

41
A NEW DAY WILL DAWN

Real Stories of God's Faithfulness

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Throughout Scripture, the number 40 is often connected to seasons of testing, waiting, wilderness, preparation, and dependence on God.

For forty days and nights, rain fell as Noah and his family waited inside the ark.

For forty years, Israel wandered through the wilderness learning to trust God.

For forty days, Goliath stood defying the armies of Israel before David stepped forward in faith.

For forty days, Elijah walked through exhaustion, fear, and isolation before hearing the gentle voice of God in the wilderness.

Again and again, Scripture reminds us that seasons of struggle are often the places where God shapes, prepares, humbles, strengthens, and restores His people, but then comes 41.

A new day. A new season. A reminder that God is still faithful after the wilderness.

The stories in this devotional are not stories of perfect people. They are stories of real people who experienced fear, grief, failure, addiction, uncertainty, loss, waiting, exhaustion, brokenness, and unanswered questions—and yet discovered that God was still present in the middle of it all.

Some stories end with breakthrough. Some end with healing. Some end with peace in the waiting but every story points to the same truth:

“What was true of God, is always true of God.”

He remains faithful. He remains present. He remains good even in the wilderness.

My prayer is that these stories encourage you wherever you may find yourself today.

Maybe you are living in your “41” right now. Or maybe you are still walking through your “40.”

Either way, do not lose hope.

God is still working. God is still leading and in Him, a new day will dawn.

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

This devotional was designed to encourage personal reflection during every season of life.

Each entry includes:

- a real 41 Story
- encouragement from the 41 sermon series
- Scripture references
- reflection prompts
- prayer
- encouragement to share hope with others

Take your time reading. Reflect honestly. Spend time in Scripture and prayer as God speaks to you through the stories shared in these pages.

You may see parts of your own story reflected in someone else's.

And if you are still walking through your "40," remember: God is still faithful there too.

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What I Was Chasing Couldn't Satisfy Me | Omar Martinez

For a long time, my life was driven by worldly desires. The people I surrounded myself with shaped the direction I was heading, and little by little I gave myself over to lust, drugs, chasing money, and constantly wanting more. No matter what I got, it was never enough. There was always another appetite to satisfy, another high to chase, another thing I thought would finally bring peace.

That was my "40."

On the outside, I looked normal to most people. But internally, I was empty. I lied to people to get what I wanted. I manipulated situations for my own benefit. Around town, I became someone people were warned about. Inside, though, I was longing for something I couldn't find. I kept searching for peace through sexual desire, drugs, and selfish living, but every path just left me emptier than before.

Eventually, all of it caught up to me. Nothing was working anymore. I wasn't progressing in life, and the loneliness I carried inside became impossible to ignore. That's when something started to shift. I remembered conversations with my cousin about Christ, and even in my disbelief, I started praying. I started seeking God, even though part of me wasn't sure what I believed. And God met me there.

The biggest change came when I realized I was a sinner who couldn't outrun or erase my past. I understood that forgiveness wasn't something I could earn—it was only possible through Christ. Once I surrendered to that truth, things began changing quickly. Habits started breaking. I stopped cursing almost immediately. Unexpected opportunities opened up, including a job that completely changed the direction of my career. But more importantly, my heart changed.

The way I viewed people changed. My relationships changed. My marriage changed. God brought peace into places that used to be filled with selfishness and chaos. Looking back now, I can see that even when I doubted Him, He was still guiding me toward redemption.

My "41" is not about becoming perfect. It's about finally finding the peace I was chasing in all the wrong places.

If you're still in your "40," don't believe the lie that the world can satisfy what your soul is craving. Those desires only grow hungrier. Real peace is found in Christ. He is the only one who truly satisfies.

From the 41 Series

There are giants in our lives that we cannot defeat on our own.

For Saul, the giant of pride became his identity. For Goliath, the giant of strength and defiance became his identity. And for many of us, giants like lust, greed, selfish ambition, addiction, control, approval, or pleasure slowly begin to take control of our hearts.

What starts small grows over time. And if we don't recognize it and surrender it to God, it will continue growing until we feel trapped beneath its weight.

That's the danger of living apart from God. We begin chasing things we believe will satisfy us, rescue us, numb us, or complete us. But the more we chase them, the emptier we become.

The enemy doesn't just want to tempt you. He wants to convince you that what stands against God should become your identity. But there is nothing and no one more powerful than God.

David understood something Saul forgot: "The Lord who rescued me... will rescue me again." Victory was never found in David's strength. Victory was found in surrender and faith in God. The same is true for us today.

The things of this world will continue demanding more while giving less in return. But Jesus offers something completely different: peace, freedom, purpose, forgiveness, and rest for the soul.

The world says, "Keep chasing." Jesus says, "Come to Me."

Sometimes our "41" begins the moment we finally realize what we've been chasing was never going to satisfy us in the first place.

Scripture Encouragement

- John 4:13–14
- Matthew 11:28–30
- Ephesians 6:10–18

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Omar's story? Why?

How have you seen yourself chasing things that could never truly satisfy you?

What "giants" may be standing in defiance of God's peace and purpose in your life right now?

What would surrendering those things to God look like for you today?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for loving me even in the seasons when I chased everything except You. Help me recognize the things I continue to look to for peace instead of looking to You. Give me courage to surrender the giants in my life that continue to pull me away from Your will. Replace my striving with peace, my emptiness with purpose, and my fear with trust in You. Thank You for being faithful to me even when I could not fully see You working.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Everyone is chasing something. As you reflect on Omar's story, consider sharing it with someone who may be searching for peace, purpose, or freedom in the wrong places.

You never know how God may use someone else's "41" story to help another person take one step closer to Him.

Fear Was Quietly Controlling My Life | Larry Davidson

For most of my life, I felt like I was always in my “40.”

I grew up going to church, but none of it ever really stuck. I didn’t believe in God, and if I’m honest, I thought it was just a waste of time. Because of that, I carried a fear with me constantly—the fear of death. The idea that life could just end and there was nothing after it unsettled me more than I wanted to admit. I avoided funerals because I couldn’t handle the thought that people I loved were just gone.

