

## I. Introduction

- A. To set up today's talk, here are some truths from different people—stories are changed to protect identities:
1. My sister is crazy. She broke up with her husband, and came to my house to crash. She'd been with us for about two months, and was driving us nuts.
  2. One day, she wanted me to drive her to work, because she couldn't afford the bus, because she spends money like a drunken sailor swears. So, she woke me up early, and said I had to drive her to work.
  3. I yelled at her: **NO I CAN'T DRIVE YOU, I'M SLEEPING, GET SOME OF MY MONEY FROM THE TABLE AND TAKE THE BUS.**
  4. Now she hates me.
  5. I made the mistake of getting my phone service on her plan, (to save money). **SHE CUT ME OFF!!** I got even by kicking her out of our house. I put all her things out in the back yard, and changed the locks.
  6. Hey, I could've thrown them out in the front like a rummage sale. Now she says she's going to sue me. Ahh, family. What a beautiful thing.
- B. I asked on Facebook for permission to use some family drama, and I got a page full. Here's one, not from Redding. He described...
1. "Two parents, under the same roof, worshipping together, raising two great kids, function the best they can, but in three months of absolute silence. No communication whatsoever. I am not kidding, absolute silence!
  2. The husband would sleep on the couch. We dug our heels in and no one was going to blink. Hurtful words were said, damage was done, the "D" word [divorce] surfaces for the first time—heart-breaking sinful behaviors/patterns, choosing silence instead of healing, stubbornness instead of openness. Three months wasted, three months breaking God's heart, and each-others hearts.
  3. Thankfully, this story has a happy ending.
- C. Our topic today is **NEEDLESS DRAMA**. Do you have any needless drama in your life? Maybe in your family or job or classroom?
- D. The Bible says:
1. *"Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; He who guards his soul will be far from them."* Proverbs 22:5, NKJV.
  2. *"The lazy man says, 'There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion is in the streets!'"* Proverbs 26:13, NKJV.
- E. This is week five in our series called, "Bite Me: Tame Your Tongue, Heal Your Heart." We're talking about sins of the tongue. So far we've talked about stuff like gossip, complaining, whining, being the third person into a fight, slander, and being a busybody.
- F. Today: needless drama, "There's a lion in the road!!!" And for our case study, let's go to a famous story from the Old Testament. You can find this in Numbers 13:31, ff.

## II. The Promised Land, Finally

- A. A little back-story: The children of Israel have been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. But God freed, them, and in about one year, they have marched through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Now, they're ready to possess the Promised Land.
- B. But first, they send in spies to check the place out. Twelve spies sneak across the Jordan River to check out the land, its people, and its fortifications.
- C. God has already said, "Go into that land, and I will bless you there."
- D. Now the spies bring their report.
1. *"Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. Then they told him, and said: 'We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.'"* Numbers 13:26, 27, NKJV.
- E. So far, so good—great place, big farms, fertile fields, abundant water—look at these huge grapes!
- F. So, it's good news, but people who create needless drama are experts in the art of setting you up for a fall. They lift you to the heights of hope, just to dash you to the depths of despair. That's their spiritual gift.
- G. The next word is a dead giveaway: "Nevertheless..." This is like saying "but", except, in Hebrew; of all the "buts" this is the biggest one. It's like saying—Verses 26-27—good news, good news, good news—STOP.

## III. Bad News

- A. *"Nevertheless [big but] the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. 'The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan'"* Numbers 13:28, 29, NKJV.
- B. I was doing some sermon prep this week, watching a TV show called, Bridezillas.
- C. I've done hundreds of weddings, and one truth I know: everything depends on what mood the bride is in. Weddings are either fun, or not fun, and if the bride is not having fun, no one in the wedding party is having fun either. So a lot of energy goes into what we professionals call B.M.M. (Bridal Mood Management). Oh, you look like a princess! That's the prettiest dress I've ever seen! Who did your hair, Wow—you know. That's what we get paid for: BMM.
- D. So many brides have this glorious vision of their ideal, fairy-tale wedding day, and as the day draws near, that glorious vision crashes head on into the flawed reality. The flawed reality of broken homes, unhappy brides, imperfect catering, dresses that don't fit right, and a drunken uncle. The tension goes up and up and up over the growing gap between the glorious vision and the flawed reality.
- E. That gap is like a vacuum. It begs to be filled. There are two ways to fill the gap:
1. God's peace: An abiding confidence in a Father who loves you, and won't let you down or...
  2. Needless drama: An abiding faith that you can control your universe by shouting, pouting, and making people pay.
- F. When the bride starts leaning toward needless drama, hopefully someone steps in: the maid of honor, or the groom, or the parents can do some quick bridal mood management.

