

DON'T LET NEGATIVE BECOME YOUR NEW NORMAL

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God is saying, "You know what? I'm taking you through something uncertain right now. I'm taking you through something right now that you've never seen before, but just because you've never seen it before doesn't mean it's not normal". Just because I have never known it doesn't mean it's not normal. "You mean it can be normal for me to have a heart that is at peace"? Yes! Yes! That's how it's supposed to be. You are supposed to have peace in the middle of a storm. Jesus did. He slept through stuff that we scramble about because he's not from here.

See, when you're from somewhere else, it changes what you see as normal. Because I come from a different place, because I am not from this world, because it is not my home, I do not have to accept the patterns of this world as normal. I don't have to accept Egypt as normal. What if God is trying to bring me into a new normal but I'm so afraid I reach for what's familiar? Can I tell you one new normal I think God is trying to give us right now? Better priorities. We are so toxic in the way we treat each other, what we say to each other, how we categorize and box each other. Well, we can't box each other like that anymore.

Now I need you and you need me, and if we don't all do what we're supposed to do, we may not ever get out of this. God is making a nation. God is bringing the people through the Red Sea together, but not for them to go through. For them to get there, there's something they have to give up. Question: What is God calling you to give up to get there? What if there's a new normal? What if your true nature has been so buried and embedded in what Romans 12 calls the patterns of this world...?

Here's what I want to show you from Romans 12:1. Some of you have heard this Scripture before, but let's put it in context. Just like the children of Israel were going through the Red Sea... And remember, all they've known as normal, all their parents knew as normal, all their parents' parents knew as normal, all their parents' parents' parents knew as normal... This is 430 years. Look at how weird our world has gotten in just a few weeks. This is 430 years of you thinking you're never supposed to have enough, you'll never be free. This is what it's like to be in bondage. Some of you know this because you've been in bondage to depression. You've been in bondage to patterns of thought.

This is a chain-breaking Scripture in Romans 12:1. I never saw it before, y'all. Watch this Scripture in Romans 12:1. Are you ready? This revelation to me... I've read both of these Scriptures a lot. They're both classic passages. The children of Israel are coming through the Red Sea. They want to go back to Egypt. They want to go back to what they've known. They want to go back to what's familiar because they are afraid. I'd rather go back to what is negative, even if it's not really normal. We'll call negative normal just because it's what we know. Do you see this? Some of the things I've called normal my whole life aren't normal. This Scripture shows me the full extent of it in Jesus Christ.

Now let's put the gospel on this Old Testament passage. "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy..." That's not normal. How many of you in a relationship can do wrong over and over and over and over and over again and the person fully accepts you? Only God. So in view of that kind of mercy... That's where we get used to things. Things we used to be grateful for we become entitled to. Remember, for this community Paul is writing to, none of this is normal. They're used to relating to God through a sacrificial system. When they come before God, they have to make offerings and spill blood in order to have their

prayer requests heard, in order to meet with God, in order to atone for sin.

So this is not normal for Paul to be talking about mercy, coming to God on the basis of grace. This is new. This is a new normal. And do you know what their temptation was? To go back to the old way. So he's telling them, "No, no, no, no. In view of God's mercy, I urge you, I need you to, I'm begging you to, stop trying to get back to normal. Stop thinking there's something you could do to earn God's love and realize it has already been done through the gift of his Son Jesus Christ, that the blood has already been shed. Instead of getting back to normal, move forward into this new way of life.

Instead of offering pigeons and turtledoves and lambs and goats and rams, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This is your true and proper worship. This is your new normal. Your new normal is that you are forgiven and not condemned". Your new normal is that you are a child of the Most High God. I am no ordinary child. I am a child of God. Moses and I have Acts 7:20 in common. I am no ordinary child; I am a child of God. I am a royal priesthood. I am a holy nation. I am set apart. I'm not trying to be normal. Normal is broken. The culture is broken. The world is weird, and it didn't just get weird when a virus was unleashed. The world has been weird for a long time. I'm going to show you in the Bible. This is way before coronavirus. You got it?

Romans 12:2: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world..." Why not? Because the world is weird. "I don't know about Christians. They're weird". Do you know what's kind of cool about going through something really traumatic? What used to be weird now is the only thing that works. That's the only thing I'm excited about. I'm not excited about anybody being sick, anybody dying, anybody losing their job, anybody losing their company, anybody losing their life's work. I'm not excited about anybody having to work 20-hour days. I'm not excited about any of it, but what I am excited about is that our faith finally fits.

