



A case for bad choices
“A case for creating”
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Courage Church, Detroit, MI
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We are going to start a new series today!

You all were probably getting a little freaked out, since we went the last three weeks without being in a series... but you can rest easy, because we are back in one today.

It will not be NEARLY as long as the last series. Compared to “Red Letter City” you would be able to call this series “a mini series”

or maybe even just “a message.”

It will probably go three weeks, which will lead us to our anniversary service which I am very excited about, and then we will start another series.

Part of the reason that is very short, is it is going to be very illustration based. Courage Church is a bible church, we teach the bible and we always will...

but we are also a community who wrestles with the scriptures together... who binds and looses things together, and who grows together so when we are able to personalize things for you, we try and do that transparently and honestly.

and you will get plenty of bible in this series as well, but you will also get a lot of real life, practical illustrations... a little more than usual.

So I am going to get right into it today, we are calling this series:

“A case for bad choices.”

and, obviously, this is a very loaded title.

It is not a case for why you SHOULD, intentionally make bad choices....

but it is a case for the fact that you are going to make them.

And when you make them, God is still going to use you.

He is still going to breathe life into whatever mess you may get yourself into.

And even beyond that... there will be times in your life, when God may put something on your heart, something that may cost you something... something that may not make that much sense to others or even you...

and this also is a case for listening to the Holy Spirit... and being willing to walk in faith through some of those moments where you know God is working, you just aren't quite sure how yet.

This whole series could also be called "a case for creating."

Because this world needs what you have. (and you do too)

and sometimes, we don't even know what we ourselves are capable until we face something in this life that we have to rise up to...

until we witness something in this world that makes go... okay... that *needs* to change. and suddenly standing on the sidelines and "saying it" just isn't enough.

sometimes, we don't even know the type of life that we are capable of creating, until we take an enormous step of faith...

and the truth is... its always comfortable to stay where you are...

to do what you know...

but there are times in our lives when it becomes clear that *if* you are going to do what you are supposed to do... comfort may no longer be an option.

Convenience may no longer be an option.

Things might get hard for a little while.

now, we are going to read a scripture, and we may read this same scripture each week, I haven't decided for sure yet, but it is one that has really made me go... ummmmmmm

I am not sure how I feel about that verse.

It is a verse that I have said many times, that I take great comfort in, yet at the same time am greatly disturbed by. So lets look at it together.

It is Peter writing, and he says this in 1 Peter 5:10 -

"after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and *establish* you."

The word Peter uses here that is translated as establish, which is the last thing on this list of what Peter says that suffering will do for you, is the Greek word *themelioō* (the melly-ah-mo) -

it means to lay the foundation or to make stable. The old King James version translates it as "settles" - It's the same word that the writer of Hebrews (1:10) uses when saying "You, Lord, *laid the foundation* of the earth in the *beginning*"

So for reasons beyond any humans capacity to understand, in the same way that God laid the foundation of the earth, our foundation seems to be built on the moments that we don't understand.

The question is, why?

Why would it be this way? Why build a foundation on suffering?

And is there any correlation between the foundation that was laid at the beginning of the earth by God... and the foundations in our lives that are established when we go through times that we just can't quite make sense of?

So we are going to explore this over the next three weeks, by looking at God, and by looking at Jesus... and by looking at the way that life just hits us between the eyes with circumstances that we don't expect...

and yet we are expected to then make something out of it.

Lets pray and then we will get into it.

I am going to share with you a secret, that everybody hears...

but not very many people actually apply.

so it is not really a secret... but the truth is, so many people look at their life in hindsight... and they can't help but compare it to other people because their life did not turn out the way that they wanted it to, or expected it to. And it causes all sorts of anger, and frustration, and bitterness when you look at someone else who maybe has the life that you thought you would have, and you don't understand why.

Here is the secret:

You life, in this world... (I am not talking about salvation. I am not talking about eternity... I am talking about how your life pans out on this earth...)

your *life* will be defined, most clearly, by moments of victories, and by moments of tragedies. By the highs, and the lows.

But you will not be defined by what happens to you, or too others that you are close to.

You will be defined by the way that you respond.

To the good. And to the bad.

You paint your life by response.

And **you waste your life if you don't respond.**

if you ignore the needs and the problems that you see, and you sit on your dreams.

You may say... well, that is a little dramatic, don't you think?

But how many times have you heard it said, "usually, later in life, you will regret the things that you don't try, much more than the times that you failed."

In the words of the great Michael Scott Wayne Gretzky - "You miss 100 percent of the shots that you don't take."

