

April 19-24, 2021 Edition

The "BIG Story" Of The Bible #46

Finding Jesus In The Old Testament

RDNA: Modelling

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When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

*** These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well you knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

**** Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

Monday:

Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company corrupts good character". 1 Corinthians 15:33 (NLT)

Mark out a straight path for your feet. Then those who follow you, though they are weak... will not stumble and fall but will become strong. Hebrews 12:13 (NLT)

Reflection: Have you ever given much thought to the concept of influence? There are lots of ways to influence people. The church and Christians have tried most of them throughout the years. Guilt, manipulation, coercion, begging, pleading, yelling, nagging... the list goes on and on.

But do any of those ways of influencing people really work? Sure, they might provide short term results but over time these forms of influence don't really change people's hearts... just their behavior while the influencer is watching carefully over their shoulder.

So what kind of influence lasts? This week we'll be talking about modeling. A way of influencing people without forcing or coercing. It's my favorite kind of influence... first off because it takes most of the pressure off of me (which I really appreciate) but also because it's the only kind of influence that truly changes people's hearts. It's powerful stuff... even though many of us would never admit it. But you are influencing the people in your life through modeling and being influenced by the people in your life through modeling whether you know it or not.

Remember how your parents always wanted you to hang out with good kids? Stay away from the bad apples. One bad apple spoils the bunch, right? Did you believe them? Turns out they were right. Shocking, huh? At least they could have been right. Modeling doesn't always work. There are a lot of factors that determine who in a group will be influenced by whose modeling. We've all seen troubled people influenced for good by the modeling of another person (think Alcoholics Anonymous here). We've also seen as people have been influenced for bad by the modeling of another person. So what's the determining factor here?

We don't really have time to get into that today (sorry... what a let down, huh?). But one thing I know... the more you understand how modeling and influence works the less you will be influenced by outside forces to become something you don't want to become and the more you will be force for influencing people to make better choices in their lives.

So for today, just think about the scripture for today and how you've seen it play out in your own life. And ask God to open your eyes to how you're being influenced... and how you're influencing others.

Prayer: Father, open my eyes to the influences in my life. Show me how I'm being influenced and show me how I'm influencing others. In Jesus Name I pray, amen.

Tuesday:

You will be my witnesses- in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, in Samaria, and in every part of the world. Acts 1:8 (NCV)

Always be ready to answer everyone who asks you to explain about the hope you have, but answer in a gentle way and with respect. 1 Peter 3:15-16 (NCV)

Reflection: Have you ever heard the word, "evangelism"? Maybe not if you didn't grow up in church. But for those of us who have spent time in traditional churches this word can make us sick to our stomachs and bring sweat to our foreheads faster than just about anything else.

Evangelism is the act of sharing the good news. It is the act of bringing someone to Jesus. Some people have the gift of evangelism. Everywhere they go people are brought to Jesus. Their lives seem miraculous. The only problem with that is that when we talk about evangelism in church generally the only stories we hear are from these gifted evangelists. Then we're told to go out and do the same thing.

I am not gifted with evangelism... at least not in the way I was taught about it. I was taught that evangelism is knocking on strangers doors and in 5 minutes converting them to Christianity. Evangelism was striking up "spiritual" conversations with strangers on a bus or at a shopping mall or at a park and in 5 minutes convincing them to change their ways and join our church. I was lousy at it. It made me sick to do it but I felt guilty if I didn't do it.

Then I came to this church. Lee Fiske was the Pastor when I started attending here and he taught something called, "lighthouse evangelism". The idea was that I just live my life the way I think Jesus wants me to live it. In Matthew 5 Jesus says this:

"You are the light of the world-like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. Matthew 5:14-16

When we live our lives the way we're supposed to people notice. Then they are drawn to us (not everyone... some people will be drawn to you... others will be drawn to other lighthouses but the concept is that they are drawn to us... not attacked by us) and when that happens then miracles can happen.