## IV. Mood Management

- A. That's what happens in verse 30:

1. *“Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, ‘Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it’”* Numbers 13:30, NKJV.
  - B. Ever take a road trip with your kids, and you finally get home, and you’re tired, and all you want to do is go in your house, use your own bathroom, and crash in your own bed.
  - C. Yeah, what if you got home, and found that a tribe of squatters moved in while you were gone, and now you have to evict them before you get your bed back. Put yourself in the Israelite’s shoes.
  - D. For four hundred years, they’ve had this glorious vision of the Promised Land and they finally get there, and they think it’s gonna be so nice, and the houses will be so nice, and the cake will be so nice, and the grapes are so nice.
  - E. And then, BOOM! Giants in the land. Fortified cities. We’re grasshoppers. The glorious vision crashes head on into the flawed reality.
    1. Maybe you prayed for a child, and you didn’t get the child you wanted.
    2. Maybe you applied for a job, and now you hate it, and you’re stuck.
    3. Maybe you worked for a college degree, and nobody will hire you.
    4. Maybe you begged God for a husband, or a wife, and now you’re hardly talking to each other and the person you gushed over as your soul mate is now sucking you dry.
  - F. The reality is nothing like the vision, nothing like the fantasy. And instead of tilting toward God’s peace, instead of tilting toward abiding faith in a Father who loves you and won’t let you down, you tilt toward needless drama.
  - G. And God has put a Caleb into your life to encourage you to tilt the other way. Go toward God, not toward drama. That Caleb might be the person who brought you to church today—your spouse, your kids, or your parents—someone trying to help you, someone who loves you enough to point you from craziness to true sanity.
  - H. Question: will you listen to that person, or not?
- V. They Don’t Listen
- A. Caleb’s pleas fell on deaf ears:
    1. *“But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.’ And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, ‘The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.’ So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, ‘If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?’ So they said to one another, ‘Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.’”* Numbers 13:31-14:4, NKJV.
  - B. They whine. They complain. They put the most negative spin possible on the situation. They wish to die. And they cap it off by rebelling against their leader, Moses.
  - C. Needless drama
  - D. The sad thing is this: they were right there on the border of the Promised Land and because of this episode of needless drama, they turn around, and spend the next 40 years wandering in the wilderness. Till every adult age 20 and up dies, except Joshua, and Caleb—the two spies who tilted toward God’s peace.
  - E. And what makes this even sadder is this: Joshua and Caleb and Moses are now caught up in the other people’s needless drama. It’s not like God said, “Okay, you three can enter the Promised Land, and the rest of you can wander for 40 years.”
  - F. No, their destinies were entwined.
  - G. And guess who got caught in the middle: the kids. Kids always get caught in the middle, and it affects them. But I am so glad that God calls Himself a father to the fatherless. God personally fills in the gaps in our heart left by our imperfect earthly parents. No one is damaged goods in God’s eyes—even if we’re caught up with other people’s drama.
- VI. Other People’s Drama
- A. That drama gushes out from a whole lot of sources:
    1. Drug abuse
    2. Alcohol abuse
    3. Physical abuse
    4. Sexual abuse
    5. Divorce
    6. Abandonment
    7. Threats
    8. Affairs
    9. Mental illness
    10. Bad character
    11. Hypocrisy
    12. Fake spirituality
    13. Immaturity
    14. Spiritual warfare—the devil is a dramatist
    15. Control issues
    16. Church drama
    17. Laziness
    18. Self-absorption: which can manifest as self-pity, self-centeredness, self-hatred, self-worship—anything where SELF is central.
    19. Rebellion against God: I want MY WAY, GOD, and I’ll make the whole world pay if I don’t get it.

- B. All of us are on both sides of this equation. Nobody's pure. You might be a victim, but at one time or another you've also been a perpetrator, too. Right?
- C. This is why there is only ONE resolution to needless drama, and His name is JESUS.
- D. Jesus spread out His arms, and died on a cross so He could close the books on your craziness.
- E. He died to liberate the VICTIMS of sin (that's you) and He died to forgive the PERPETRATORS of sin (that's you too).
- F. And now, He welcomes you to close the books on your needless drama. He wants to write a happy ending to that part of your story.
- G. And best of all, He wants to open a new book, and start your story over with God's grace in the middle. Jesus wants to write into your life a story of wholeness and love and peace that stretches forever.
- H. You can start over. And you can do it today.
- I. In a few minutes, I'll give you a chance and I won't single you out or embarrass you, but you can write the end of your needless drama, and open the books on a new chapter with God, right now, today. Be ready.
- J. But first I want to give you three encouragements to deal with the needless drama in your life.