You were not created to do nothing. You were created to create.

Art... one of the most healing facets of our world, and arguably THE MOST propelling facet of our world, apart from Christ...

ultimately is nothing more than a response.

A response to how someone hurt you. A response to how much you love another person. A response to happy you are to be somewhere. A response of gratitude for the grace of God...

whatever it may be.

and even though for most of us, our lives are, most of the time, found somewhere in the middle of the peaks and the valleys, the way that we handle those extreme moments will affect how we live the normal ones.

Lets try and visualize this.

We all have these extreme moments in our lives...

and again, lets call them victories, and tragedies. Highs. Lows.

and victories are on one side, and tragedies are on the other...

you get a new job... thats a win.

you have a baby... another win.

A parent dies... tragedy.

The job lays you off... tragedy.

and now, because you are laid off, you lose the high of having the job... so not only do you face a trial, but in some ways, you lose a memory. Because that new job that you thought was going to be so good, and that you put all of your hope into, let you down.

and suddenly, the job makes you feel insecure, about the baby.

How will I feed him? How will I buy diapers?

and something good that happened to you is causing you an unhealthy amount of stress because of something else bad that happened to you.

If you put your hope in what you have accomplished, or even in what good things seem to have happened to you... then you can just easily lose your hope but everything that has been given to you can just as quickly be taken away.

so if you find your identity in it, then even your high moments will let you down.

These are the extremes. But most of our lives are lived somewhere in between these extremes. In between the peaks and the valley's.

Take for instance, the house that I bought. We knew going into it, it was going to take some work. It was going to be a fixer upper.

That was actually part of our dream, we wanted to rebuild something, we wanted to take something dead and breathe life into it. So we buy a house, and we are stoked!

but I have had builders, people who are way smarter than I am, come in and look around at my house, and even help me work on my house, and ask me this question:

So why did you buy this house?

And so now we are over here... in tragedy territory... what a huge mistake we have made! But the reality is... we already bought it. This is our lot. We own it, and now we need to make something of it.

but I have had others look over the same house... people in similar fields, and even though the whole house is a construction zone and it may seem like a pile... they have dropped their jaws at how cheap we got it for.

Not because they think it is as it should be, but because they can look at something, and see through the walls that ARE there but shouldn't be... and see through the backsplash that is NOT there, but should be.

and see that house for what it is slowly transforming into.

Now, I love my house.

we are working on this house. we are having a blast.

But at the same time we are working on this house, we are living in this house, and raising children in this house. So we have to balance all of these extremes, while living somewhere in the middle.

One day, sewage was backing up into the basement and we had to auger the sewer, and it was really gross.

another day, we hung a really cool chandelier that we found, and it was really awesome.

and it wasn't long ago, that we began tearing apart the upstairs, and when we did that, we noticed, that when it rains outside, it rains inside our house.

So we need a new roof.

and suddenly, this sends us all the way back over here... tragedy side. An extreme LOW.

The pain of trying to financially figure out how this is going to work.

Then we got our first quote for the roof... because Zach and Tim told me I was forbidden to even try and do it by myself.

and again, that quote HURT. I was living over here (tragedy)

Thinking of what body parts I could sell on the black market to cover this.

and here I am, overwhelmed by the debt I would probably have to take on just to make sure that this winter doesn't destroy my house and all that we have worked for already.

and I am living in that zone. (tragedy)

I need to get better roof quotes.

So anyway, I have a friend who owns a roofing company, but they are out of town and won't come to Detroit, so I call my friend John, the owner, just for advice.

and of course, he tells me, DO NOT GO WITH THE FIRST QUOTE. You can do better.

and he gave me some tips on what to look for, and he said he would see if anyone he knew, knew anyone in Detroit.

Now, John has a guy named Dave who works for him. And Dave handles ordering supplies for the company. So John asked Dave, "do you know

anyone in Detroit who can give a good price and do a good job on Jacob's roof?"

And so Dave then calls the guy he knows at the company he orders from, and asks THAT guy... whose name I do not know, if he knows anyone in Detroit...

and somehow from there, a guy named Cole comes into the equation.

Now, I am not really sure who Cole is, but he called someone named Matt who then called me.

and when I was on the phone with Matt, Matt said, "I hear you are having some trouble getting a good quote from a reputable company... well let me change that..."

Then he says, "Let me send Roy out. He will measure and give you a good deal, and we will get you a roof."

and before he gets off the phone, he says this:

"any friend of Cole's is a friend of mine... we will hook you up."