That was my “40.”

What didn’t make sense was how I lived during that time. Even though I feared death, I lived recklessly. I drank heavily almost every day. I drove drunk. I drove fast for no reason. Looking back, I was almost daring death, even while being terrified of it. There were so many moments that could have ended differently.

Things began to shift when I got married and had kids. When my son was born, something in me changed. I didn’t want him to grow up seeing his dad come home drunk or wondering why I lived the way I did. That realization pushed me to get sober.

Years later, I started to look back on my life differently. All the moments where I should have been hurt—or worse—somehow turned out okay. I couldn’t ignore it anymore. It pointed me to something bigger, to someone who had been watching over me the entire time.

In 2015, I hit another turning point. I was miserable in my job and knew I didn’t want that life anymore. Out of nowhere, I asked my wife if she wanted to move to Florida. It felt random, but it also felt right. Leaving everything behind was easier than I expected.

It took years after that for things to really come together, but eventually we found a church. And for the first time, it wasn’t just routine—it was real. Being part of that community changed me. I’m different now. I’m happier, more open, more at peace. The fear of death that followed me my whole life is gone because I have given my life to God. Looking back, I can see that even when I wasn’t looking for God, He was looking out for me. I wouldn’t be here today if He wasn’t keeping me safe.

If you’re still in your “40,” just keep going. You may not see the end of it yet, but it’s coming. Don’t give up before you find out why you’re here. We’ll all find our purpose, it’s just a matter of time.

My purpose and hope now is to make sure the rest of my family finds God.

From the 41 Series

Noah stepped into the ark without knowing exactly where the waters would take him or how long the storm would last. There was no visible destination, only trust in God.

Everything outside the ark was chaos. Inside required faith.

I think many of us know what it feels like to live that way spiritually. Fear begins to shape how we think, how we respond, and even how we see the future. Sometimes it's fear of failure. Sometimes fear of loss. Sometimes fear of death itself.

Fear has a way of quietly controlling us while convincing us we are still in control.

What's interesting is that Noah's story reminds us that obedience and fear cannot lead us in the same direction. Noah trusted God enough to step into the unknown even when he didn't fully understand it.

And over time, what felt uncertain became evidence of God's protection and faithfulness.

Often when we look back, we begin to recognize all the moments God was carrying us even when we weren't fully aware of Him. The places where we should have fallen apart. The moments that could have ended differently. The seasons where His grace quietly preserved us.

Sometimes your "41" is realizing God had been protecting and leading you long before you fully recognized His presence.

The storm eventually settles. The ark rests. The dove returns with peace.

And what once controlled you no longer has the final say.

Scripture Encouragement

- Genesis 8:1–12
- Psalm 27:1
- John 14:27

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Larry's story? Why?

What fears have quietly shaped your thoughts, choices, or view of the future?

How have you seen God protecting or guiding you even in seasons when you weren't fully aware of Him?

What would it look like for you to trust God more fully in your current season?

Prayer

Father, thank You for being present even in the seasons where fear feels overwhelming. Help me trust You more than my worries, doubts, or uncertainty.

Remind me that You are faithful in every storm and that You have not forgotten me. Give me peace where fear has taken hold and help me rest in Your presence instead of trying to control everything around me.

Thank You for protecting, leading, and carrying me even when I could not fully see it.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Fear often convinces people they are alone in what they carry. As you reflect on Larry's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God is still present, still faithful, and still leading them through the storm.

I Thought Freedom Would Fulfill Me | Lauren Carrera

I grew up in church, but it was a very strict and judgmental environment. As I got older and gained independence, I didn't run toward God—I ran away. In my teenage years and early twenties, I wanted freedom, and at first, that's exactly what it felt like. Life felt fun and carefree. I didn't think much about consequences. Drugs and alcohol gave me confidence I didn't naturally have, and I chased that feeling.

That was my "40."

On the outside, I was building a life—making money, moving out on my own—but internally, I was searching for something I couldn't name. I looked for validation in friendships and relationships, accepting love from just about anyone who offered it. In the end, I often felt worthless. No matter what I gained or experienced, it didn't last.

Things began to shift in stages. Meeting my husband was one of those moments. Our relationship had its ups and downs, but it anchored me in a new way. When I found out I was pregnant with our son, we got married, and life started to change, even though it wasn't perfect. Years later, finding out I was pregnant again—right as I was turning 40—shook everything. It wasn't part of my plan. I felt scared, overwhelmed, and alone. My husband struggled with the decision, and there were moments I didn't think our marriage would make it.

But in that place, something began to change in me. I started thinking about going back to church because I felt so alone. And then something unexpected happened—my husband opened his heart, even just a little, to exploring faith. That was a turning point.

We started attending church, and for the first time, I experienced God in a real way. Not as routine, but as presence. I began to pray again. I could feel His peace, His love, even in the middle of everything. Looking back, I know He was with me through every sleepless night, every tear, every fear.

Now, everything has changed. I'm not perfect, and I'm still growing, but my life is different. I wake up focusing on what I have, not what I lack. I choose to spend time with God, and I've found a peace I didn't know before. I don't feel alone anymore.

My "41" feels like a new beginning.

If you're still in your "40," don't lose hope. It might feel like there's no end in sight, but God is there, even when you can't see it. Take it one moment at a time, and keep talking to Him. He will meet you where you are.

From the 41 Series

Saul had everything a king could want—position, authority, recognition, success. Yet even with all of it, something inside him remained unsettled because he slowly drifted from dependence on God toward dependence on himself.

That’s the danger of false freedom.

At first, it feels exciting. It feels empowering. It feels like finally getting to live however we want without restraint or accountability. But eventually, what we thought would free us begins to control us.

The world promises peace through pleasure, approval, money, relationships, success, or escape. But those things were never designed to carry the weight of our identity.

And the longer we chase them, the more exhausted and empty we often become.

One of the most powerful moments in David’s story is that while everyone else stood terrified and overwhelmed, David remembered who God was. His confidence didn’t come from himself. It came from knowing the Lord had already been faithful before.

Sometimes God allows us to come to the end of ourselves so we can finally recognize where real peace is found.