Jesus told us we would be witnesses for Him. Not judges... not juries and certainly not executioners. We are to be "witnesses". Witnesses answer questions. We don't make the case... we don't judge the case... we just answer questions. The second verse that we read today tells us how to answer... with gentleness and respect. Somehow over the last 2,000 we've lost the gentleness and respect factor. We've gained a whole new way of doing things. With guilt and fear and coercion. These forms of influence aren't lasting. And they are incredibly damaging.

I was with a couple one time and he had grown up in church... she hadn't. She started coming to Riverside because a friend was coming here and she could see the change in her friend so she decided to give it a try. Guess what happened? Her life was changed. Her husband who had given up on church because of the forms of influence he had been subjected to started to see how her life changed. He started coming to. But then a funny thing happened. His early training in how things are supposed to be at church kicked in. She

didn't fit into any of those ideas that had been burned into his mind. They came to see me because the tension between them over whether she was ok was killing their marriage.

He thought she needed to have all the verses memorized and be able to articulately explain her faith or she wasn't really a Christian. I turned to her and asked her what she thought. Here's what she said:

I don't know all the verses and I don't know how to preach to people. But I am an alcoholic and I'm a selfish person but Jesus is helping me with all of that. I don't know much but I know this... taking the Bible stuff that I learn here and applying it to my life makes me a better person.

I looked at him and shrugged. "That's pretty good, isn't it?" He admitted it was pretty good and they worked all of that junk out and are doing really well on the east coast right now. I still get to follow her on Facebook and Jesus is still making a difference in her life. All because a friend of hers was a lighthouse for her and then she was a lighthouse for her husband. What a miracle modeling and lighthouse evangelism is.

So for today... think about what kind of light you are putting out to the people you encounter every day. Is your life drawing people to God. And if people ask will you be ready to tell them about the hope you have? That's a pretty important part of this. You don't have to be Billy Graham to share your hope... you just have to tell what Jesus has meant in your life... after all... you're the expert on what Jesus has meant in your life.

Prayer: Father, thank You for the lighthouses in my life that have drawn me closer to You. Show me what kind of light I'm putting out there for people to see. Help me to develop an answer to give to people when/if they ask me about the hope I've found in Your Son. In Jesus' Name, amen.

Wednesday:

We're not in charge of how you live out the faith, looking over your shoulders, suspiciously critical. We're partners, working alongside you, joyfully expectant. I know that you stand by your own faith, not by ours. 2 Corinthians 1:24 (MES)

Reflection: Pastor Ed... how come you use video clips in your lessons to make points and go to see plays like "The Book Of Mormon" when you're a Christian? How do you justify doing that?

I get questions like that all the time. We have this sense that good Christians are supposed to ignore most of the media of our culture. If we watch something "bad" we might be tempted to make bad choices and we may encourage other Christians to watch these things who might be tempted to make bad choices in their own lives.

So how can you justify watching the movies/tv shows/plays that you watch?

I am not going to defend the American media. Our world is filled with illustrations of people either ignoring God's plan for their lives or blatantly defying it. Movies can be so irreverent and critical of God and/or Christians. The reason I immerse myself in these media types is because the philosophy of our age is represented, for the most part in movies, tv shows, plays

and music. I think it's important to know what the popular culture is saying about God and His church if I'm going to be able to combat their subtle (and I think for the most part it is very subtle even though many would disagree with me) arguments against religion in general and Jesus in particular.

Every day people in our country are being barraged with the message that followers of Jesus are ignorant, mean, superstitious, mean, stubborn, mean... I think you get the picture. Most of the time the way they are being influenced with this message is not through coercion or outright teaching. Most of America is being convinced of the irrelevance of the church and by extension Jesus through a very subtle form of influence... modeling.

