

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON TITLE Everything is not as it seems

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE Various Scriptures

SYNOPSIS God is always working behind the scenes, even when everything seems to be going wrong.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ Everything is not as it Seems

“Even when I don’t see it, you’re working. Even when I don’t feel it, you’re working.” That’s a line from the song, Way Maker. It’s a good reminder that God is always working behind the scenes. Sometimes, we are simply unaware of it and sometimes, we don’t see it because we’re focused on the wrong things. We often get focused on the troubles around us or the work of the enemy, but we need to keep our focus on God.

Peter walked on the water when he had his eyes on the Lord, but he sank when he looked at the wind and waves. David was very discouraged at one point when he had lost everything. When we face troubles and losses we can fall into despair as well. But both Peter and David got their focus back on God and got a hold of him. Then he strengthened them, lifted them and encouraged them. We need to do the same thing and keep our focus on the Lord instead of our troubles. And, even ☞ when we can’t see what God is doing, we need to trust him, realizing that **he is working behind the scenes**, even things that seem negative on the surface. We can see this in David’s life.

In 1 Samuel 16, David is anointed by the prophet Samuel to be the next king of Israel. And the Bible says that the Spirit came upon David in power. Not long after this anointing, David is called into King Saul’s residence to play his harp. And, we can see God’s hand on David. Saul was being tormented by an evil spirit, but when David played, the spirit would leave. This is a good reminder to us about **the Power of Praise**. Psalm 8:2 says, “From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.” When you’re discouraged, instead of griping and protesting, begin to glorify and praise!

And then, not long after that, David faced the giant Goliath on the battlefield and God gave him one of the most remarkable and memorable victories in all of history. While the entire army of soldiers were afraid, this young man was as bold as a bear and ran to the battlefield to confront the enemy. We love these parts of the story about David... A young man, anointed by God, operating in the Spirit’s power.

But then, Saul became jealous of David and was out to kill him. So, David went on the run. Often, the enemy works this way. After we experience the power and presence of God, the enemy attacks to discourage us and send us running.

David was supposed to be the next king, living in the capital city, in the palace! Instead he’s living outside in desolate places. For a time, he was in the Forest of Hereth and then he was in the Desert of Ziph and the Desert of Maon. These names have significance...

Hereth = silent and deaf. It’s like those times when **it seems that God is not listening** and he’s definitely not speaking.

Psalms 22:2
my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer...



Ziph = falsehood. Sometimes **people are saying and thinking things about us that just aren't true.**

Psalms 27:12

...false witnesses rise up against me, breathing out violence.

Maon = asylum. It's like feeling that you must be **losing your mind** because everything is going wrong and it doesn't make any sense.

Now in the middle of all this David had an opportunity to do away with Saul and get on with his own kingdom. He was hiding in a cave when Saul came in to relieve himself. David's men encouraged him to kill Saul and be done with it. But David would only cut a corner of his robe because he respected the authority that God had established in Saul.

Even then, the Bible says that David was conscience-stricken for cutting his robe. This says something about David. In the midst of all his troubles he still had a heart for God and did not want to sin against God. This is another good reminder for us... when everything is going wrong, we're being mistreated, and our temperatures are rising, we need to **keep God in mind and be careful not to sin** against him. And, **don't shortcut God's plan.** David was willing to ride it out so that he wouldn't sin and go against God's plan.

While he was trying to avoid Saul, David also stayed in places like the Hill of Hakilah and Jeshimon, and Maoch. Hakilah = darkness; Jeshimon = desolation; Maoch = oppression. Do those sound like places you've been? Sometimes it's just in your own mind, but it feels dark and desolate.

David actually made his home amongst his enemies. Goliath was a Philistine that David killed. Now, David is living *with* the Philistines! That's about as bad as it gets! While living here, David's home is attacked and burned and everyone's families are kidnapped. Even his own men are thinking of turning against him. That's the worst – when people you thought were with you turn against you. But David got a hold of God and found strength in the midst of all his troubles.

☞ **1 Samuel 30:6**

David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. **But David found strength in the Lord his God.**

And still there's more to the story. But first, let's talk about Moses a bit. In Moses' day the Egyptians were taking all the Hebrew boys and throwing them into the Nile to either drown or be eaten by crocodiles. But, God's hand was upon Moses.