Not in pretending. Not in striving. Not in running. But in returning to Him.

And often, the “41” moment doesn’t begin because every circumstance suddenly changes. It begins when our hearts begin turning back toward God.

That’s where peace starts to grow again.

Scripture Encouragement

- Luke 15:17–24
- John 8:31–32
- Psalm 34:8

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Lauren's story? Why?

Have there been seasons where you searched for peace, identity, or freedom in things apart from God?

What helped begin shifting your heart back toward Him?

In what areas of your life is God inviting you to trust Him more fully today?

Prayer

Lord, thank You for continuing to pursue me even in the seasons when I wandered from You. Help me recognize the things I look to for peace apart from Your presence.

Teach me that real freedom is found in walking with You, not running from You. Restore my heart where it has grown tired, fearful, or distracted, and help me trust that Your ways are always better than my own.

Thank You for welcoming me back with grace, patience, and love.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly carry the weight of disappointment, loneliness, or spiritual exhaustion while trying to appear fine on the outside. As you reflect on Lauren's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God still welcomes people back with grace and compassion.

***I Began to Believe My Life Had Purpose* | Emma Gardner**

There was a season when I felt deeply lost. It began after my Papa died. His death shook something in me, and for a long time I felt like I was drifting, trying to figure out where I belonged and even why I was here. I was young, still trying to navigate middle school, trying to find myself, and underneath it all I was carrying grief I didn't really know how to process.

I felt draining. I questioned my existence. I wrestled with whether I had a purpose. There were moments I felt like I didn't belong in this world at all.

That was my "40."

And if I'm honest, it wasn't one moment of pain. It came in layers. Losing my dog years later reopened some of that hurt, and it felt like life crumbled all over again. I struggled in school too, and there was a point when it looked like I might not even graduate on time. A lot of things felt stacked against me.

But somewhere in all of that, God was still working.

Even when I didn't fully see Him, He was carrying me. I made it through high school against the odds. And then something shifted when I stepped into church for the first time. I can't fully explain it, but I felt God's presence in a way that was real to me, and it also felt as if my Papa's memory was no longer only tied to loss, but to something deeper—something healing.

That was a turning point. I began to believe I was here for a reason.

What changed most wasn't everything around me, but what I understood about myself. I stopped seeing my life as meaningless. I began to see purpose where I once saw emptiness. God helped me heal, not all at once, but truly.

Now my "41" is knowing my existence matters.

If you're still in your "40," give it time. Healing can take longer than you want, but that doesn't mean it isn't happening. Your existence matters. Your life has purpose. Even when you can't see it yet, God has not forgotten you.

From the 41 Series

Elijah experienced incredible victories with God. He saw fire fall from heaven. He watched God provide during drought. He witnessed miracles, answered prayers, and moments of undeniable power.

Yet even after those victories, Elijah still found himself exhausted, discouraged, isolated, and questioning everything.

That part of the story matters.

Because sometimes people assume that struggling with grief, sadness, loneliness, or hopelessness means God must be absent. But Elijah's story reminds us that even faithful people can walk through very dark seasons.

After Elijah fled into the wilderness, overwhelmed and afraid, God didn't abandon him. God met him there.

Not first through the wind. Not through the earthquake. Not through the fire. But through a gentle voice.

A reminder that God was still present even when Elijah felt alone.

Grief has a way of making life feel heavy and confusing. Loss can make us question our purpose, our future, and even our value. But what was true for Elijah is still true for us today:

“What was true of God, is always true of God.”

His presence does not disappear in the wilderness.

Sometimes your “41” begins quietly. Not with everything suddenly fixed, but with the realization that your life still has meaning, purpose, and value because God has not forgotten you.

Scripture Encouragement

- 1 Kings 19:11–13
- Psalm 34:18
- Jeremiah 29:11

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Emma's story? Why?

Have you ever walked through a season where grief or discouragement made you question your purpose or worth?

How have you experienced God's presence during difficult or lonely seasons?

What reminders of hope or purpose do you need to hold onto today?

Prayer

God, thank You for staying near even in seasons where life feels confusing, painful, or heavy. When grief, loneliness, or discouragement begin to cloud my thoughts, remind me that my life still has purpose and value in You.

Help me hear Your voice above every lie, fear, or hopeless thought. Give me peace in the middle of difficult seasons and help me trust that You are still working even when healing feels slow.

Thank You for never abandoning me in the wilderness.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people silently wrestle with grief, loneliness, or questions about their purpose. As you reflect on Emma's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that their life matters and that God has not forgotten them.

Connection Replaced Isolation | Chris Lopez

My “40” started in my early teens, and it came from something I didn’t expect to affect me so deeply—losing connection with people I thought would always be there. I would build friendships, get close to people, and then suddenly they were gone. Some moved away, some went to different churches, and many just stopped keeping in contact. After being part of a church for 11 years, we left so my sister and I could be part of a youth program, and it felt like that entire community disappeared overnight.

That was my “40.”

I felt depressed, lost, and confused. I kept asking myself why people didn’t care enough to stay connected. Over time, I started pulling back—from God and from others. My thoughts turned negative, not just about myself but about everyone around me. It felt easier to isolate than to risk being hurt again.

The circle of people who no longer stayed in contact kept growing, and I started believing the lie that nobody really cared. Even though I was trying to grow in my relationship with God, it felt like I was doing it while carrying a weight I didn’t know how to let go of.

Things began to shift when I realized how much I was focusing on everything that was going wrong. I was so fixed on what I had lost that I wasn’t seeing what God was still doing. That realization changed my direction. I began choosing to focus on God instead—on my family, on the good that was still present, and on the ways He was working, even if it was quiet.

Now, my relationship with God is stronger than it has ever been. I’ve learned that no matter what I’m feeling or facing, I need to seek Him first. I still have moments where old thoughts try to come back, telling me nobody cares, but I recognize those as lies now.

My “41” is not perfect, but it’s grounded. Through church and community, I’ve grown in my faith and in who I am. I’m still learning how to trust people again, but I don’t give up. I ask God for strength, and He meets me there.