Modeling doesn't trumpet to everyone... you HAVE to be like me! You HAVE to do what I tell you. You HAVE to toe the line and get with my program. Instead modeling is a very subtle way of influencing people where we are constantly barraged with examples of how ridiculous Christianity (and Christians) are. Over time this message does what outright preaching and teaching could never do... create a generation of people who never even consider what Jesus could do for their lives because everyone knows that road is wrong, uncool, and will turn me into one of "those people".

I'll give you a great example. The Broadway play that is the toughest ticket in New York to get right now is called, *The Book Of Mormon*. It was written by the guys who do *Southpark*. It's the story of a couple of Mormon elders who are sent to Uganda to evangelize the people there. Through the writing and the songs one idea is constantly trumpeted without Matt Stone or Trey Parker ever having to actually say it out loud: these guys are crazy! This religion is crazy! Anyone who believes in God or Jesus or the teachings of the Mormon church (which by the way includes traditional Christians... even though many Christians might revel in the ridicule heaped on the Mormons the audience is going to make the same conclusions about traditional Christians too) is crazy!

Throughout the play the villagers ask questions that the Mormon missionaries parrot back prepared answers that work sometimes for people in America but when said in the context of these Ugandan's world everyone can understand how ridiculous these answers are. One song that encourages people to curse God for the evil in the world has the Ugandans talking about what's going wrong in their lives (80% of their village dying of aids, female mutilation, famine, drought, death, death, death) and when the missionaries are encouraged to talk about what's going wrong in their lives they talk about their luggage getting stolen, the plane ride to Uganda taking a long time, and there being no air conditioning in their hut. But the missionaries urge the Ugandans to trust God and His plan... because the missionaries say, "it always works out ok for us".

Another song has the tag line, "a Mormon just believes" no matter how crazy some of the stuff they (and other Christians as well) ask people to believe.

All of this is done with the wit and talent of Matt Stone and Trey Parker. I think I laughed more than I cringed as I watched this show (and I cringed A LOT). As I left I heard people in the audience parroting what the actors said in the show. They believed it wholeheartedly. They had bought in.

If you don't think modeling is a form of influence that is incredibly powerful then I don't think you're paying attention. Hollywood is using modeling to shape the minds and thoughts of America. I think we had better understand this and do a little modeling of our own. But in order to do that we need to understand the unspoken arguments Hollywood is using to influence us.

In Acts 17 the Apostle Paul is in Athens... in his sermon to the Athenians he quotes pagan philosophers. Why? I think it's because that's a powerful way for Paul to get them to consider what he was about to tell them. Something they had never considered. Something that could (and would for many of them) change their lives.

When I use a movie or tv show to make a point during my lessons at Riverside it's not because it's funny (well... it's not ONLY because it's funny ;o). It's because I am trying to do in my own way what Paul was doing in Acts 17. I am quoting the philosophers of modern day popular culture (and if you don't think what Hollywood is putting out is a philosophy then I think you need to take another look... it isn't Aristotle or Plato but in many ways it's just as powerful than their philosophies were in shaping our world). I am using something most of the audience already buys into without even thinking about it and then inviting them to consider something (or more specifically someONE) else. It's modeling. If you've been to Riverside you know I don't yell and scream and pound the pulpit and tell people what to do and what not to do. Have you ever wondered why?

I'm just not that impressive.

If I tried to force my opinion on you and told you to do this and stop doing that who would listen? The number one response would be, "who are you?" There are people who are that impressive and when they talk people respond... but that's them, not me. I'm not one of them.

So I go with the only form of influence that my unique gifts, skills and abilities lend themselves to... modeling.

And what I've discovered over the last 14 years is, it works. It's miraculous. It doesn't work for everyone... there are people out there that want someone to tell them what to do/say/think/believe. There are plenty of churches out there that will do that for you. But not Riverside. Here we say, consider Jesus. Here's what the Bible says about Him (it's probably a different story than you thought it was), here's why we think you shouldn't just fall hook, line and sinker for the philosophies of our modern popular culture about God, Jesus & His church, let us show you what this guy can do in your life if you'll let Him. And you don't have to become "one of them" to become His follower. Look at us... we're just regular guys/girls. Regular guys/girls who have given the claims of Jesus a try and found that these claims change things.

