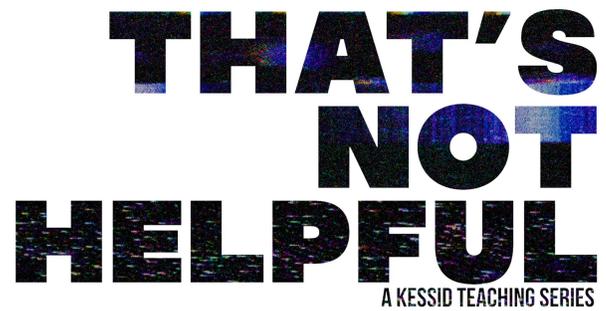


"FACING OUR SEAS"

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Speaker: Jenn Adamson



My name is Jenn Adamson, and I'm part of the teaching team here at Kessid. We are in this series called, "That's Not Helpful." It's about recognizing these clichés and statements we say as Christians to try and be helpful but, in many circumstances, it's not.

How many of you have been a victim of unhelpful commentary? After I had my first kid, I noticed anxiety rear its ugly head in my life. Maybe it had been there for some time, but it became unmanageable at this point, and, with the best of intentions, those around me, who I know love and care for me, would tell me, "Don't worry about it," or, "Don't stress about it."

And I just want to say for all of those in the room and listening online, on behalf of all of us who struggle with anxiety, if we could choose that button, if we could just turn off our worry and stress, we would choose that Every. Single. Time!

We've talked a lot about the things we say that aren't helpful, but what about the things we may not say but we post or convey through other sources? Maybe it's not about the things we verbally say sometimes, but about the things we don't say - the things we actively leave out. Similar to how and what we post on social media.

Danny spoke last week about Moses and Aaron, and how Moses really struggled with all the words in his head and he begged God to appoint Aaron to speak on his behalf. Growing up, hearing about Moses, I remember him as the man used by God to lead the Israelites out of slavery – a hero. A servant of God. I heard about how God spoke to him, and through him, and used him to write the Ten Commandants. How God used him to part the red sea and help the Israelites flee from Pharaoh and the Egyptians pursuit.

And that's what we are going to read today...

(Vs) Exodus 14:1-4 – Then the Lord spoke to Moses: "Tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you must camp in front of Baal-zephon, facing it by the sea. ³ Pharaoh will say of the Israelites: They are wandering around the land in confusion; the wilderness has boxed them in. ⁴ I will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will pursue them. Then I will receive glory by means of Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord." So the Israelites did this.

I'm going to pause here for a minute and tell you about my own "Red Sea experience" and share a little of my story.

I was born a few blocks away at Vancouver Memorial. A solid 10.4lbs of cuteness.

I grew up in the church, in fact, my grandpa served as the pastor of Calvary Full Gospel off Garrison for 36 years.

My grandma rocked out on the organ in her finest attire and my other grandparents served as Sunday School Superintendents. I grew up under the leadership of Sister Branam and Harriet Hooper, true women of the faith.

I grew up with Christmas plays, church picnics, and a solid felt-board foundation of my faith. In 4th grade, my parents thought we could be country and moved us to Yacolt for a year. But then business moved us north to what I consider my hometown of Lynden, WA. We immediately got plugged into a church and youth group began my 5th grade summer. I taught Sunday school every Sunday, and in the summer of 6th grade, I went to church camp. On the last night of camp, I went forward to the altar call (probably asking for salvation for the 500th time in my life), just making sure I was still good, and it was that night that I felt God call me into ministry. What that means and what it looked like for me is that I felt God give me this immense purpose for ministry, followed by an overwhelming passion to do it. It was clear as day for me and, in fact, it's what I pursued from that night forward. That calling changed the whole direction of my life. It changed the circle of friends I hung out with, it changed my weekend plans, it changed my summer plans... It changed how I spent my money and where I went after high school.

After HS I moved to Modesto, CA and did a youth ministry internship. About 8 months into the internship, the pastors I was serving under moved to Mill Creek, WA (outside of Seattle) to plant a church and about 30 of us youth leaders followed. We planted a church from scratch, much like Kessid, and I attended Northwest University simultaneously, double majoring in Pastoral Ministries and Biblical Studies.

After graduating, I moved back to Lynden and became a Children's Pastor at my home church while also working for my family business and coaching at my local high school.

About 2 years into that ministry, my family and business moved us back to Vancouver. I got plugged into Grace Church in Camas as a youth leader and became part of the greeting team, hoping to meet people, and landed my husband. I say landed because if you know him, you know I'm the one that married up in this scenario!