If you’re still in your “40,” don’t stop seeking God. Even when you don’t see Him working, He is. Stay in His Word, pray, and don’t isolate yourself. Let people walk with you. Don’t give up.

From the 41 Series

One of the enemy's greatest strategies is isolation.

Not always physical isolation, but emotional and spiritual isolation—the slow belief that nobody understands, nobody notices, and nobody truly cares.

Elijah experienced that in the wilderness. After everything he had seen God do, he still found himself alone, discouraged, and convinced he was the only one left struggling.

Isolation has a way of distorting perspective.

It causes us to focus only on what we've lost.

Only on who left. Only on the hurt. Only on the disappointment.

And over time, those thoughts can slowly harden into lies about our worth, identity, and belonging. But God never designed us to walk alone.

Throughout Scripture, God continually works through relationship and community. Noah had his family in the ark. David had people who stood beside him. Elijah eventually discovered he was not as alone as he believed. The same is true for us.

Sometimes healing begins when we stop focusing only on what is missing and start recognizing where God is still present and still working.

That doesn't erase the hurt.

It doesn't make loss feel insignificant.

But it reminds us that isolation does not have to become our identity.

And often our "41" begins when connection starts replacing the loneliness that once defined us.

God still meets people in the wilderness.

And many times, He does it through His people.

Scripture Encouragement

- Ecclesiastes 4:9–10
- Hebrews 10:24–25
- Psalm 68:6

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Chris' story? Why?

Have there been seasons where loneliness or disappointment caused you to withdraw from others?

How have relationships, community, or church helped strengthen your faith?

What steps could you take toward deeper connection and vulnerability with others?

Prayer

Father, thank You for caring about the loneliness and hurt I carry. When disappointment or isolation begins shaping my thoughts, remind me that I am not forgotten and not alone.

Help me stay connected to You and to the people You place around me. Give me courage to trust again, build healthy relationships, and remain open to the ways You may bring healing through community. Thank You for meeting me even in the wilderness.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly wrestle with loneliness, disappointment, or feeling disconnected from others. As you reflect on Chris' story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God still brings connection, healing, and belonging through His presence and His people.

What Broke Me, God Used to Remake Me | Kim Masson

My “40” began in deep betrayal. It was the sin of someone in my own family, and it changed the trajectory of my life through abuse. For a long time, that pain consumed me. It felt hopeless, fearful, exhausting. Anxiety became normal. Shame felt inescapable.

And what made it harder was feeling unseen.

I tried to tell the truth, and people did not believe me. I was treated like I was the problem. I felt abandoned not just by people, but by God. I even cursed Him. I told Him if this was what love looked like, then He must not be loving at all. I was trying to find God and did not know how.

That brokenness spilled into other parts of my life. I turned to things that only deepened the wounds. I became pregnant at fifteen. There was more pain, more secrecy, more struggle.

That was my “40.”

And for a long time, I thought that was the whole story.

But years later, something began to shift. Even in the middle of hardship—our house catching fire, my husband losing his job, being forced to move—I started seeing God everywhere. My eyes began to open. What I once thought was abandonment, I began to see differently.

Over years of walking with Him, healing started happening. Relationships in my family began to mend. And one of the deepest miracles of all—God taught me forgiveness. Not excusing what happened. Not calling evil good. But releasing what had bound me and allowing God to redeem what the enemy meant for harm.

What changed most was my heart.

Healing happened. Peace came. Wisdom came. I found that knowing God became more precious than anything. And what once wounded me deeply, God has used to help others who carry similar pain.

I can say now, with honesty, I am grateful for how God refined me through what tried to destroy me.

What broke me, God used to remake me.

If you are still in your “40,” hold on. Reach out. Tell someone. Do not give up. Lean into God, even if all you can do is whisper. He can bring healing where you only see ruin. He is able to turn even the darkest things toward His glory.

From the 41 Series

Aaron's story reminds us how easy it is for failure, pain, shame, or brokenness to begin defining how we see ourselves.

One moment. One wound. One betrayal. One season of darkness. And suddenly it feels like that becomes the lens through which we view everything else.

The enemy wants us trapped there.

He wants us to believe our pain is our identity. That what happened to us or what we've done, has the final say over our future.

But Aaron's story shows something different.

One moment of failure did not define the rest of his life. God's forgiveness did.

And that same truth matters for us today.

Pain changes people. Trauma leaves scars. Betrayal, abuse, abandonment, and shame can shape the way we see ourselves and others for years. But God's grace is greater than the things that tried to destroy us.

That doesn't mean the pain was good.

It doesn't mean evil suddenly becomes acceptable.

It means God is powerful enough to bring healing, redemption, and purpose even out of the darkest places.

Sometimes the very thing that broke us becomes the place where we encounter God's grace most deeply.

And sometimes the wounds we thought would silence us become the very places God uses to help others heal too.

Your pain is not beyond God's reach.

Scripture Encouragement

- Romans 8:28
- Psalm 147:3
- 2 Corinthians 12:9

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Kim's story? Why?

Have there been wounds, failures, or painful experiences that began shaping how you viewed yourself?

How have you seen God bring healing, wisdom, or growth through difficult seasons?

What would it look like for you to trust God with the parts of your story that still hurt?

Prayer

Father, thank You for meeting me even in the broken places of my life. Thank You that my wounds, failures, and pain are not beyond Your ability to heal and redeem.

Help me stop defining myself by what has happened to me or by the lies the enemy continues to speak over me. Teach me to trust that Your grace is greater and that You are still working even in places that feel unfinished.

Bring healing where there is hurt, peace where there is fear, and hope where there has been shame.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people carry painful stories they rarely speak out loud. As you reflect on Kim's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God still heals, restores, and redeems even the deepest wounds.

It Stops With Me | Ashley Miller

I didn't come into this world under easy circumstances. My story began in chaos, and for a long time, chaos felt like all I knew. I grew up around instability, absence, addiction, and pain that shaped me before I was old enough to understand it. Love often felt fragile, and safety felt uncertain. I learned early how to survive.

That was my "40"—not just one season, but years of carrying wounds, grief, and questions.