And so at Riverside we don't say to completely withdraw from American culture. But don't fit into it without even thinking about it either. Watching The Book Of Mormon made me rethink again what I believe and why I believe it. I laughed, I cringed, I often had to admit to the stereotype that they opened my eyes to. And in the end I was stronger for it. That's why I watch the movies/tv shows/plays that I do.

Prayer: Father, open my eyes to the stereotypes I'm perpetuating about Jesus, the church and the Bible in my own life without even realizing it. Show me how to be the kind of person that busts those myths with my life so the people who have bought into that stereotype might reconsider the claims of Your Son. In Jesus' Name, amen.

Thursday:

Do you understand what I have done to you? You address me as 'Teacher' and 'Master,' and rightly so. That is what I am. So if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. I've laid down a pattern for you. What I've done, you do... If you understand what I'm telling you, act like it-and live a blessed life. John 13:12-17 (MES)

Reflection: Do you want to know why I choose modeling over all other forms of influence? One of the big reasons is, it's the form of influence Jesus used.

Sure... Jesus taught with His words as well. His words WERE the words of God. But he never followed up His words with force or coercion. He simply said, follow Me.

Once there was a rich, young ruler who came to Jesus and asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus rattled off several of the 10 commandments which the young man claimed to have followed flawlessly. But there was one of the 10 commandments that this young man had a problem with. One of the 10 commandments that was getting in the way of this young man becoming all God had created him to become. So Jesus told the kid to go sell all he had and give it to the poor and then come and follow Him. The Bible says the young man left sad... for he was very rich.

Now I don't tell that story to say money is always the problem in a person's heart. It was for that young man... he had made it a god in his life and worshipping anything other than God will always keep you from becoming all that God created you to become. But the real reason I tell that story today is because when that young man walked away from Jesus, Jesus didn't try to bargain with him or guilt him into staying or force him or manipulate him. Jesus told him how it was and when the kid made it clear he wasn't willing to do what Jesus asked then Jesus let him go. That's modeling.

The number one argument Jesus' followers had was over who was the most important. He caught them several times and always told them... that's not the point of life. The point of life is serving. And if you follow Me then you'll learn that My kingdom is upside down. The first are last and the last are first. The greatest becomes the servant of all and the servant of all becomes the greatest. But He didn't just say it, He modeled it over and over again with His whole life. And when they got off track He'd just continue modeling servanthood for them.

In fact, on the last day of His life Jesus modeled it again by washing their feet. When He was done He said this:

Do you understand what I have done to you? You address me as 'Teacher' and 'Master,' and rightly so. That is what I am. So if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. I've laid down a pattern for you. What I've done, you do... If you understand what I'm telling you, act like it-and live a blessed life. John 13:12-17 (MES)

That's modeling. And over time the disciples finally got it. They finally understood. And so they would teach the words of Jesus and then model His behavior in their own flawed way and together they changed the world. That's what modeling does... it changes the world. So for today think about how you're doing at following the pattern Jesus has laid down for you. Nobody expects you to be perfect at this... not even Jesus... but are you trying or have you given up?

Prayer: Father, open my eyes to the pattern I'm following in my life. What model am I living by? Show me how to become more like You. In Jesus Name, amen.

Friday:

Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. John 1:41-42 (NLT)

Then Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up. "There's a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?" John 6:8-9 (NLT)

Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration paid a visit to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. They said, "Sir, we want to meet Jesus." Philip told Andrew. Then the two of them went to Jesus and told him. John 12:21-22 (NLT)

Reflection: There are lots of different models we could choose to follow when it comes to Riverside. We could model ourselves after the pattern of the Apostle Paul... or Peter... or John (we do model a great deal of Riverside on the Apostle John but that will be better to address next week when we talk about love). At Riverside we've chosen (and the key word is chosen... it really is a conscious choice) to pattern the way we do things after a little known Apostle... Andrew.

