*It Would Take a Miracle ….*

**To Fix My Family**

*Dr. Marty Baker | Genesis 37 | January 29, 2017*

 Hello. My name is Marty Baker and I want to welcome you to Stevens Creek Church. I am so glad that you are here today. Have you ever heard or said the expression “It Would Take a Miracle?” People use that expression in a variety of ways—to describe someone in poor health, a troubled marriage, a financial reversal and even a ball game if their team is behind. They say this when they are looking ***at*** an impossible situation and they realize that they need something supernatural to happen. Today, I want to wrap up this series with the message: It Would Take a Miracle to fix my family.

 **Every family has problems**. We are either facing a problem right now or we have just gotten out of a problem or headed into one. Oftentimes these problems hit us right out of the blue. Some of the most influential events in your family may happen to you when you least expect it. There are a lot of events that happen in life that you can’t go around, you can’t go over, you can’t go by – you have to go through and at times you need supernatural power to get through it. You simply need a miracle.

 Many of you know what I am talking about. Over the last three weeks, we have prayed through the cards that you turned in. Over and over, I see that people are asking for God to move in their families…they are crying out to God to fix their families.

 This week, as I was praying, there were four things that came to my mind when it comes to building a strong family. Four things you need to know. First of all, you need to

**Be present. The best gift that you can give someone**

**is your time and undivided attention.**

 Our lives are busy and if we want to fix our families then we have to spend time together. You may have to be creative. You may have to say “no” to some good things, but it will be worth it. When you are “present” with your family, you are saying that family is important.

 Be intentional about spending time with each other. When our kids were growing up, Patty made sure that we would have dinner together as a family. We used those times to connect with the kids.  Sometimes it meant that we went through the drive-through and had dinner in the car as we were headed to a ball practice or to a dance recital.

 She was intentional on Friday nights to go to the pizza place, not because we loved their pizza, but because they had a circular table where she would be able to look into the eyes of each child and hear about their week.

 Our kids are out of the house, but we still do this on a regular basis. This past week, we found ourselves at another restaurant that had a U-shaped table sitting with our kids … they are 30, 28 and 23, then you add the best son-in-law in the world and an almost 2 year old and you have a full night. The last thing Patty said to me that night before she fell asleep was this: *I am glad that we can afford to take our kids out for dinner, because there was a time that we could not.* Then, she fell asleep.

How can you afford that … you learn to say “no” to somethings now, so that you can say “yes” for the important things later.

 If you are going to fix your family, then you must be present. Let me say this: You need to figure out what it means to be present in your family and then do it. What works for us does not work for everyone. Secondly, you need to

**Be patient. God is not finished with you and He is not finished with your family. Don’t underestimate what God is doing as you wait on things to get better.**

 God changes caterpillars into butterflies, sand into pearls and coal into diamonds using **time** and **pressure**. Could it be that He is working on you too? Could it be that He is using these situations to shape you into the person that He wants you to be. God never wastes a pain or a problem. This pressure that you are under could be an opportunity for God to show you His power.

 I realize that some of you are concluding these 21 Days of Prayer without an answer. Be patient. God’s delay is not a denial. Just because the answer hasn't come *yet* doesn't mean God isn't going to answer or that he's forgotten you or that he doesn't care about you. It simply means "***not yet***"!

Part of becoming spiritually mature is learning the difference between "no" and "not yet," between a denial and a delay.

 This situation that you are in did not develop overnight and you may not get out of it quickly. During this season, take a deep breath and put your trust in the Lord. Allow Him to finish what He has started.

 God knows exactly **what** you need, **who** you need, and **when** you need it. Trust Him. You need to trust God even when it appears that the circumstances are not changing.

Be patient … God is at work. Here’s the next one. Next, be proactive.

**Be proactive. Great Opportunities may come once in a lifetime, but small opportunities surround us every day. Do what you can do to make the situation better.**

 Being proactive means you are going to take care of the problem before it spreads. Often times it is easier to ignore a problem than it is to fix the problem.  We find it easier to bury our head in the sand and somehow believe that everything will get better on its own. That is not always the case.

When you discover an issue, move quickly to take care of the issue.  A small corrective action early on spares you from a great deal of hard work down the road.

 Patty is better at this than I am. She often works behind the scenes to create healthy environments. If one of the kids started hanging out with the wrong crowd, she worked behind the scenes to make the right crowd attractive. She encouraged positive relationships and had a rule … she wanted our house to be the house where the kids would hang out.

 Some of you are not in the parenting season, but there are things that you can do to make your situation better. Extend a helping hand, take a class, improve your skills, be the first one to say, “I’m sorry.” Just do something … don’t live another year in the same situations that you are in right now.