So then Roy comes to my house, he measures, we talk... and he gives me an *amazing* deal. It goes like this:

Roy says to me, "that's a hard roof. Lots of peaks, lots of valleys... very steep..." (just like what everyone else said to me), then he said "but the boss said to hook you up, so this is our price."

and it was a very good price.

now, Can I just say this?

I am just so glad, that somebody, somewhere, knows this Cole guy.

Because I don't know him.

From what I could tell, the sales rep didn't know him.

My friend John doesn't know him... maybe his friend Dave does?

Yet somehow he is the piece that brought the entire thing together.

and suddenly, through a dark moment that I easily could have lived in, had I accepted it as my lot... I kept pushing... and suddenly got an amazing glimpse of what the provision of God actually looks like.

and if you can't see God, in the finite stories, that weave our lives together with other people...

and in the way that he provides when we know in our own realities we have no solutions... if you can't see God in that...

then talk to Cole.

good luck finding him. Because nobody in the equation even knows who he is yet he brought it all together.

you have to have your eyes closed to not see that. Because I could never have worked that out. I don't think my friend who owns the roofing company himself would have given me as good a price as I got here.

Psalm 37:23 says this (NLT) -

"The Lord directs the steps of the godly.
He delights in every detail of their lives."

Hopefully the roof turns out good.

And this is the point of all of that.

God is writing a story, and you and I just get to be a piece of it. and the story is a lot bigger than roofs... and its bigger than houses. But so often in our lives, things happen like roofs that leak... and too often, we view our problems like they are gods and we view God like he is far away and has no interest in our lives.

So we let circumstances control us and problems define us.

See, if I live my life controlled by the low points... the tragedies... then every day in my house is going to be miserable, isn't it?

if my perspective is drawn to the low points and rather than the high points, then I am living in a dump. Its a disaster.

and if I view my life from *that* perspective... then what I am going to do is always be thinking about being somewhere *else*, rather than creating something out of this.

Creating something out of my circumstances.

But that is what we are choosing to do. We are choosing to create out of what we have, and stop waiting for something else to get handed to us.

Because when I look at the house that we bought... maybe it was a mistake... maybe. maybe not. only time, the quality of our lives that we can make there, and the way the market goes, will tell. But if it was, then I think it was one of the best mistakes that I ever made.

and I am going to breathe as much life into that place as I possibly can. We are going to make it the best house that it can be, and we are going to make it a lighthouse in a community that needs people to care about what happens in their neighborhood. In a community that needs people to restore old leaky houses, and put new roofs on them, and add creative features to them... and draw new people into the community. is not that what Isaiah 58 talks about like we said last week?

Make. the community. livable again.

I don't know about all that right and wrong stuff, I know I have done plenty wrong in my life. I know I've taken plenty of steps in the wrong direction.

but what I know above all of that, is this:

I want to make a difference in this community.

and Throughout history, God has used the mistakes of men and women... and the broken hearts of men and women, and He has used people who were willing to learn from the pains of the past, to pen the future.

And its the ones willing to do *that*, that God has used to change the world.

How many songs were written out of broken hearts?
How many inventions were created out of problems to be solved?

History is not made by the ones who sit on their butts ...

or who live in the lows, instead of digging their way out.

it is made by the ones who learn from their mistakes... who learn from others mistakes... who get up when they fall...

and who realize that in our world, there are things that have not been created yet, that need to be.

There are people who have not been reached yet, that need to be.

There are ENTIRE CULTURES and colonies of people who have not yet been reached, that need to be.

Its made by the ones who see the future for what it can be...

who can see *HOPE* in an old house...

and find life in an old burned out homeless man that everyone else has given up on...

Because that guy has a story... and I bet its a heck of a story. And to be honest, I bet if you lined his story up with your story... they wouldn't be much different most of the time. Just somewhere along the line, one person went one way... and one person went another way.

and it may have come down to one circumstance, one crossroad... one decision... and the way you responded to it.

What you created out of it.

where are the artists?

Where are the people who are willing to make something new in a place that's gotten comfortable with what it has?

Where are the people who can see something that has been torn to pieces, and can figure out a new way to put it all back together.

Yes our world is chaos right now.

No, most of it does not make much sense.

But what a better time to be alive, and to live a life on fire for Jesus Christ than this time right here and right now... In a world that needs what you have... your creativity... your compassion... your hope.

so what is it?

what breaks your heart?

and what are you doing about it?

What are you creating because of it?

Because according to the verse that we looked at, at the very beginning of the message, in the same way that the Lord laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, our foundations are established on this....

and in order to fully understand that, you have to go to the beginning.