When I was sixteen, I lost someone I loved deeply to cancer, and that loss shattered something in me. I didn't just grieve her—I wrestled with God. I questioned how a loving God could allow such pain. My faith felt ripped away. And yet life kept moving. I became a mother. I carried responsibilities while still carrying wounds no one could see. There were days I felt exhausted, unseen, and stretched beyond what I thought I could endure.

But I kept getting up.

And somewhere in all of it, something began to shift. Not because life suddenly became easy, but because I began to see that survival was becoming strength. I started realizing I was becoming what I never had. A protector. A provider. A mother determined to break cycles that had shaped generations before me.

It stops with me.

That became a turning point.

My "41" is not perfection. It is healing in progress. It is learning that my past does not define my future. It is recognizing that God has been present even in the places where I once only saw pain. He has been shaping strength in me, refining perseverance in me, and showing me that pain does not get the final say.

I did not become what I came from.

By God's grace, I became something different.

If you are still in your "40," I want you to know your story is not over. What has wounded you does not have to define you. You may feel like you are only surviving, but God may be building strength in you that you cannot yet see. Keep standing. Keep going. There is hope on the other side of what feels unending.

From the 41 Series

David stood before Goliath while everyone else retreated in fear. The giant looked too powerful, too intimidating, too overwhelming to overcome. And that's often how generational pain feels.

Patterns of addiction. Abuse. Fear. Anger. Absence. Broken relationships. Cycles repeated over and over again until it feels impossible for anything to ever change.

Giants grow when nobody confronts them. And over time, people begin believing those giants are simply part of who they are or where they came from.

But David understood something important: the giant standing in front of him was not greater than the God standing with him.

Sometimes God raises someone up within a family line to finally stand against what has held generations captive.

Not perfectly. Not without struggle. Not without scars. But with courage, surrender, and faith that God can write a different story.

Breaking cycles is exhausting work. It requires perseverance, humility, forgiveness, and daily dependence on God. But what once looked impossible becomes possible when we stop fighting in our own strength and begin trusting Him.

Your past may explain some of your wounds, but it does not have to determine your future.

Through Jesus, generational brokenness does not have to continue having the final say.

Scripture Encouragement

- 1 Samuel 17:45–47
- Romans 12:2
- 2 Corinthians 5:17

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Ashley's story? Why?

Have there been unhealthy patterns, fears, or struggles passed down through your family or environment?

What does "It stops with me" look like in your own life right now?

How can you rely more on God's strength instead of your own as you pursue healing and change?

Prayer

God, thank You that my past does not define my future. Thank You that through Jesus, healing, freedom, and transformation are possible.

Give me courage to confront unhealthy patterns and surrender them to You. Help me stop living in fear, shame, or hopelessness, and remind me that You are greater than the things that have tried to hold me captive.

Strengthen me to walk in wisdom, perseverance, and faith as You continue shaping a new story in my life.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly believe they are destined to repeat the pain or brokenness they came from. As you reflect on Ashley's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God can break cycles and begin something new.

Healing Began When I Finally Believed I Had Worth | Amanda Rowley

I was born into a cycle I didn't choose. Mental illness, abuse, fear—it had been passed down for generations, and it became part of my life too. I grew up not really understanding what love was. I was always on edge, always wondering what might happen next. I was afraid of truth, afraid of myself, afraid of repeating what had been done to me. That was my "40."

For seventeen years, I was in a relationship where I felt like I didn't exist. He was much older, emotionally abusive, and my life revolved around him, his family, and my son. I didn't value myself. I didn't think I had worth. I was just surviving, trying to keep everything together while feeling like I was falling apart inside.

There came a point where I could see my mental stability slipping. I felt like I was breaking. Part of me believed no one would even notice if I was gone. But then there was another part of me that knew my son needed me. And in that moment, something shifted. I chose to break the chains.

I didn't fully understand it at the time, but God had been protecting me all along. As I began to step out of that life, I started learning what it meant to love myself—not in my own strength, but through Him. Philippians 4:6–7 became something I held onto, a reminder to release fear and hold onto His peace. What changed was everything.

I found freedom. I began to understand what real love looks like. I stopped a cycle that had been going on for generations, and now my son is growing up knowing he is safe and loved. God brought someone into my life who has walked beside me, helping me learn and grow in ways I never thought possible.

Now, my "41" is marked by peace and healing. I know who I am. I know my identity is rooted in Him, not in what I've been through. Looking back, I can see that season wasn't the end of me—it was where courage started to grow.

If you're still in your "40," I won't tell you it's easy. But you don't have to do it alone. Press into God. Reach out to people. There is a way forward, even if you can't see it yet.

From the 41 Series

For forty days, the Israelites stood frozen in fear before Goliath. Day after day, the giant's voice filled the valley, intimidating and discouraging everyone who heard it.

That's what fear and brokenness often do in our lives too.

They repeat lies long enough that eventually we start believing them:

You're worthless.

You'll never change.

This is all your life will ever be.

You are too broken to heal.

And when someone grows up surrounded by fear, abuse, instability, or emotional pain, those lies can begin shaping identity from a very young age.

But David's story reminds us that giants only appear larger when we forget who God is.

The enemy wants fear to keep people trapped.

God calls people into freedom, healing, and restoration.

That freedom often begins with truth.

Truth that you were created with value.

Truth that your wounds do not define you.

Truth that God sees you, knows you, and loves you deeply even in the middle of brokenness.

Sometimes God uses painful seasons to expose the cycles, fears, and unhealthy patterns that have controlled us for years—not to shame us, but to rescue us from them.

And often our "41" begins when we finally realize we do not have to become what wounded us.

Through Christ, generational brokenness can stop.

Healing can begin. And a different story can be written.

Scripture Encouragement

- Isaiah 43:1–2
- Psalm 34:18
- 2 Corinthians 5:17

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Amanda's story? Why?

Have there been lies, fears, or painful experiences that shaped how you viewed yourself?

How has God begun bringing healing, strength, or truth into your life?

What unhealthy cycles or patterns do you hope stop with you?

Prayer

Father, thank You for seeing me fully and loving me completely, even in the middle of my wounds and struggles. Help me stop believing the lies that fear, pain, or brokenness have spoken over my life.