**Be prayerful. The quickest way to change a bad relationship to a good one**

**is to start praying for the other person.**

 Today is Day 22 of our 21 Days of Prayer. I want to encourage you to continue to press and seek the Lord and believe that He is going to complete what He has started. I want to encourage you to pray like you know that God will answer. I believe that prayer changes situations; but more than that, it changes me. Prayer shapes the way I think. It changes the way I feel. It gives me hope that there is a better day ahead.

 **I want to tell you a story about how a bad family relationship turned into a good relationship. It is an example of how God healed a family that was torn apart with sibling rivalry. It is the story of Joseph in the Old Testament.**

 Joseph’s family was the most one influential family in the Bible. His Dad Jacob was one of the Patriarchs. The Patriarchs of Scripture are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is the closest that the Bible comes to royalty. Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel, had two wives, Rachel and Leah, but he really only had one love and that was Rachel.

 With Rachel, Jacob had two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. While giving birth to Benjamin, there were complications and Rachel died during child birth.

 When Rachel died, Jacob tried to hang onto to her memory by focusing on Joseph. The other boys knew that Joseph was Daddy’s little darling. He got to stay home while the other brothers went to work. Joseph … Daddy’s little boy … got his coat of many colors…while the others wore hand-me-downs.

 **Joseph’s brothers resented this special treatment and grew to hate their brother Joseph.**

 This influential family helped shape the world as we know it. The country of Israel is named after this family. They were spiritual giants; however, what they posted on Facebook and Instagram was not their real life. You see behind the scenes the older brothers hated their young brother because he was given special treatment from their Dad. On the outside, everything seems good, but on the inside it was far from it.

 One day, Jacob sent Joseph out to check on his brothers. They were working on a project about fifty miles away from home. We pick up the story in Genesis 37.

**Genesis 37:23-25**

**23**So when Joseph came to his brothers, they **stripped** him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing— **24**and they took him and **threw** him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it. **25**As they sat down to eat their meal…

 Notice it says that they **stripped** Joseph of his coat, they tied him up and **threw** him into a pit. They **stripped** him and **threw** him. Those are defiant verbs, aren’t they? They were angry with him. They had plans to kill Joseph and hide his body.

 Now, I don’t think that Joseph saw this assault coming. I don’t think that Joseph woke up that morning and said, “Hmmm….today is the day I get thrown into a pit…by my brothers. He did not see this assault coming and ***neither did you****.*

 Joseph’s pit came in the form of a cistern …yours came in the form of a ­­­­­-------. Just fill in the blank. A diagnosis? A foster home? A traumatic injury?

 Joseph was thrown into a hole and despised. What about you? Maybe you were thrown into a **divorce court** and forgotten, thrown into a **bed** and abused, thrown into an **unemployment line** and passed over.

 Joseph’s story …if you remember…got worse before it got better. He would have died in that cistern had his brothers not been greedy. Instead of killing him, they sold him as a slave to a group of merchants. Then the merchants later auctioned him off. This enslavement eventually led to entrapment. He was falsely accused of rape and thrown into prison.

 Joseph’s story was a downhill slide that led from one problem down to another problem for over a decade … **yet he never gave up.**

 Do you remember what happened? While he was in prison, the King had a dream that perplexed him and he could not figure out what it meant. He shared the dream with the wisest people in the land, but no one could interpret the dream. Then, one of the King’s servants remembered that Joseph had a God-given gift to interpret dreams.

 They brought Joseph to the King and he listened to the dream. He explained to the King that there would be seven years of abundance and seven years of famine. In order to make it through the tough times, the King needed to store up grain during the years of plenty.

 The King recognized God’s hand on Joseph’s life and made him the Prime Minister of Egypt. It was an amazing turn-around story.

 In one day, Joseph went from being a prisoner to prime minister. His life changed. Joseph was placed in charge of the largest relief effort in history. As a result of his work, Joseph literally saved the world from famine.

 God set him free. God turned Joseph’s life around. The same God that set Joseph free is here for you. I realize that none of us have been sold into slavery, but how many have been in families that are plagued by problems? How many of you feel as though your back is against a wall and you feel as though are stuck in this same place that you have been before.

 Today, your life can change. You say, “How?” Well, I want you to do four things … four things that will change your life; fours steps to fix your family. Here’s the first step.

1. **I declare that with God's help, we will get through this.**

Let’s say that together.  ***I declare that with God’s help, we will get through this.***

 Make up your mind that you are going to get through this. Turn your attention to God. Immerse yourself in Bible. What does God’s word say?

**Hebrews 13:5**

…God has said, “I will never leave you.  I will never desert you.”

You are not alone. God is here whether you feel Him or not. You may not feel him, but He is there with you. Focus your thoughts on him.

