

# COME BACK TO GOD, FOR HE IS DOING SOMETHING NEW

After starting with Habakkuk 3:2 I had a sense God was saying: My people, you are to be marked out, to be known as different. See, I am stripping you back - I am bringing you back to your first love, to the One your heart desires. For I am a jealous God. I am jealous for the love, the praise, the adoration of my people. My chosen ones. My tribe. My priesthood. See what I am doing. See the prayers that I am answering. See this barren wasteland I am bringing life to. See the path in this wilderness. I split the Red Sea and they walked through on dry ground. See the dry ground. I am a God for whom nothing is impossible, for whom nothing is too far or too hard. I am about a new work, a new time. See I am coming - I will blow upon this nation. You ask me and I will do it. I am willing and able - but have you the faith? Dare you ask? Do you trust me? Trust me. Cling to me. Come back to me, your first love, my beloved people. Come back to me. Not to your traditions and feel-good fancies, but to me, your jealous & good God. Be encouraged. I am doing something new. I am renewing my deeds of old. My majesty, my power will be displayed. You are my people. Rise up. Be bold and courageous. Do not be dismayed or discouraged for I am with you. I take you by your right hand. I go ahead of you. I am with you. Declare and believe my word, my people.

## DRAW CLOSE TO HIM

God has really blessed us and is enabling us to draw closer to him through. Since beginning on this 40 day journey, God has been using things around me and experiences from each day to draw me close to Him. I'm noting them down and hope that God will draw all the things together to show Himself and His heart.

## FIX YOUR EYES ON HIM AND HE WILL SUSTAIN YOU

We went for a walk then sat down by the river and waited on God, listened and prayed. God spoke about keeping our eyes fixed on him. Psalm 105 v4-5 talks about this, about having confidence that he will speak to us, especially as we are setting aside more intentional times of seeking him through this 40 days. I can sometimes come to times with an attitude of 'see out the time' and not be expectant. There was also a word about God being like the waves, that it can feel like God is far away but, like the tide, it can be a period of waiting to feel that closeness and connection, and the waves always meet the shore, so you can be certain in the knowledge that God is there. There was also Jeremiah 17v7-8, where it talks about how if we are rooted in God, like trees on a Riverbank, we can survive months of drought. We thought this was timely as the pandemic has felt a bit drought like, but the encouragement is there that by trusting in the Lord he will sustain you and that the rain will come and things will start to grow again.

## DRAW NEAR TO HIM AND HE WILL DRAW NEAR TO YOU

I focussed on Hebrews 10:22 'let us draw near to God in full assurance of faith' and was reminded that when we draw near, he draws near to us, and with great eagerness. His name is Emmanuel, which means 'God with us'. We can be confident that taking time to approach Jesus will be met with his presence.

## PREPARE FOR BATTLE AND MOVE FORWARD IN FAITH

I asked the Lord for a Psalm and felt I should read Psalm 20. In particular I felt v5 and v8 were for us as a church (Churchcentral but also the wider Church). In relation to v5 I feel like God is saying this 40 days is a training ground for battle, a call to arms for His church. It's time for us to advance with the banner of faith - shouting and declaring triumphantly the name of the Lord. I felt God was saying as His church we had been quiet but that it was time for amplification and he wants his church to be bold and not apologetic: willing to take risks, confident and courageous. I asked God what it would look like for His church to be bold. I felt it included advancing into new spheres, making space for people - not just those who seem amenable to hearing about God but those we consider challenging, outspoken or hostile. It looks like coming to God openly with our own doubts and questions but most strongly it looks like not retreating into passivity when things are uncertain but moving forward in faith.

## FIND STRENGTH IN GOD

While praying I had a sense of God's building us in his strength, strength to move through this time of transition, in all ways: physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally. Our prayers were built from Psalm 16. We thanked God for his promises: everything we have is from Him (v2); He guides and instructs us, day & night (v7). We felt led to pray for this as we can't do any of this in our own strength. We asked God to build our confidence in Him so that when we move/talk/share/live with those we love who don't know Him, they will see Him. There was a time of repentance and God impressed on me my 'Peter' moments of omission or editing my life so as not to 'offend' my friends (Proverbs 29 v 25). We prayed for transformation to be courageous in God and with the Holy Spirit to be aware of when he wants us to be bold.

## GET BACK TO BASICS

I felt God wants to transform the view of self, going back to basics in seeing ourselves as in Christ, living for him not for self; loving others and loving God. Two very basic commands followed this: keep loving and keep trusting. There was also a sense that maybe God wants to strip things back so that we can be 'repainted' to look more like him. I was also led to draw a picture of a tree and realised that Jesus was literally crucified on something he created: His humility knows no bounds.

## GIVING UP CONTROL

'Set a fire down in my soul, that I can't and I can't control'. In this time, control is something that's very hard to give up. It makes us feel safe to have some control, and to pray for God to do something in us that is outside of our control is therefore very scary! But we are to trust Him that as he reveals more of himself, then even if we feel we aren't sure what that's going to mean for us, we should pray it with faith. More of Him is better than simply remaining in control ourselves.

# A NEW PERSPECTIVE

As I looked at the Brum skyline I saw 3 bright lights that I hadn't seen before. God spoke through them. He is bringing a new focus, a new perspective and growth to Churchcentral:

You have been through a time of shaking as a church and come back different/changed. You are ready to go further than you have been before. You are building on strong and established foundations.

- Momentum - there is a new and clear sense of direction coming and a gathering of speed
- Unity - you will value each other in new ways in terms of who you are and what you have together and you won't take each other for granted, but will have a new sense of each others' worth, how precious each member is, their giftings and place in the body of Christ
- Diversity - you will become a church that has members from more nations and ethnicities, more reflective of all the people groups that will be in Heaven.
- Propulsion - God is going to propel you into new areas within the church (in areas of worship particularly) and beyond/outside the church in new areas of ministry and you will find new ways to bless and protect, to be the voice for the voiceless and to champion the poor which will raise your reputation in this city and bring favour from secular organisations as they see how well you do it and want to help with financial support and provision.

As you come back together there will be an unsettling period. There will be some bumps in the road and it will be uncomfortable at times as you readjust. However, the elders will be united, will hear God clearly and will know what to do and when and how to do it. There is peace and protection. Be vulnerable and listen to the Holy Spirit, take risks as and when you feel led to and blessings will follow obedience. Be courageous, God says, because I am with you. Dare to believe dreams will come true because I am the God of making the impossible possible. Adventures are ahead.

I also see a rainbow over the church when it meets together again as one body. People will see this as a banner and know that they should join you. People will be drawn in but won't understand why and some won't even know who Jesus is to begin with. It will be irresistible to them. The Holy Spirit will prompt them and they will know that the church is a place of refuge and safety. This will bring much growth. There are many, many more for you in this city. What you have seen so far is a drop in the ocean compared with what is to come. You will be flagbearers in this city. Your profile as a church will be raised and you will be part of the Birmingham skyline, a prominent and key part of the city.

I also see the words passionate, vibrancy and care. A new depth in authentic pastoral care will emerge with more connectedness which has already begun in community groups. There will be a deep sense of belonging and a time of healing together from the past year and all the hurts it has raised. God will heal these wounds and you will learn how to do this effectively through the Holy Spirit in your meetings. Many tears will be shed but none will be wasted for they are shed in the Holy Spirit's presence who turns all things for our good. There is peace to be found in Jesus. Wounds are raw and vulnerable and it will be hard for a while but this is true lamenting.

God is with us and will be our strength and song. Keep kneeling in prayer, keep seeking all that God has for us and press in with all you have. God has so much more for us.