Remind me that my identity is found in You, not in what happened to me or what others said about me. Bring healing where there has been hurt, truth where there have been lies, and peace where fear has taken hold.

Thank You for being the God who restores, renews, and makes all things new.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly carry wounds from fear, abuse, rejection, or broken relationships. As you reflect on Amanda's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that healing is possible and that God can write a different story than the one pain tried to create.

When the Lies Lost Their Power | Anonymous

For most of my life, my mind was not a safe place to be. For forty years, the voice in my head was filled with hate and self-deprecation. It was constant. It shaped how I saw myself, and it spilled into how I treated the people around me. I carried it everywhere, and it wore me down over time.

That was my “40.”

It wasn’t loud on the outside, but internally it was exhausting. It felt like being trapped in something I couldn’t escape. And eventually, in my forty-first year, it all led me to a breaking point. I reached the lowest place I had ever been, and I attempted to take my own life.

But that night, something happened.

I was interrupted. Stopped. And in that moment, everything shifted.

For the first time, I saw the lies for what they were—lies. It felt like scales were falling off my eyes and ears. The voices that had defined me for decades suddenly lost their power. In their place, I experienced something I had never truly known before: His love. It felt like the weight of forty years lifted in an instant.

At my absolute lowest, God stripped everything away that wasn’t from Him. What was left was just me and Him.

That moment changed everything.

I felt exposed, vulnerable, like the shell I had been hiding behind was gone. But at the same time, I felt peace. Real peace. I felt safe, like I was finally in His hands.

From there, God began to rebuild my life. My wife and I were able to address years of hurt and start fresh. As I leaned into Him—through His presence, His peace, His guidance—He continued to wash over me and renew my mind.

Now, my “41” looks like a quiet mind, free from the lies that once controlled me. I see myself differently. I know who I am in Him. I truly feel like a new creation.

Looking back, those forty years were long and hard, but God didn’t waste them. He used them to bring me to a place where I could finally see the truth.

If you’re still in your “40,” don’t make decisions in your lowest moments. You’re not alone, even if it feels like it. The thoughts you’re hearing don’t get the final say.

Your life matters more than you know.

From the 41 Series

Elijah reached a moment where the exhaustion, fear, and isolation became so overwhelming that he prayed for God to take his life.

That's an important reminder for us because sometimes people assume that struggling mentally or emotionally means someone lacks faith. But Scripture shows us that even deeply faithful people can walk through incredibly dark seasons.

The enemy often works through lies.

Lies about our worth.

Lies about our identity.

Lies that tell us we are trapped, hopeless, unwanted, forgotten, or beyond healing.

And when those lies repeat long enough, they begin shaping how we see ourselves and the world around us.

But what was true for Elijah is still true for us today: God does not abandon people in the wilderness.

When Elijah felt empty and ready to give up, God met him with provision, presence, and a reminder that his story was not over.

Sometimes our "40" becomes so heavy that we cannot imagine things ever changing. But God has a way of exposing the lies we've lived under for years and replacing them with truth.

Truth about who He is.

Truth about who we are.

Truth about His love, grace, and presence.

The enemy wants despair to have the final word.

Jesus speaks life instead.

And sometimes "41" begins the moment we realize the lies no longer hold the same power they once did.

Scripture Encouragement

- 1 Kings 19:4–8
- John 8:31–32
- Romans 8:38–39

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in this story? Why?

Have there been lies, fears, or thoughts that have shaped how you view yourself or your future?

What truths from God's Word do you need to hold onto in this season?

Who are safe people in your life you can talk to when you feel overwhelmed or isolated?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for staying near even in the darkest seasons of life. When my thoughts feel overwhelming or hopeless, remind me that Your truth is greater than every lie.

Help me recognize the ways fear, shame, or despair try to shape my identity, and replace those things with the peace and truth found in You. Give me courage to reach out for help, to stay connected to others, and to trust that my story is not over.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly battle hopelessness, fear, or painful thoughts while feeling completely alone. As you reflect on this story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that their life matters and that God's truth is stronger than the lies they are hearing.

Peace Where There Had Only Been Chaos | Anonymous

For years, it felt like we were living in constant motion and never arriving anywhere. Jobs changed. We moved from place to place. We had children quickly and were trying to raise a young family while both working full time, exhausted, and unsettled. Life felt chaotic all the time. My mind never seemed to rest. My marriage felt like it was living in fight or flight mode, and there were moments we honestly didn't know if we were going to make it.

I felt lonely, spiritually dry, and at times almost numb. We never stayed anywhere long enough to build deep relationships or find a church home. I felt lost as a wife and mother, and there were days I questioned my identity and whether I was doing any of it well.

That was my "40."

The turning point came when the Lord led us toward freedom in a way I wasn't expecting. We began pursuing spiritual healing, and something started shifting internally, even before our circumstances fully changed. We realized we couldn't control every move, every job, or every unknown, but we could surrender what was happening inside us to God.

And He began to move.

As we stayed in the Word, in prayer, and centered our home around the Lord, doors started opening. My husband received a new job that brought us to Florida. I was able to become a stay-at-home mom. We had a season of rest. For the first time in years, peace didn't feel impossible.

What I thought was instability, God was using to form us.

Now we feel settled. We have a church home. We're present with one another. We're building friendships. Our home is marked more by peace than chaos. And I can see now that God was not absent in the wilderness—He was growing us there.

If you're still in your "40," hold on. The hard season may be doing deeper work in you than you can see right now. God can bring peace where there has been chaos, healing where there has been exhaustion, and settlement where there has only been striving. He carried us through, and He will carry you too.

From the 41 Series

Noah stepped into the ark without knowing how long the storm would last or where the waters would carry him. There was no map. No timeline. No visible destination. Only trust that God was still leading even when life felt unstable.

I think many of us know what it feels like to live in that kind of chaos.

Seasons where everything feels unsettled.

Where relationships feel strained.

Where exhaustion becomes normal.

Where we're constantly reacting instead of resting.

And over time, chaos can quietly shape the atmosphere of our hearts, our homes, and even our relationships.

But Noah's story reminds us that what feels like drifting is not always abandonment.