Next month marks our 10th anniversary, and 4 kids later, here I am.

And that, my friends, is 100% true! But, it's not at all helpful. It's just the highlights. It's not an accurate perspective of my journey this far. So, let's go back, let me get really vulnerable, and share the parts I left out.

I WAS born down the street, but I WAS NOT cute. I look like I ate my twin.

I did grow up in church, but that was during a time that was very black and white. It didn't leave a lot of room for grace and mercy, and it gave me nowhere to put my shame when I inevitably fell in the grey.

Note : I don't have pictures of that because like the rest of you, I never documented my defeat and my struggles.

And I did move to Modesto, but I didn't stay willingly. After moving my stuff into a 4 bedroom rambler with 1 bathroom and 10 messy girls, I showed up at my parents hotel. The night before they drove home, I pleaded, begged, and made my Oscar award-winning performance, throwing my arm to my forehead and throwing myself on their bed, telling them I had made a mistake by coming, this is NOT where God wanted me, and that they should take me home. (I'm thankful for parents who trusted in God's call on my life and left me there. To date, my time there has been one of the best experiences of my life).

I did return to Seattle and helped plant a church, specifically the youth ministry which consisted of ONE family with 3 kids, only 1 of which could be in youth group. So we had to go out and find students. I was the same age as most seniors in high school at the time and I struggled with my pride to get these kids to want to come to church. I found an avenue in coaching and that became such a great platform for me in ministry. I did attend NU, but I burnt myself out quickly by taking the most credits I could take, working multiple jobs, and living off campus.

I called my dad my senior year and told him I couldn't do it. It was too hard, and I was quitting. Again, I'm thankful for parents who believed in what God had called me to when I had forgotten - - - that or they just didn't want their "scholarly investment to go to waste!"

And when I became a children's pastor, I thought I had finally reached where I was supposed to be. But a few months in, I really didn't like it... and it was the first time I really felt out of alignment with what God had called me to do and be. When we moved back to Vancouver, I found myself starting over in my early twenties with only family as my friends and my job with Papa Murphy's as the only stable thing to hold on to... And it was hard.

Over this past decade as my titles changed to Mrs. and then to Mom, I have had many conversations and wrestling matches with God over that fact that I know that He called me that 6th grade summer... but where did I get it wrong? Why didn't ministry fit like I thought it would?

All of these Biblical giants like Moses seemed to always get it right – so why didn't it work that way for me? And then, He leads me back to the edge of my Red Sea and reminds me of my path, one that didn't fit in my box or timeline.

Escape through the Red Sea

(Vs) Exodus 14:15-21 – ¹⁵ The Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to break camp. ¹⁶ As for you, lift up your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ As for me, I am going to harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them, and I will receive glory by means of Pharaoh, all his army, and his chariots and horsemen. ¹⁸ The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I receive glory through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who was going in front of the Israelite forces, moved and went behind them. The pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and stood behind them. ²⁰ It came between the Egyptian and Israelite forces. There was cloud and darkness, it lit up the night, and neither group came near the other all night long.²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back with a powerful east wind all that night and turned the sea into dry land. So, the waters were divided, ²² and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with the waters like a wall to them on their right and their left.

The Israelites had just escaped from over 400 years of slavery and now the enemy was closing in on them. God placed them there, where what felt like being trapped by the sea for two reasons.

1. So that they wouldn't miss their path through the sea
 - I'm sure none of them thought that was their rescue plan
2. To redirect them.
 - Some of us are facing the wrong direction, some of us are facing Pharaoh's army instead of facing the sea. Some of us are supposed to turn and go back. Some of you are facing the obstacles instead of facing the Sea that God is trying to open for you. God placed the Israelites in front of the Red Sea, and in verse 2, it says...

"He had them turn back and face it."

To those that were in pursuit of them, it made them look in chaos, confused, like they didn't know what they were doing, but God had a plan and his rescue of them was through the sea, but he told them they had to turn back and face it. And church, that's where I find myself this morning.

Facing the sea: in fact, if I'm being honest, I've been here for years. We don't always have a clear yes or a clear no, but we are called to remain obedient and face it. To others on the outside, it has looked like I have failed, that I changed my mind, that I couldn't make it in ministry. But as God has turned me around to face my seas over these past 5 years, I've never been more confident in the direction He has placed me in and I'm okay with waiting.