#### VII. Three Encouragements

- A. Reframe your drama from God's perspective.
  - 1. Twelve spies viewed the Promised Land. They all saw exactly the same thing, right?
    - a) Ten spies said, "THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE."
    - b) Two spies said, "THIS IS TOTALLY POSSIBLE..."
  - 2. The ten or the two: who reframed the drama from God's perspective?
  - 3. So, Miss Bridezilla, what does God see when He looks down on your wedding day?
  - 4. What does God see when He sees the illness that invaded your family? What does God see?
  - 5. What does God see when He looks down on your job situation, or your busy schedule?
  - 6. What does God see when He views your married life, or your sexual life, or your financial life?
  - 7. You will ALWAYS frame your drama either from the perspective of the TEN spies, or the perspective of the TWO spies—from human viewpoint or the divine viewpoint.
    - a) *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled"* 2 Corinthians 10:4-6, NKJV.
  - 8. Every time you tell your story, you're putting a frame around it.
- B. Commit to turning around your family tree.
  - 1. Some of us were reared with a functional, healthy Christianity. Some were not. Now, I don't want to start any family feuds if you mom and dad are here so here's the deal. I want to do a little test.
  - 2. If you go back in your family tree, and if there's godliness and no divorce in the home you were raised in OR if your parents or grandparents are here and you don't want to mess with them I understand. Go ahead and raise your hand—so there is some health on the family tree.
  - 3. Now, everyone else, raise your hand because this should be most of the people whose family tree has a high level of needless drama.
  - 4. Here's what I want to say to you today: decide today that you will be the generation that turns around your family tree. Instead of passing down a curse, you'll pass down a blessing.
  - 5. We had one person just tell us that he comes from several generations of Satan worshippers. If there's craziness in your family's past, turn that around for your children. Hand them a blessing instead of a curse. Don't make them wander in the wilderness because you are an idiot (in Christian love).
  - 6. You may come from a long line of addicts, or alcoholics, or abusers, or prisoners—okay. That's your history. But it doesn't have to be your destiny.
  - 7. Jesus is ready to write a different life story, not only for you, but for your children, and your children's children.
    - a) *"The righteous man walks in his integrity; His children are blessed after him"* Proverbs 20:7, NKJV.
- C. Bring your heaviness to Jesus.
  - 1. Even as I was preparing this message, God was speaking to me. The first way He spoke was by surrounding me with needless drama. Everywhere I went; people were struggling with needless drama: Here at church, at the store and online. And God was confirming in my heart to speak on this topic.
  - 2. But another way God spoke to me was by laying this heaviness across my emotions—a kind of depression, or sadness. It just felt like heaviness. And God was saying, "Bill, don't forget this feeling. Don't forget this heaviness, it's what my children feel when they're stuck with needless drama."
  - 3. Heaviness
  - 4. Do you want to know something about that heaviness you feel from needless drama?
    - a) *Jesus came to exchange "a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness"* (Isaiah 61:3).
  - 5. He was crushed. He was pierced. He was exploited. He was despised. He was ridiculed. He was ignored. He was misrepresented. He was belittled. He was dishonored. He was disrespected. He was wounded. He was killed.
  - 6. He gets it.
  - 7. He understands what you feel.
  - 8. If a human can feel it, Jesus felt it. And He kept His heart clear with God anyway.
  - 9. When you feel that heaviness pressing in, the temptation is to pull away from God.
  - 10. Don't do that. That will create more drama.
  - 11. That couple that didn't talk to each other for three months, finished their story this way:

- a) "All to God's glory. He took two very broken, hurt people, and in His mercy began the healing process. Communication started, tears were shed, and hearts began to heal. In place of anger there was forgiveness; silence was replaced with gentle communication, harsh words replaced with love. God penetrated our hearts at the core, and began to heal wounds. Not easy, not quickly, but slowly and deliberately as only He could. Is our marriage perfect today—no way! It is an example of two people who refused to be a statistic, who battled through the hard times, and instead of running away, ran to God, and cried out for help. He did help, and we are thankful, and continue to work to glorify Him in our marriage.
- b) The above stories, are not things I am proud of, and I don't share them with any sense of me, only of who God is, and His amazing mercy on a couple of worthless sinners."
- 12 . And here you are today, and God has His arms open way wide to welcome you in. I don't know what's going on in your life today, but I do know this, God wants to draw you into Himself. And you can either resist Him, or you can let Him draw you.
- 13 . Bring your heaviness to Jesus. Bring your drama to Jesus. Bring your guilt, your shame, your failures, your disappointments, your hopes, your dreams, your strengths, to Jesus.
- 14 . Bring yourself to Jesus. Right now, it's time.

#### VIII . The Heavenly Promised Land

- A. God has a promised land for you today. And He wants to bring you in, even though it looks impossible.
- B. That Promised Land is a permanent connection with God that starts now, and lasts forever.
- C. The Bible says that the human race is alienated from God, but Jesus came to reconcile you to God. He did this through His death and resurrection. And He is the only way back to God.
- D. You will either spend your life slowly circling the drain of your own drama, or you will join the incredible story that God is telling through Jesus.
- E. Today, God wants you to be saved.
- F. He wants you to receive Jesus.
- G. He wants to start a new chapter in your life's story.
- H. And if you have never received Jesus, you can do that today. Over the last three years, we've seen almost 1,943 people make a profession of faith in Jesus. I don't say that to boast, I say that to celebrate.
- I. God wants to rewrite the ending of your story.
- J. He's beckoning you to Himself, to heaven, to the forgiveness of sins. He's beckoning you to Jesus, the only One Who can bring you to that place you want to be so deep inside your soul.
- K. Right now, I want to give you an opportunity to receive Him.