Sometimes God is still carrying us even when we cannot clearly see where He is leading.

The ark was not punishment. It was preservation.

And often, God does some of His deepest work in the middle of uncertain seasons. He slows us down. He exposes unhealthy patterns. He teaches us dependence. He reminds us that peace is not found in controlling every circumstance, but in remaining close to Him while the storm continues around us.

Eventually, the waters receded. The ark rested. Peace returned.

Not because Noah controlled the storm, but because God remained faithful through it.

Sometimes your "41" begins when peace starts replacing the chaos that once defined your life.

Scripture Encouragement

- Genesis 8:1–4
- Philippians 4:6–7
- Isaiah 26:3

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in this story? Why?

Have there been seasons where life felt chaotic, exhausting, or emotionally overwhelming?

How have you seen God bringing peace, stability, or healing into difficult situations?

What would it look like for you to trust God more deeply in the middle of uncertainty?

Prayer

Father, thank You for remaining faithful even in seasons that feel chaotic or overwhelming. When life feels uncertain and exhausting, help me remember that You are still present and still leading me.

Teach me to rest in Your peace instead of trying to control everything around me. Bring healing where there has been strain, calm where there has been anxiety, and trust where fear has taken hold.

Thank You for carrying me even when I cannot fully see where You are leading.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly carry exhaustion, instability, or tension within their homes and relationships. As you reflect on this story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God can bring peace where there has only been chaos.

God Was Still Working in the Wilderness | Brent Wernsing

There was a season when it felt like everything I had poured my life into was unraveling. We had seen blessing, momentum, growth—God was moving. Then COVID hit, and it felt like all the work of those early years had been swept away overnight. We couldn't gather. We didn't know if we'd have a place to meet. People drifted. The future felt uncertain. And if I'm honest, I wasn't just carrying ministry questions—I was carrying personal ones too. How do I provide for my family? Do I keep going? Do I give up?

For a couple of months, I remember lying awake night after night, wrestling with questions I couldn't answer. I felt purposeless, directionless, even hopeless at times. It was the first time I had walked through a season of depression, and I didn't know what to do with that.

But somewhere in that wilderness, things began to shift.

A local business opened their doors to us. People stayed engaged. Support came from places I didn't expect—people in our church, other pastors, voices reminding me that God's calling hadn't changed. What changed was the path. The how, the where, the when, even the who—but not the calling.

And slowly, what felt like loss started looking like rebuilding.

The passion returned. The zeal returned. We relaunched, replanted, and in many ways started stronger than before. God didn't just restore what we had—He refined it. He strengthened the foundation. He revealed weaknesses we needed to address. He sifted, shaped, and prepared us.

Now I can see my "40" wasn't God abandoning me. It was God preparing us.

Sometimes what feels like everything falling apart is God laying a stronger foundation.

And maybe the greatest gift in that season was this: I gained empathy. I now understand pain I had never personally carried before.

If you're still in your "40," don't assume God is absent because things feel uncertain. He may be working behind the scenes, setting you up for what's next. Don't let doubt or despair make you lose sight of His calling.

Your wilderness may be preparation, not punishment.

A new day will dawn.

From the 41 Series

Elijah experienced an incredible victory on Mount Carmel. Fire fell from heaven. The prophets of Baal were defeated. Rain finally returned after years of drought.

It looked like the breakthrough moment had arrived.

And yet shortly afterward, Elijah found himself afraid, exhausted, isolated, and overwhelmed again.

That part of Elijah's story matters because sometimes we assume that if God moves powerfully in one season, we'll never struggle again afterward. But life often doesn't work that way.

Sometimes one "41" leads into another "40." Victory may be followed by exhaustion. Breakthrough may be followed by rebuilding. Clarity may be followed by uncertainty. And in those moments, it can feel confusing. Especially when we thought things were finally settling down.

But Elijah's story reminds us that God's presence does not disappear just because the season changes.

God was still working in the drought. Still working in the isolation. Still working in the cave. Still working in Elijah's exhaustion and discouragement.

Sometimes what feels like everything falling apart is actually God refining, strengthening, and preparing us for what's next.

"What was true of God, is always true of God."

His presence remains steady even when our emotions, circumstances, and understanding fluctuate.

And often, one of the greatest things God produces in the wilderness is empathy—the ability to help carry others because we now understand pain we once could not fully see.

Sometimes your "41" is realizing God never abandoned you in the wilderness at all.

Scripture Encouragement

- 1 Kings 19:11–18
- Romans 8:28
- James 1:2–4

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in this story? Why?

Have you experienced a season where it felt like one difficult wilderness led directly into another?

How have you seen God refining, strengthening, or preparing you through difficult seasons?

What lessons or empathy has God developed in you through your own struggles?

Prayer

God, thank You for remaining faithful even in seasons where life feels uncertain, exhausting, or discouraging. Help me remember that Your presence has not left me simply because the wilderness has lasted longer than I expected.

Give me strength to keep trusting You when I cannot clearly see what You are doing. Use every season of struggle, waiting, or refinement to shape my heart more into Your likeness and prepare me for what You have ahead.

Thank You for never abandoning me in the process.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly wonder if God has forgotten them in difficult seasons. As you reflect on this story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God is still present and still working, even in the wilderness.

What Felt Like Loss Became Part of a Greater Story | Christine Wernsing

There was a season when I thought the story of growing our family would look one way, and God kept saying no—or at least, not yet. After our first daughter, we were unable to conceive more children, and that grief could have left me feeling defeated. But instead, it drove me to seek the Lord. I believed He had placed the desire for more children in my heart for a reason, even if the path was not what I expected.

That was my “40”—learning to trust God when doors seemed closed, while holding onto the belief that He was still leading.

As I prayed and sought Him, I began to sense He was growing our family in a different way. Little by little, God started confirming His direction—through quiet time in His Word, through worship, through people He placed in my life, even through specific moments and opportunities I could not have orchestrated myself. I watched Him provide for adoptions, lead us into foster care, and bring children into our family in ways that felt undeniably guided by His hand. And then, in ways I never expected, He even provided biological children too.

What I thought was loss became part of a much greater story.