See, the world always operates by logic, but now we've come to a Red Sea. So the world is trying what it has always tried. "Ah, more information". And none of it works. So now there's room to do what Romans 12:1 says, and worship isn't weird anymore. It's not weird to worship now, is it? Because the only thing I can do now is call on God. People are praying right now who used to think praying was superstitious. It's not weird anymore. For once, we're not the weird ones. For just a minute, let's just take this moment. It's like we're a middle school boy who finally hit a growth spurt, and our voice isn't cracking, and we finally fit. The church finally fits. You could send this link to somebody today, and they wouldn't be annoyed that you invited them to church. They'd be excited. They are bored to death. They have three ulcers. They have ulcers in places where you don't even normally get ulcers.

So faith finally fits. This is our moment! This is our time! This is what we were born to do. I wasn't born to be normal. We fit. It's an amazing moment. Finally, there's space for faith in your life. As long as everything is normal, there's no space for faith. "Oh, I've got this. I've figured this out. Here's what I do: I take the kids here, and I take the kids there, and I take the kids there, and I take the kids there". The Lord said that in this season he is helping people reset their schedules. Since you didn't want to do it manually...

Now, as the whole thing is shut down, one of the new normals God might bring us into is that we have a different baseline for busy or a reordering of priorities. Think about this. Many of us worshiped soccer more than we worshiped the Savior. I know that sounds like one of those clichés. I would normally do it in the country preacher voice. "Y'all worship soccer more than the Savior". But it's the dang truth. I don't have anything against soccer other than I hate it, but listen to me, church. Are you listening to me right now?

Sit up and listen to this. God said, "I'm not trying to get you back to the normal where you worshiped your kids' activities and left no space for me. I'm not trying to bring you back to that Egypt where you

had to make bricks without straw and you were just spending your money and spending your time and never full, with holes in your purses, and just running after this and running after that to impress people". Now you're going through a season where you can put on any clothes you want and nobody is going to see them.

God is reordering some priorities, because... Romans 12:2: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind". Why? The world was weird to begin with. It's not normal. Even the way you develop your construct of the world is important. Right? If you get your construct of what the world is like from the news, you will not know normal. The news does not make money by showing you normal. The news makes money by showing you the most extreme example to keep you watching. You think the news is there to inform you? The news is not there to inform you. The news is there to engage you so you'll keep watching.

You're getting your construct of the world right now from the news, the news, the news, the news. That's not normal. I'm not telling you not to check the news; I'm telling you not to watch it all the time. It's not normal. That is not normal. You know how the world has these patterns, all of these patterns of the world where we overextend ourselves all the time. We do all of these things to impress people. That has never been normal. That has just been culturally accepted. That doesn't make it normal.

What does God call normal? That's what I want to know in this season. What does God call normal? I told Elijah the other day, "I don't care if you like sports or don't like sports. If music is your thing..." I grew up with this too. The kids who did sports were normal. The kids who liked music were weird. You know what? I'm 40 and I probably can't play sports anymore either, even if I was good at them at one time, but I can still make music. What was weird then is making ministry happen now. "Do not be conformed..." That's to be acted upon by the outside. That's conform. You can make it what you want it to be.

That's what the world has done to us for so long. "Your faith goes here. Don't talk about your faith". That's not normal. The world is weird. Faith is normal. Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Now we get it, that the unseen is the most significant. I've been preaching this since the beginning of the year, but now we finally get it, that what is unseen is most significant. We get it because we're fighting a virus we can't see.

Now we understand that the things which are seen were made of things which do not appear. Faith finally fits, because we are standing in front of the Red Sea, and we no longer understand, and we can't count on the things we used to count on. In one sense, we want them back for comfort, but God cannot bring change while we hold to comfort. There is a new normal. There is a better you, a truer you, a real you. The patterns of this world are just pretend. It is not real. There is a peace that comes from above. There is a wisdom that whispers, and it doesn't shout.

God said, "I'm not trying to get you back to normal; I'm trying to bring you into it". I'm looking forward to normal. I'm looking forward to God reinventing me. I'm looking forward to God increasing my capacity to connect with people for real. I prayed that God would help me with my gratitude. I'm looking forward to being able to put it into practice in the next season. I'm looking forward to normal, not trying to get back to it.