In Exodus 2 we find the story of Moses' miraculous escape. His mother put him in a basket and let him float down the river. Pharaoh's daughter happened to see him and ultimately adopted him as her son. Plus, she unknowingly hired Moses' real mom to nurse him while he grew. Talk about miraculous!



Now there's not much information in the scriptures about his youth, but we know that Moses grew up in Pharaoh's house as an adopted son. He probably had a life of luxury. But then, one day, Moses came to the rescue of a Hebrew who was being mistreated and he ended up killing an Egyptian. Because of this, Pharaoh wanted to kill Moses. So, just like David, Moses ended up on the run.


He fled to the land of Midian. He was in the desert after being seated in a life of luxury. It would be easy to **think that God had forsaken** him. And, he could easily have thought that he deserved it because of what he had done. While in Midian, he married Zipporah and had a son whom he named Gershom.

Midian = judgment or contention
Gershom = refugee

These words express what Moses must have felt. Have you ever felt that way? **Like you're under judgment** or in a contentious situation or you're a refugee in a strange land? It's a common feeling.

Psalms 80:4-6

Lord God Almighty, how long will your anger smolder against the prayers of your people? **5** You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have made them drink tears by the bowlful. **6** You have made us a source of contention to our neighbors, and our enemies mock us.

However, it's while he's in Midian that he encounters God in the burning bush on Mount Horeb. Horeb = solitude. Now this can be taken negatively or positively. In the negative, Moses probably **felt all alone**. But in the positive, it's when we get alone and quiet that we can have a profound encounter with God. Remember Elijah? God spoke in the quiet voice, not in the tornado or  earthquake or blazing fire. Sometimes we need to **get alone and quiet and just listen for God**.

Now what do David and Moses have in common? They both were on the run, living in fear and discouraging conditions. They were in the desert. The desert is that dry and weary place where nothing seems to be happening. Nothing is growing. It's miserable! But, neither story ends there!

After Moses went back to Egypt, God did many miraculous wonders to free the Israelites. Eventually, they were able to leave Egypt with all their families and even a lot of Egyptian wealth. And you know the most spectacular miracle – they crossed the Red Sea on dry ground and Pharaoh's army was destroyed when the waters came crashing down on them. Not only were they set free; not only did they plunder the enemy; they were also delivered from an ongoing threat. The enemy's army was destroyed and would no longer be pursuing them.

Do you know where Moses led those people after that? Into Midian, the very place he had been years before. Now, he was leading the Israelites there! So, it was familiar territory.

And David, after living amongst the Philistines, did finally become the king of Israel. And you know what God did with him then? He used him to defeat the Philistines. That's found in 2 Samuel 5.



God used those bad times to prepare Moses and David for the future. When it was time for Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt, he was ready. He was already familiar with the territory. When it was time for David to be king and fight the Philistines, he was ready. He had lived among them. He had been part of their army. He knew their commanders and their strategies, and the territory where he would face them now.

☞ God did a **Romans 8:28** for both of these guys: **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.**

God has a way of using our troubles to prepare us for the work he has in mind. Just as David and Moses were familiar with the territory, God will often allow us to become familiar with a problem so that we'll be able to have victory or lead others to victory in that same area later.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, **4** who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

☞ Here it is: **God is with us during our troubles and helps us get through as we hang on to him. Then we can help others get through their troubles because we have seen firsthand how God got us through ours.**

Sometimes, things aren't really what they seem. God has a purpose in mind... *Karate Kid – wax on; wax off.* Whatever you are going through can be used by God for a greater purpose. Don't ☞ despair. Instead **look for God's hand in your life.**

Now, here's an encouraging word... the Bible says David defeated the Philistines at Baal Perazim. Perazim = breakthrough. God is still working behind the scenes, and he will make things right. It may seem that you're all alone, being defeated by the enemy, with little hope for your future. But ☞ things are not always as they seem. **God can suddenly turn the tables. Isaiah 29:5-6** says, "But your many enemies will become like fine dust, the ruthless hordes like blown chaff. Suddenly, in an instant, ⁶ the Lord Almighty will come with thunder."

We often grow weary in the waiting. But God always keeps his promises. I'm still waiting on some personal promises that are now decades old. I sometimes waver in my belief, but I remind myself that God always keeps his promises. He's still working behind the scenes.

Things are not always as they seem. God is still working, even when you don't see it. God has done the miraculous in the past, and he can still do the miraculous today. God is just and he will ☞ not let the enemy triumph. So, **hang in there. Everything is not as it seems.**

Way Maker