Andrew doesn't get noticed much. He only has 3 stories that he plays a part in but the fascinating thing is, he's always doing the same thing in all 3 stories. He's modeling. He's drawing people to Jesus.

The first time we see Andrew is right after he's decided to become a follower of Jesus. The first thing he does is go get his brother (who will be more visible than Andrew), Peter. He doesn't preach Peter a sermon... all he does is bring Peter to Jesus. I can imagine the conversation when Andrew introduces Peter to Jesus:

This is Peter... my brother. He's a little bit of a hothead and he doesn't think before he talks... I know he will be a big project for you, Jesus, but nobody has a heart like him. I think if You rubbed off on him a little it might just change his life.

Ok... I don't know that that's how the introduction went but I do know Andrew brought Peter to Jesus. For the last 2,000 years this is how it's worked. People bringing brothers, sisters, friends, coworkers, neighbors & complete strangers sometimes to Jesus. And it all started with this guy named Andrew.

The next time we see Andrew it's in the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 (5,000 men... which means when you include women and children it was probably more like 15,000). Jesus

had been teaching and Phillip comes and tells Jesus that He should send the people home since it was getting late and they were getting hungry. Jesus tells Phillip that they should feed the people. Phillip is blown away... not a chance... it would take WAY more than we could scrape together (ok... I'm paraphrasing a little... but that's the gist of it).

While Phillip is having this conversation with Jesus about what's impossible Andrew (the guy who rarely gets noticed) is noticing someone that nobody else has noticed. A little boy with a few fish and a couple of loaves of bread. Phillip brings the kid and his little lunch to Jesus. I think it's fascinating that Andrew tells Jesus what the kid has but also says that he has no idea how that can help. It's as though Andrew has no clue what to do but does know that if he can just get this kid together with Jesus then Jesus will know what to do. And so Andrew introduces the kid to Jesus and the rest is history. I imagine when the kid got home and told the story of what had happened Andrew's name never came up. But without Andrew... the kid would have never had the experience with Jesus that he had.

And the last time we read about Andrew it's just before the last supper. Some gentiles have come and they tell Phillip they want to meet Jesus. In that day who a rabbi associated with was a big deal and introducing Jesus to some gentiles was risky so do you know what Phillip does? He goes and gets Andrew. Why? I'm not sure. Maybe he knew that Andrew's specialty was putting unlikely people together with Jesus. So Andrew takes these guys to meet Jesus. Why? Because that's what Andrew does. He's never sure what will happen... he just knows that if he can get someone together with Jesus then Jesus will take over and Jesus ALWAYS knows what to do with people.

And that's the premise I've built my ministry and life upon. You don't have to know me very long to realize that there's a lot of stuff I'm not very good at. And there's a lot of stuff I have no idea about. But what I know is that if I can get people to step in here and if I can get them to see Jesus for who He really is, then Jesus will take care of the rest. And really that's all we're doing here at Riverside. We figure if we can get someone to walk through those doors who wouldn't ordinarily walk into a church (by being different) then all we have to do is put them together with Jesus and miracles can happen. It doesn't take long to realize we don't have all the answers. But neither did Andrew.

That's his story. We only see him three times, but every time Andrew is saying to somebody, "Come on, I will take you to Jesus." Jesus has one mission, and at the very beginning He says to His disciples, "Come, and follow Me, and I will send you out to fish for people. You thought your job was to fish for fish, or to collect taxes, or to teach school, or to work on an assembly line, or to clerk at a store, or to run a business, but I'll give you a bigger job. I want you to go out there and find people who are confused, lost, hurt, lonely, angry, and you can bring them to Me." Andrew gets it and that changes the world. So how about you... do you get it? What would it look like for you to bring people to Jesus?

Prayer: Father, I don't know what I have that I can give that You would want. But whatever I have I give to You. Show me what it would look like in my life to bring people to You. In Jesus' Name, amen.