

# LIVING ON THE EDGE OF DESPERATE

## Week One Notes

Luke 8:40-56, John 11:1-45

“Desperate” is a difficult place to live...even if we are living just on the edge of it.

Scripture is filled with desperate people. Abraham, an old man, desperate for God to fulfill His promise. Moses, given a seemingly impossible task to lead a people only to find himself caught between an army and a sea. David, running for his life from Saul turns to the Philistines and must present himself as insane.

But there are two accounts that have provoked questions and thoughts in recent years. Two accounts of desperate people who knew they must take their desperation to Jesus. What they find, however, is much different than what they imagined. (Luke 8 and John 11)

### I. Desperate Does Not Mean Denied (Luke 8:40-42)

Jairus was a powerful, but desperate man. His young daughter was dying. He put aside his power and prestige...even his dignity to make an urgent request of Jesus. No matter what the other synagogue officials thought, Jairus knew Jesus could heal his little girl. He had a measure of faith and he was willing to exercise that faith regardless of anyone’s opinion of him. After all, people are most desperate when someone they love is dying.

Jesus heard Jairus’ request because the Bible says, “as they went.” They were headed for the home of Jairus---But it did not play out like Jairus expected.

Often times when we are desperate, we know where to take our need. We take our desperation to Jesus...but we usually take our plans as well.

Jesus is on His way to Jairus’ house...but then He stops, and for 6 verses He has a rather calm conversation about someone touching him and then dealing with a woman who has been bleeding for 12 years...a women who will live another day. Jesus delays what seems to be the urgent need of Jairus for something that seems *less* urgent.

Can you imagine Jairus? Agonizing over his dying daughter, anxious for the expediency in which Jesus *should* act...but instead, this long conversation with a much less pressing, albeit needy woman. In Jairus mind, certainly this is not how it was supposed to play out. *But he would soon learn that while Jesus delayed, Jesus had not denied.*

A few things to remember in the delays.

#### A. God is always working.

Genesis 39, the account of Joseph being sold into slavery and then ending up in prison. At every painful turn of events, God had a plan, but it seemed the plan was delayed over and over by dire circumstances. Yet five time in Genesis 39, we are reminded “the Lord was with Joseph”. That phrase means that God is actively at work in the circumstances of Joseph—not just a passive observer. He at work in our circumstances as well, even if we do not immediately see the evidence.

#### B. God works according to His sovereign timetable

God has His own sovereign timetable. He works according to His plan, in His way, and in His time. God is forming something in Jairus that expediency could not accomplish. **In God’s economy, instant gratification never produces long-lasting fruit.**

The psalmist must have experienced this at some point in his life because he writes encouragement to us in Psalm 46:2 and 10 “*Therefore, we will not fear though the earth should change and though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea.... Cease striving and know that I am God.*”

Genesis 18:14 is a reminder to us. God has promised Abraham a son, but over 20 years have passed and no son (other than the mess they created with Hagar). Verse 14 is God’s message to Abraham—after years of waiting--,” *Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year and Sarah shall have a son.*”

Notice the words *appointed time—at the right time, at the ordained time, at God’s time*. God sets the time and God always keeps His appointments! Dear ones, if we are going to claim the promises of God, we must also claim the timing of God. Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us God’s ways and His thoughts are not like ours.

### C. Feelings are valid, but truth must always prevail.

During times of desperation, our tendency is to lean into our feelings. It *feels* like God does not love us, or He has forgotten about us, or He just doesn’t care. The story in John 11 is familiar. Mary and Martha have a brother, Lazarus who is dying. They are good friends of Jesus and so they eagerly and urgently make a request for Jesus to come and heal their brother. But John 11:5 astonishes me!

Verse 5 says, “*Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*”

In my mind that should mean Jesus drops everything, races to Bethany and heals His friend. Right? Verse 6 puts an end to that way of thinking. “*When therefore He heard that he was sick, He stayed then two days longer in the place where He was.*” He delayed!

When we are desperate, and we take our urgent need to Jesus, we **MUST** lean into truth, not feelings. Adversity requires a knowledge of truth before we ever get to the point of desperation. Often in adversity, we are engulfed in emotions that lead us to doubt God’s love for us. Be reminded of truth.