**Isaiah 43:1-3**

1 But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel:

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
2When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.
3For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;

***I declare that with God’s help, we will get through this.*** Let’s say that together.  ***I declare that with God’s help, we will get through this.***

 Joseph put his faith in God even though the circumstances of his life did not make sense to him.

 The fact is, **problems** and **pain transform us**. Pain never leaves us where we started. It will either make you better or bitter. It won’t leave you where it picks you up. It will take you to another place.

 Listen very closely to what I’m about to say. The secret of every winner – whether it’s winning in business, winning in sports, winning in love, winning in relationships, winning financially, spiritually or any other way – the secret of every single winner is one word: it is the word “**resilience**.” Resilience is the ability to bounce back.

 Why? Because everybody goes through tough times. Everybody has failures. Everybody has flops. Nobody goes through life with unbroken success.

 There are problems, pains, pressures, difficulties in everybody’s life. The difference between winners and losers is that winners get back up. Losers stay down. ***I declare that with God’s help, we will get through this.***

 Be resilient. Winners have resilience. Winners keep on keeping on. Winners keep going. Winners get knocked down but they get back up. Winners have the same problems losers do; they just have resilience.

 Joseph had resilience. What was his secret? The answer is right here. It’s perspective. Joseph put his faith in God even though the circumstances of his life did not make sense to him. Here’s the second declaration.

1. **I commit to pray through the pain until the answer comes.**

 Several weeks ago, I encouraged you to write prayer requests down on a card we provided. Over the last 21 days, we have prayed through your requests. There are recurring themes … we are praying for God to change our lives and to heal people who are sick.

 I don’t know what you personally are going through right now, but I believe that you can get through it … in **prayer**. This is a time to cry out to the Lord.

 We have to press through the pain, press through the problem until the answer comes. We see in the Bible that Jesus while he was in the Garden of Gethsemane prayed with loud cries and tears. I want you to cry out to the Lord.Pray through your pain. If you are hurting, tell God about it. It’s okay.

 Part of getting through this tough time is getting honest with God. Pray your pain out. If you read the Bible, you will often see that people came after God. They chased God. They were persistent. Abraham came after God. Moses came after God. David, Isaiah.... they came after God and said, “God, do not ignore me. You've got to do this. You promised.”

 People would say to them, “You can't talk to God that way.” But, God was not offended. He honored their persistence and their boldness. Cry out to the Lord. Pray through the problem. Don’t give up, but be persistent. God is honored by people who pray bold and persistent prayers.

**Luke 11:10**

For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Most of us like quick answers. We want to pray it on Monday and have an answer by Thursday. You need to know that just because you ask it on Monday does not mean that you receive it on Thursday. You may have to ask for three or four years, but you just keep coming to God in persistence.

 He says, “The door will be open.” I know that your pain may be great, but don’t give up. Pray until the answer comes. Here’s the third declaration.

1. **I choose to forgive and refuse to be bitter**

 I meet so many people who are stuck in life because they refuse to forgive someone for what they have done. If we want to get through what we are going through, then we must release the offenders. Here’s what I mean by that. You have to release them from the debt they owe you.

 A lot of people do not understand what forgiveness really is. To help you understand what it is, it is good to talk about what forgiveness is not.

* + Forgiveness is not pretending something never happened.
	+ Forgiveness is not saying that what happened was good or right.
	+ Forgiveness is not a casual glossing over an offense.
	+ Forgiveness is not deciding to let people run all over you.

 Forgiveness is a choice we make to release someone from a debt they owe us. Joseph did not gloss over his brother’s actions. He said:

**Genesis 50:20a**

**20**You intended to harm me…

Joseph stated the truth. He called them out for their actions. He had an opportunity to get even, but instead of getting even, he released them.

 Too often people get stuck in life because they are unwilling to forgive someone who has hurt them. They allow the hurt and the anger to turn inward and it becomes bitterness. Bitterness is like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die. Joseph was clear….

**Genesis 50:20-21**

**20**You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

**21**So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Here’s the final declaration:

1. **I will not despair but I will trust that God will bring something good out of this problem.**

Joseph said that God intended it for good. There is a parallel passage in the New Testament that echoes this same thought.

**Romans 8:28**

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.

Bad things happen to all of us. When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, he promises to bring something good out of the bad things that happen to us.

Those things that are beyond your are not beyond God’s control and when you know God’s going to handle them for you that gives you confidence.

One of the reasons why so many people are stressed out is because they are trying to work their problems out on their own. **It’s time to invite God into your life.** He promises to bring good out of the bad.

Here’s what I know. *You’ll get through this. It won’t be painless. It won’t be quick. But God will use this mess that you are in for good. In the meantime, don’t be foolish or naive. But don’t despair either. With God’s help, you will get through this.*

Closing Thoughts and Prayer