The Israelites crossing that Red Sea not only rescued them from the Egyptians, but it brought God glory. And that's the business I want to be in. I don't just want to be rescued. I don't just want to do good in my life at something that makes sense and is deemed viable by the world. I want to cross that Sea bringing Him glory. I am trusting in Him to part it, not because of my highlight reel – not because of the things I've done, learned, and experienced. And I know that He's not contemplating NOT parting it because of the times I've doubted, struggled or my unbelief. I just trust Him to part it.

To this day, I'm still unsure with what living out my calling fully looks like, but I know that it's no longer dependent on my timeline and my boxed-in reality. After I had Tenley, I had this conversation with God (thinking that she was my last kid) that I was ready to speak again and that if a door would open, I would walk through it.

That same week, Danny asked me to speak for the first time and while I said yes without hesitation, he walked back out of my office and I immediately thought, "I'm so not ready. Not cool, God."

So, I continue to walk through, doing my best to be obedient and trying my best to not just share my highlights. Because I know there are young people in those classrooms upstairs who will eventually hear from God, and some already have, and they need to see and hear from those of us in this room about the times we fall and how we got back up. The times we've doubted, the times we've spent in the waiting and the wandering, so that when they face those same opportunities to learn and grow, they will. And so they won't feel alone or discouraged, and that Kessid, the church, and those of us in this room will be a sounding board to have those conversations, without conviction or judgment.

We will be examples of waiting and facing our seas with obedience.

Landing at Kessid is part of my story. I'm so thankful for this season of my faith that Kessid has developed inside me. It's been a place that I have loved, and disliked, and agreed with, and disagreed with, and have been utterly frustrated with. And I'm so thankful for that tension, because I've been able to take a solid look at the foundational truths I've built my life upon, and untether from the ones that should have never been there.

Danny did a series called, "Untethered" a few years ago, and I really encourage you to go back and relisten or listen to it for the first time because it really challenged my faith. It forced me to do the work needed to truly build a solid foundation and have a more open perspective that it's okay to not have all the answers. It's okay to be curious and wait in the curiosity.

It's okay that you're waiting for the seas to part, as long as you're doing the work to turn and face it.

I used to write a blog, long before I knew you could make millions from doing it. It was an outlet and an escape from Myspace and Facebook. It was called, "Not Much of a Dutch! –Just another Jesus lovin' shopaholic stuck in small town America!"

... Yes, I know.... there are no words. As I was trying to find pictures for my highlight reel at the beginning of this sermon in efforts to not have to dig in old boxes, I found this blog I wrote on May 28th of 2010 and, in efforts to not utterly embarrass myself, I have narrowed it down a bit. This was about 5 months into moving back to Vancouver.

"The Art of Self-Centered-Lessness"

28 – May : "I had this profound moment recently. Lately I've been in this place of "waiting" (I was going to write, patiently waiting, but I better not lie on my own blog).

By the way, I think our whole life, if we really thought about, is a constant stage of "waiting." Waiting to be finally old enough for school, waiting to finally be in middle school, high school, graduate, college, graduate, get married, find a job, find a better job, find a job that pays better, find a job that might not pay as well but at least makes you happy, have kids, afford a vacation, buy a house, buy your dream house, grandkids, retirement...understand?

Like I was saying... before I went off on my tangent about waiting, I've been in this place of the previously aforementioned "waiting." Mostly just waiting for God to use me in a way greater than I feel I'm being used now...if any. Just waiting for the gifts and talents and strengths and gazillions of weaknesses that I have inside me to be used for something bigger than I could do on my own. Before, I always felt like I had to finally get to a place where I fully trusted God in his timing and stopped yelling at him to conform to mine. I felt like I had to get to this place where I could honestly say with every fiber of my being that whatever God wanted to do with my life, he could...I was willing. And besides the sometimes-overwhelming thoughts of believing I had to be perfect in the spiritual sense (you know, read my Bible 80 hours a day, memorize the entire New Testament, blast "Point of Grace" music out of my car and become Mother Theresa's right-wing woman) I felt like I had finally come to terms with it all. I could and still can, honestly say, I really do trust in God's timing for anything & everything in my life and that I really am willing to do what He wants me to do.

So, here it is, my profound moment. I "humbly" brought to God's attention that I was finally trusting him and was truly willing to do whatever and go wherever; and when I was expecting something, anything really to pat me on the back for doing my part... I came to the realization that **it's not about me**. Now don't get me wrong...I've known for quite some time that it's not about me in the "worldly sense," but in the spiritual sense...better yet...in the relationship sense between me and God...even in that place, **it's not about me**.

