joshua and said, "Moses is dead." That got his attention. It got the attention of the entire nation. Another example is when Jesus turned to the disciples and said, "I am going to the Father." It got their attention.

Step 2– God reveals His purposes. He got their attention for a reason. He said, "Joshua, here is the program. We are to go into the land and conquer it. You are My man. Here are your orders. Let's get on with it." God had a purpose. The disciples looked at Jesus in bewilderment when He told them He was going to the Father. He turned to them and said, "But I am sending you a Comforter. This is the reason I am going to the Father, to send you a Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth. He will be with you always. Here is My purpose."

God gets our attention, then He gives us a purpose. Wouldn't it be good if it stopped there? No, it wouldn't be good at all. The next three steps have to do with us. God gets our attention through a

The Creativity of a Crisis

crisis, and then He gives us a purpose.

Step 3– We become accountable. In the Scriptures, Jesus tells us a parable about the seed that falls on the ground. One kind of seed falls and begins to take root, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things entering in choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. In order for this not to happen, we become accountable. What is the first thing we do with our accountability?

A) We are accountable to remember. What do we remember? How many of us have written down in our book of remembrance the insights and convictions that God has given us in the last few days or weeks in the midst of a crisis? Most of us just didn't get around to it. I want to ask you to make a commitment that you will take thirty minutes and write down what you have learned, what principles or qualities God is trying to work into your life, and what you need to do about it to make it work. Write the events or circumstances that convicted you or ministered to you during the last few days of crisis. Secondly, write down the principles or qualities that God is trying to work into your life. Thirdly, what does God want you to do about it? We are first accountable to remember.

How many of you have made a graph of your life and charted out the progression of your spiritual growth? We discussed this in a previous lesson. Take a piece of paper and begin with the circumstances that led to your conversion. Then, put down the circumstances of your conversion. Next, put the various crises or major events in your life along with the people who God has given you to create growth. You would be amazed to see a pattern emerge. You will probably see that in between crises you don't grow too much. This week write down what you have learned from the events of this past week so that God can use it in your life. How much more meaningful it will be in the kingdom.

B) We are accountable to implement any changes in our lives in which God convicted us. I was with a group of men this past week. We were sharing what the past week has meant in our lives in terms of conviction. I was really encouraged. They were sharing how God had gotten hold of them in light of what really counts in life. He reminded them of the shortness of life and the importance of spiritual things. I asked them to go home and write down what they were going to do about it. Basically, we are not only accountable

The Creativity of a Crisis

to remember, but we are accountable to implement what God has moved us to do.

C) We are accountable to pass it on to other people. We see this in II Corinthians 1:

And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you all that my joy is the joy of you all.

For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

(NKJV)

Step 4– Our accountability is proportionate to how close we are to a crisis. Those closest to the crises are most accountable. They have passed closer to the fire. God wants to do more with their lives. When God allows a deep crisis to come into your life, it is because He has a deep purpose for your life. As you go back in the Scriptures and find the men and the women God really used, you will find that they were the ones He had the confidence in to allow to pass through the fire. The closer to the crisis, the more accountable you are, but the more grace is supplied. To whom much is given, much will be required. The more responsible you are to people, the more responsible you are in a crisis. James 3:1 says,

Don't be in a hurry to lead other people or to be a teacher because God gives you a greater level of accountability or judgment.

(paraphrase)

In other words, your availability to other people creates in itself a greater responsibility for your response to crises.

Step 5– In the light of these things, our responsibilities are clear. Some of us need to go home and make a vow to God. You may not like to make vows. I don't blame you. I don't like to make them either. The Scripture does say in Ecclesiastes that when thou vowest a vow to God, defer not to pay it for He hath no pleasure in fools. Better is it that you should not vow than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. You don't want to take a vow lightly, but that doesn't mean you don't make a vow to God. If God has created a burden in your heart concerning something you need to change in your life through the crisis that you have passed through, I would encourage you that as you write it down, ask God for a sensitivity in your heart for those things that you need to make a vow to do.

The Creativity of a Crisis

You may say, “One of the things God burdened me about is that I need to be available to people.” You won’t do that unless you put yourself in a position before God so that you have to do it.

HOW DO WE BECOME ACCOUNTABLE?

First of all, discipleship helps. That is where mentoring comes in. Those people who are discipling you or are responsible for you or are ministering to you will keep gently reminding you to be faithful, if you ask them to. There are some of you who need to seek out somebody to have a ministry in your life. They don’t need to be ten miles ahead of you. How far ahead of someone do you have to be to lead them? You need to be at least one step ahead. There are some of you who have sat through all of the lessons on discipleship. You think, “That is a great principle.” You need to first have someone to minister to you, and then you need to begin to minister to someone else. You may need to make a vow to God to get involved in other people’s lives.

Secondly, call on others to help remind you what you need to do.