The very first thing that is talked about in the entire bible is creativity.

In the beginning...

God created.

It is the first thing that he did. If you look at Genesis 1:2 in Hebrew, it reads that everything was *chaos*. It is the word "*tohuw*" (toe who)

So when God created, what it says he did was he created life out of chaos.

God saw chaos...

and he said "I can work with this."

I can work with this mess of existence and I can create something that will change the course of the entire universe.

The Hebrew word for "create" is the word: "*bara*" (buh ra) and it means:

"to shape or form."

it is actually where we get the word "son" from, as in someone's child...

the son was *created* by his parents...

We have been doing this class at Equip, and we have been teaching you all about how ancient Hebrew was originally written in pictures... and those pictures, ancient as they are, illustrate in amazing ways what the words mean...

and - "*bara*" (buh ra), which is Hebrew for create, is made up of three letters, bet, reysh (raish) and alef.

The letters "*reysh*" (raish) and "*alef*" together make the word "raah" which means "to see" and the word picture that we get for "*bet*" is the picture of a house, which symbolizes what is inside, and so when you read this in ancient Hebrew, the illustration you get for creating is, it is "seeing what is inside"

It is the idea that you can look at something that maybe everybody else sees and doesn't notice... but you see what is not visible. You see what could be pulled out of it.

It is like when we first walked into our house, and all the rooms felt claustrophobic, and the ceilings felt low... and we saw in our minds what it would look like to have no wall between the dining room and the kitchen, and Zach told us how much bigger it would feel, beyond that, if we took out all the drop ceilings. And now the place feels wide open.

It is like what Michelangelo said: "Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it."

But most of us don't see things like sculptors do... we walk past stones and don't even think about what's inside there.

Some people see stones.
Others see statues.

Our lives are like that block of stone. And some people, they go through every day, and all they see is routine. All they see is boring. All they see is security, and a paycheck, and savings account. All they see are the things that you can't take with you when you go.

Others look at every day, and ask the question:

What is inside?

What does today hold? What can it bring? What can I make of it?

Some look for the flaws, and others see the potential. And that is where I want to live. In a world that's moving in the direction of hope.

with eyes that see what *can be*, all the time.

And if you can view your circumstances through that lens, then you will be able to view other people through that lens as well.

But if your circumstances... whatever your current reality is... if you take the world for what it is instead of what you can make out of, you will never find what you are looking for.

and that is not the way we were created to live.

Jesus puts it this way in John 16:20-22:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, **she no longer remembers the anguish**, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you"

Now, this is a great visual. It is a somewhat graphic visual, but if you understand childbirth it makes a ton of sense, which I only do because I have been present for three of them and delivered our third baby myself at our house in Rockaway beach, myself...

It is a stupid amount of pain, through an uncontrollable situation.

I will remember the day that Fiona was born for the rest of my life... the midwife showed up that morning, checked Dawn out, dropped off a few things...

then she told Dawn and I that she was certain that the baby would come today, and then she left.

She just went home.

Which I didn't think too much of, until a few hours later, when we were calling her back in a panic saying GET HERE! GET HERE! This baby is coming!

But the truth is... when a baby is coming... it is coming.

It is not waiting on the midwife.

And so we have the midwife on speaker phone while she speeds through Brooklyn to get to us, and she is crossing the bridge into the Rockaway's when Fiona arrives and I delivered her...

Normally, in childbirth... all you want is for the baby to come as quickly as possible.

In a moment like that, all you want is for the baby to wait, just a couple more minutes.

But its coming.

and for those of us who are in Christ... who are actively working to creatively make him more visible in our lives... Joy is going to come, even when there is pain. We are going to face these trials, and these pains, but the joy will come... it has to come... but that doesn't necessarily mean we see it.

Think about what Jesus says about child birth, he says that when the child comes, the mother NO LONGER REMEMBERS the anguish. That doesn't mean that the pain is gone, its not gone. It can takes months for a woman to fully heal from a pregnancy and deliverly. Maybe longer, I don't know.

But the balance that holding her child brought to that moment, has made it so she doesn't even remember that she is in pain anymore. Because all that matters is what was created.

All that matters is the crying bundle of joy that is in her arms. And in that mothers eyes, that child does not represent the pain of what she just went through to bring it into the world... that child represents the hope for the future.

AND IF YOU THINK that your life is defined by the things that happen to you... you are wrong. What matters is what is birthed from it.