Lamentations 3:19-20, 22, 32, Psalm 32:10, Isaiah 54:10, Romans 8:38-39

Truth will anchor us in the hope that is ours.

Romans 5:8, “*But God demonstrates His love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” God’s greatest demonstration of love is not healing, or financial gain, or peaceful circumstances. God’s greatest demonstration of love is salvation. The saving work of Christ is proof enough of God’s love for me...*even if our plans do not play out as expected.*

## II. Desperate Develops Our Faith

Remember Jairus is a powerful, prestigious person in his community. He is a synagogue official. But in light of his great need, none of that matters. He is willing to cast it aside, lay face down in the dirt, and beg for his daughter’s life.

*Desperation makes the unimportant or superficial become glaringly unimportant.*

When the superficial is stripped away from Jairus’ life, Jesus is free to do a greater work than anyone ever imagined. In John 11, Martha is not serving. She is presented in Scripture three times and this is the only account of her **NOT** serving in her home. Why? ...something else has taken precedence. Her brother’s sickness and then death pushes aside the need to prepare meals. So, we must ask ourselves, are there secondary things in our lives that must be laid aside in our seasons of desperation?

James 1:2-4 is a tough reminder. “*Count it all joy my brethren when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect (mature) and complete lacking in nothing.*” The original language is rich in word meaning.

**Encounter**—to fall into unexpectedly. When was the last time you were able to plan for an upcoming desperate moment?

**Various**—literally multicolored, meaning different degrees of trials. Not all trials are the same intensity.

**Testing of your faith**—put to the test to see if it is genuine. God is not gathering information for Himself; He already knows the depth of your faith. Often however, we do not. Trials remove façade and expose our faith. We get to see what our faith is really made of when the desperate seasons barge in.

**Produces**—God is doing a work on the inside of us **BUT** He is putting that good work on display on the outside for others to see. When we go through trials, our children, our students, our neighbors get to see the work that God is doing in us. It will encourage them when their own season of desperation comes.

**Endurance**—oh I hate this word! It means *to bear up under*. Typically, I want God to immediately change my circumstances or remove me from the difficult circumstances. But this verse says God enables me to remain under the circumstance!

**Perfect result**—a maturing result. Our faith deepens and grows more through trials than any other means.

Jairus had a measure of faith. He believed Jesus could heal his daughter, but he never imagined Jesus could raise the dead. Many times, the Lord will take us into deep waters, and we feel like we are overwhelmed and will surely drown. But it is in the deep waters that He matures our faith. Like the tiny coi fish, faith grows in proportion to the size of the pond. *God will allow individuals, families, ministries, and churches to experience the deep waters of desperation so that He can strip away the truly unimportant, or perhaps the façade that we have mistaken for reality.*

Mark 6:51-52 is interesting. The disciples had watched Jesus feed 5000—they had even participated. But immediately afterwards, they are in a terrible storm. Jesus walks on water to get to them and calms the storm. The Bible says they were astonished, “*for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves.*” They understood Jesus was able to feed 5000, but they had no idea He was Lord over the wind and waves. Their view of Christ was limited, and only the storm would expand their understanding.

Jairus (Mary and Martha, too) had a game plan that did not play out, but in the desperate delay Jesus developed Jairus’ faith. We cannot put God in a box of our own making (our plans) or demand smooth sailing through life thinking that is the indicator of God’s love and favor towards us. God allows the storms because He has a purpose for the storms in our lives.

Let me be quick to say, God doesn’t zap us with trials so that we can learn hard lessons. Trials come because we live in a fallen world, yet God will use them to develop us in ways we could never have known without the trials. God will always reveal Himself more intimately to us in seasons of trials, storms, or desperation.

### III. Desperate Demonstrates God’s Glory (Luke 8:49-56)

After Jesus took his time with the bleeding woman, Jairus gets the news his daughter has died. Oh, I cannot imagine the heartache of this man... to lose a child, an only child...one so close to being healed by Jesus. Jesus however says what He often says, “Do not be afraid any longer....”