Thirdly, if there is a commitment you need to make, make it. You say, “I made a commitment that I’m going to be more involved in my Sunday school class. I’m going to be more involved in the lives of the people there.” Go up to someone on a committee at your church and tell them you want to be involved. You may say, “I made a commitment to God that I was going to start a Bible study in my home.” If God has laid the names of those people on your heart, pick up the phone and call them. Put yourself in a position so that you won’t back out.

The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things entering in choke the Word and it becomes unfruitful.

The principle of accountability is so important. We hear. We become convicted. We even reason what we ought to do, then we think we have done it. We think that hearing the Word and doing the Word are the same thing. That is not so.

In two more lessons, we are going to get to the concept of implicit obedience found in verse 7. This is the most important principle in Christianity. Knowing what God wants you to do and then doing it exactly as He told you to is of utmost importance. We make it so complicated. “It is too easy”, we say, “God wouldn’t make it that

simple.” He is dealing with simple people, so He made it simple.

THE AWESOMENESS OF GOD’S AUTHORITY

The second concept is the awesomeness of God’s authority. Now after the death of Moses, a servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua. I don’t know about you, but I think we take these passages in Scripture too lightly. Who spoke to Joshua? The Lord did. God, Himself, spoke directly to Joshua. Joshua paid attention. He repeated what he heard, then he did what he was told. You may say, “I don’t blame Joshua. If God were to speak directly to me, I believe I would pay attention, too.” Don’t believe it. God has spoken to you. He is and He will continue to speak to you. That is what the Bible is all about.

I want everyone who has a Bible to hold it up. There are many different colors of covers. There are many different translations. We have the King James, the New American Standard, the Living Bible and the New International Version. Do you fully grasp what you just held up? Look at it. God lives in that book. Do you know what we do with that book? We throw it in the back seat of the car. We pile other books on it. Now I realize that the book itself is not what we are worshipping, but do we recognize the awesomeness of who speaks through it? We have many translations and many copies. We have records, tapes, slides and movies. We hear it, read it, memorize it, and talk about it. We have many books written about it. Do you know what has happened? We are lost in a sea of disrespect for the Word of God.

Do you know how we ought to respond and act when the Word of God is read? Joshua 5:12-15 is a good example.

Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.

And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, “Are You for us or for our adversaries?”

So He said, “No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, “What does my Lord say to His servant?”

Then the Commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, “Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand

The Creativity of a Crisis

is holy.” And Joshua did so.

(NKJV)

If this morning the microphone had blared out, “Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States,” even if we had not voted for him, we would jerk our heads to attention, and we would respond with respect. But, every time we pick up the Bible and every time we open its pages or someone else does, we ought to hear ringing in our ears, “Ladies and gentlemen, the King of Kings is about to speak.” In our societies and in our churches and in our communities, we have lost our respect for the awesomeness of the authority of God. Every word in the Bible comes from Him. It is just as visible and just as vital as if He were standing here speaking Himself. We tend to treat it with such a spirit of apathy. It is the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is living. The same Greek word is used to depict life in all of the other passages. What are the characteristics of life? Vibrancy. Personality. Intensity. Transparency. Availability. All of them are in the Bible. It is not just a book, it is the residence of the Spirit of God wherein He takes and reaches out and magnifies the Word of God. It is not a book; it is a person.

In Luke 4:4 Jesus said,

“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone [by the physical resources of this world], but by every word of God.’” (NKJV)

This means every “thee” and “thou” and “and” and “to” and “it”. Every word from this Scripture gives life. It is the source of life. It is what we live by in the Spirit.

Romans 10:17 tells us that faith, the very essence of that which gives us life in the Spirit, comes by hearing. Hearing comes by the Word of God.

Ephesians 6:17 tells us that the enemy will attack, but that we have one positive, offensive weapon. We have the sword of the Spirit, which is the living Word of God.

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

(1 Thessalonians 2:13 NKJV)

So the Lord spoke to Joshua. You may say, “No big deal.” Joshua thought it was. The problem is that you and I can relate better to

The Creativity of a Crisis

Joshua than we can to ourselves. It is a little easier. After you have written in your book of remembrance today, I want to ask you to take out your Bible and kneel by it. Tell the Lord that no matter what may assault it or assail it in the days to come, regardless of what comes, by life or by death, you will commit your life to the integrity of this book. Agree with Him that it is altogether true and that it is altogether the Word of God. Nothing can be added to it. Nothing can be taken from it. It is the basis for all God is, and therefore the basis for all we can become.

If you are in a situation where a teacher or a pastor or someone continually denies the veracity or authenticity of the Bible, press on because this is the most important thing of all, the authority of the Word of God. We need to recognize the creativity of the crisis and have an awareness of God's authority. After the death of Moses, God spoke. Joshua listened and did something about it. May that be the case with us.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230
210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778
www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer

(05.28.15)