Even though I try not to, I sometimes view God as the keeper of knowledge and plans to my life (which He is), but I think that I have to accomplish certain tasks or mature to a certain level before I can be given the next phase or chapter of my life. I guess it's easy to turn your relationship with God into something like that since that's what the world consists of – to get anything, you must give or be or do or acquire....

And so here I am, waiting, for the next chapter in my life...knowing full well that there must be more than this, there must be more I can do, there must be more people to help, money to give, time to lend, circumstances to help change. And I wait. What I thought depended on me, being spiritually ready and mature or close to perfect in my relationship with Jesus (which I've come to grips will never be) doesn't at all. **It's not about me**. Not one bit. So I finally trust him? Great! I'm finally willing? It's about time! Graduated College? How'd that happen...I mean great, good job! Saved enough money, worked hard, regularly tithe, memorized scripture, joined a Bible study... Great! **It's not about me**. Not even in the spiritual stuff. It's about Jesus. It's about the "picture" he sees for my life and the many people he's going to place in it for me to invest love, time, encouragement, etc. into. It's about his glory and not mine.

At the end of the day and at the end of my life, it's not whether I failed, but if I followed. **It's not about me**. It's humbling and a relief to know that every day when I fail at being this perfect person in my relationship with Jesus, that I struggle with believing I have to be, ...it's not about me, even then. And so, with the jumbled post and thoughts, I leave you with this – Take peace in knowing that God will use you and speak to you and love you and lead you, imperfect and unworthy as we are. The great things his plans entail for you don't depend on you, but him. Be faithful, hardworking and have integrity with where you are and who you are now. Do the best with what you have and be confident in the unconditional truth that He is more than enough for you...for me."

God did not just part the Sea that day to make Moses feel better about himself and his inadequacies. He didn't even part it that day to just rescue His people. The Bible says that He did it SO He would receive Glory and that those in pursuit of them, those up against them, would know that He is Lord. It wasn't about them; it was about Him.

The sea-splitting isn't for you, it's for Him.

It's to bring Him glory and to reveal Him to those who watch us not only crossing our seas but facing them.

I don't have a sea-splitting story for you in my life, nothing to highlight or reveal, just an honest depiction of where I've been, what God's led me out of and to, and who He's called me to be. I'm not sure when God will part this sea for me.

Moses was about 80 years old when he was leading people through the wilderness and was 120 when he died before Joshua led the people to the Promise Land. God is still in the game of using the elderly to lead nations and perform miracles. So regardless of your age this morning or the season in your life, would you take an honest reflection of where you find yourself facing this morning? Are you running in fear? Are you focused on what's up against you? Have you lost patience for God to part your sea?

Will you stand with me this morning?

I want to recognize that there are people in this room and online that have spent years running in chaos, in uncertainty, and have even counted themselves out for what God has for them because of the reels no one even knows about. God has not counted you out. In fact, this Scripture says that before the Red Sea split, the angel of God who had been leading the Israelites moved BEHIND them in order to create a barrier between what was pursuing them and where God was leading them.

If you find yourself lost this morning, with a lack of clarity or what God is doing in this world and in you, don't mistake your lack of sight as His absence. The verse before the parting of the Red Sea, vs 19, says...

(Vs) Exodus 14:19 – "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."

Can we try that today? Will you do something with me and turn around and face the back wall, as a symbol of making an active decision to turn and face your Sea?

Would you close your eyes and no longer dwell on the things that are coming up against you and focus on the sea God has before you?

What does that represent in your life? What sea are you facing? Is it a breakthrough in your marriage? Is it taking that first step in trusting God's best for your life? Is it what God has called you out of and preparing to bring you to?

As I pray over us today, will you just allow yourself to feel this awkwardness? How vulnerable this feels and allow God to speak to you? Will you let God fight for you today as you make a conscious effort to be still?

MESSAGE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

PONDER

1. What about the message did I feel...
 - Inspired about?
 - Convicted by?
 - Sadness, grief, or loss about?
 - Curious about?
 - Hopeful for?

EXPERIENCE

2. Did anyone have a "Wow!" moment during the message that resonated in you? If so, what was it? (Could be a new scripture/Bible story you've never heard, a profound concept, etc.)

LEARN

3. What new/fresh thing did I learn about God? What new/fresh thing did I learn about myself?

APPLY

3. How can I challenge myself this week with what I've learned? What might responding well look like?