Fear is a natural response. If it were not, the Bible would not have to remind us so often to not be afraid. Jesus always meets us in our fear...never chiding, always reminding us of truth. Like Jairus, the Lord wants to move us from fear to faith. It may seem almost cruel to allow Jairus to experience the agony of death... even if just for a moment. But there are things God can never reveal to us about Himself until we are in the throes of desperation. I wish it were not so...and yet even in desperation...there is hope—a confident assurance—that God is at work.

In both accounts, Luke 8 and John 11, there is a resurrection. For Lazarus, there is loud, public, calling forth resurrection. One that astounds everyone, and the news of it spreads. It’s the kind of resurrection we all want. Big and Bold. Miraculous. Testimony worthy! But the resurrection in Luke 8 is very different. It’s a resurrection to be sure, but it is quiet and private and asked to be kept on the down low. In the privacy of a home, accompanied by grieving parents, and 3 disciples, Jesus takes a dead little girl by the hand and simply says, “child arise.” No loud proclamation. No public reaction. No onlookers. Just a quiet resurrection to life. **Both resurrections declare the glory of God. Both demonstrate His authority and power. Both are equally miraculous. Both result in life.**

My late husband lived 9 hours after the car accident. The hospital was crowded with hundreds of people all praying and encouraging me while we anticipated what the night would hold. Truthfully, I wanted to be left alone. I wanted my Bible, I wanted to read and pray and think and hear from the Lord. The crowd however wasn’t going anywhere. In the trauma and the crowd, I tried to remember comforting verses of Scripture. But not one previously memorized passage of Scripture would make its way into my memory. Out of nowhere, I heard a faint whisper... “*I am the resurrection and the life....*” That is all I got. I wasn’t sure where that scrap of a verse was found. I had no idea of the context. I just heard the distinct whisper of the Holy Spirit over and over.....” *I am the resurrection and the life....*” In desperation I grasped the partial verse, believing with all my heart we would experience a resurrection that night...that Dana would come out of the coma, the bleeding would stop, God would heal him, it would be a dramatic moment —testimony worth... for all my days. But no resurrection came—at least not the kind I wanted.

Dana died at 1 am on September 27, 2005 and I questioned the truthfulness of God’s whisper.

When I arrived home in the early morning hours I ran straight to my Bible. I had to find that verse and why had God whispered it to me over and over in the hospital. I found it. John 11:25. Martha is talking with Jesus after her brother has

died. She is complaining about Jesus' delay, and Jesus responds to her. The complete verse says, "**I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live *even if he dies.***"

In God's great mercy, He only gave me the first part of the promise.... that indeed He is the resurrection and the life. He saved the second part of the promise until the darkness of death was a smothering cloak...." he who believes in Me shall live...even if he dies." Dana died. But hope remained. Christ was still the resurrection and the life. My sweet Dana was now more alive than he had ever been.

While Dana has experienced an eternal resurrection, I have experienced a resurrection as well...every day for the past 17 years. It has not been a Lazarus type of resurrection...but more like a Luke 8 resurrection—quiet, personal..." child arise". Every day for 17 years the Lord has whispered to me, "child arise...I will meet every need of this day". "Child arise... I see you and hear you". "Child arise...I will fight for you". "Child arise... I will provide for you". No dramatic deliverance. No loud proclamation. Just a day-by-day resurrection from the Giver of life...daily life...every day. Both resurrections—mine and Dana's---are miraculous. Both demonstrate God's authority and power. Both declare His glory. Both result in life.

Are you living in desperation today? Or perhaps just on the edge of it? Are you taking your request to the Lord and it seems like there is a delay? Are you leaning into your plans or His, your feelings or His truth?

God is at work. Our desperation is a place of great grace and God's attentiveness. He is still the resurrection and the life...sometimes with bold deliverance, and sometimes with a whispered promise of daily provision.

Certainly, desperation changes us as we trust Christ in it and through it. It changes the way we pray, the way we worship, and the way we live. Christ is not interested in "fixing things", rather He wants to change things. He wants to redeem (buy back and make new) rather than restore things to the way they were.

Dear one, He has not denied you, even if He delays—He is working all things together for His eternal purpose. He is developing your faith, and He will demonstrate His glory in you and through you.