So in the way that only Jesus can, he paints this picture for us of real life pains that we go through. That we all have to face, and essentially is saying, "this is all part of the story, but just like the child who is ready to come out of her mother's womb, it can't be stopped! but it's a great story!!!"

There is going to be pain. There is even going to be death. Sorrow. Sadness. Pressure. Stress. Labor pains. But there is also going to be life, and all of that other stuff goes away the second you are holding that child in your arms. All of that goes away when you make it out on the other side and finally start to get it. The other stuff becomes distant, and the gift is more rewarding having that distant memory of what it actually took to get there.

it is just as the psalmist says, "joy comes in the morning."

But here is the deal: Joy is not happiness. Most people spend their lives pursuing happiness. and the more stuff they get, that they think will give them more happiness, but the less happiness they actually have.

Because life is not what you acquire, life is what you create.

and most people who spend their lives trying to create something for themselves find themselves empty and alone because we were not put on this earth for ourselves.

You want to know how to have real joy?

Its found in Jesus. In meeting Jesus, and in *sharing* Jesus.

The word gospel, the literal word in the greek is the word *evangelion* (*you on gelly on*)- we like to say "the good news" but the literal is actually "the joy news" - it comes from the word "messenger" and in ancient Greek, an euangelos was a person who brought a message that caused the hearer "JOY."

What are you creating that is causing joy?

Jesus says NO ONE can take your joy from you. Because even though your circumstances may change... Jesus Christ stays the same, through it all.

but the moment you forget that, you find yourself back in the same place. Trying to make your own way, controlled by your circumstances... controlled by your mistakes... controlled by the things that are out of your control.

and this may sound harsh... but it is easy to miss out on the life that you are destined to have, because you are scared...

or because you are sad.

or because you let one thing lead to another and then another, and the things that you thought would make you happy have left you bitter.

I watched a short film recently, about a man and his wife who were in a terrible car accident. The wife was killed, and the man was suddenly thrust into being a single father to their daughter.

But after what happened to his wife... he never found the strength to be much of a dad to his daughter. He brushed her off... he ignored her... he didn't spend any time with her. He lived his whole life missing his wife, and 20 years went by but still he never noticed his daughter. He didn't pour into her, he didn't teach her... he just lived his life regretting that night, regretting that they went out that day, regretting ever getting into the car, while his daughter just sort of raised herself.

They weren't close. They never talked. Every time she needed him, he was depressed, so she knew to stay away..

and on and on and on it went for her entire growing up.

At her wedding, she did not even ask him to walk her down the aisle.

and that was essentially the life that he had made of a really big mess.

He made an even bigger mess.

But then one day he met someone, who gave him the amazing opportunity to travel back in time. The man requests to go back those 20 years, in hopes of reliving that fateful day, and staying home with his wife rather than going out.

The guy says “ok,” and sends him back.

But when he gets sent back,

he looks around, and his wife is still gone. and he doesn't feel any different than he did the day he lost her.

and he realizes that the date and time he was sent back to was after the accident.

He was furious, because he wanted his wife back.

But what he was given, was his daughter back.

He was given another chance to not live his whole life looking backwards, all the while raising a disconnected daughter. He now had a chance, knowing well his mistakes, to do it all over again, this time, living for her, not for his sorrow and not for a memory of what was lost. and of course, for the man in the story, Everything was different the second time around.

How would my life look a second time around? Would I have moved my family across the entire country for some idea I had that I could make the world better? I think I probably would...

Would I have bought the house that we live in now?

I think I probably would...

but there are plenty of other things that I would probably do differently. Times when I knew better. Things I should have put a little more effort into... things I should have stepped out and tried... I am definitely more on

that side of it... I wouldn't as much change the things that I did, I would change the things that I didn't do.

but the question is:

Why not live that way now?

Because there are no time machines.

You only have one life, so make it great.

The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus Christ is both the author and the finisher of our faith. So we don't need to worry about messing all of this up, as long as we are trusting him. When he says go, GO. When he says stay, STAY.

He will finish what he started in our lives, down to the last detail. Down to the roofs that unforeseeably leak, to the storms that unforeseeably come, and shake our worlds up a little.

He will perfect what he birthed in our hearts if we keep going even when we face opposition... because its all building a foundation that he can build on.

He promises us beauty for ashes, but if we give up before we give him the chance to clean up... then we will miss it.

There is something that you are supposed to do with the things that go wrong... there IS A STORY IN IT.

there is something you are supposed to do with the things that stir you up... with the things that make you angry... with the things that make your heart break...

and when you choose to live every day responding...

then you are creating something new every day.