What changed wasn't just our family size. My heart changed. My faith deepened. I began to understand that what I once saw as infertility, God was using for impact—for children in need, for families, for His kingdom, and for His glory.

Now I look around at our family and I am overwhelmed. I cannot imagine life without any one of these children. What I once grieved became one of the clearest places I have seen God's faithfulness.

God was writing a greater story than the one I was trying to write for myself.

If you are still in your “40,” keep following His leading. Even when you cannot see what He is doing, He is working. Stay close to Him. Trust Him through the closed doors as much as the open ones. What He has planned may be different than what you imagined—but it may be far better too.

From the 41 Series

Noah entered the ark believing God was preserving life, but he could not fully see everything God was preparing on the other side of the flood.

That's often how waiting seasons feel.

We pray. We hope. We ask God to open doors. And when those doors remain closed, it can feel confusing, painful, and deeply personal. Especially when the desire itself seems good. But one of the hardest truths we learn in the wilderness is that God's "not yet" is not the same as God's absence.

Sometimes God is leading us toward something different than what we originally imagined. Not because He is withholding good from us, but because He sees a greater story than we can currently understand.

That's what makes trust so difficult.

We often want clarity before obedience but God frequently asks us to follow Him before we can fully see where He is leading. And over time, we begin to realize that the closed doors, delays, and unexpected paths were not random interruptions. They became part of how God shaped our hearts, deepened our faith, and expanded our understanding of His purpose.

"What felt like isolation was actually protection."

Sometimes what feels like loss becomes the very thing God uses to open our lives toward people, opportunities, and purposes we never would have discovered otherwise.

And often our "41" is not God restoring the exact story we originally planned, but revealing that His story was greater all along.

Scripture Encouragement

- Proverbs 3:5–6
- Isaiah 55:8–9
- Romans 8:28

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Christine's story? Why?

Have you experienced seasons where God's answer felt like "no" or "not yet"?

How have unexpected changes or closed doors shaped your faith or perspective over time?

What areas of your life is God asking you to trust Him with right now?

Prayer

Father, thank You for remaining faithful even when I cannot fully understand what You are doing. Help me trust You in seasons of waiting, disappointment, or uncertainty.

When doors close or plans change, remind me that Your ways are higher than mine and that You are still leading me with wisdom and love. Teach me to follow You with faith even when I cannot yet see the full picture.

Thank You for writing a greater story than the one I could have written for myself.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly wrestle with disappointment, waiting, or unexpected changes in life. As you reflect on Christine's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God is still working even when the path looks different than expected.

***Beauty From Ashes* | Stephanie Hinckley**

There was a long season when it felt like every prayer we prayed for our family was met with silence. What began as hope for more children became years of infertility, treatments, failed IVF attempts, and heartbreaking loss. We lost multiple children, including our daughter later in pregnancy, and there were moments when the grief felt unbearable.

That was my “40.”

It was lonely. It felt like everyone around us was receiving the very thing we were pleading for, while we were left asking why. There was fear, anger, confusion, and seasons where I wondered if God was even there. But even in the pain, He kept leaving reminders He had not forgotten us—through people, through quiet moments, through small glimpses of hope that kept me holding on.

The turning point came when we began to sense the path we were pursuing might not be the path God had for us. After failed IVF treatments and after losing our daughter, there was a peace I can only describe as God’s presence in the middle of grief. Around that time, through friends who had walked similar roads, God began opening our hearts to fostering and adoption.

What I thought was the end of a dream was actually the beginning of a different one.

That changed everything.

At my lowest point, when I was questioning God and exhausted by pain, He began teaching me to look back and see how He had been carrying us all along. Slowly my heart shifted from asking why, to trusting that God was writing a bigger story.

And now I can see it.

Our “41” looks like two beautiful children God brought into our family through fostering and adoption. They are not a substitute for what we lost. They are part of the promise God was preparing us for. They are living proof that God brings beauty from ashes.

What once felt like our deepest pain has become part of how God now uses our story to encourage others.

If you are still in your “40,” don’t assume silence means absence. God may be doing His deepest work in the valley. Hold on. Be obedient. Let others walk with you. He is faithful, even when you cannot yet see where He is leading.

From the 41 Series

Elijah prayed for rain after years of drought, and even after God promised it would come, the answer did not appear immediately.

Seven times his servant looked toward the sea.
Seven times there seemed to be nothing.

But eventually, a small cloud appeared on the horizon.

I think seasons of grief and unanswered prayer often feel like that. We keep praying. Keep hoping. Keep asking God to move. And sometimes the silence feels overwhelming.

Loss has a way of testing our faith deeply because it forces us to wrestle with questions we cannot fully answer:

Why would God allow this?

Why does the pain continue?

Why does the waiting feel so long?

And yet throughout Elijah's story, one truth remains constant:
God was still present even when the drought had not yet ended.

Sometimes God's work is happening quietly before we can fully recognize it.

Not every prayer is answered in the way we imagined. Not every story unfolds according to our plans. But God is still faithful in the valley.

Over time, Elijah learned that God's voice and presence mattered more than his ability to understand every circumstance around him.

And often, our "41" begins when we slowly realize that God has been carrying us through the grief the entire time.

Sometimes the very places that once held the deepest sorrow become the places where we later recognize God's faithfulness most clearly.

God still brings beauty from ashes.

Scripture Encouragement

- 1 Kings 18:41–45
- Isaiah 61:1–3
- Psalm 30:5

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Steph's story? Why?

Have there been seasons where unanswered prayers or loss tested your faith?

How have you experienced God's presence during grief or disappointment?

What areas of your life require continued trust and surrender right now?

Prayer

Lord, thank You for remaining faithful even in seasons of grief, waiting, and unanswered questions. When life feels heavy and difficult to understand, help me continue trusting that You are still present and still working.

Give me strength to keep hoping when the answers feel delayed and peace to rest in Your presence even when the future feels uncertain. Remind me that You are able to bring beauty, healing, and purpose even from painful seasons.

Thank You for carrying me through the valley. In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people silently carry grief, disappointment, or unanswered prayers. As you reflect on Steph's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God is still faithful in the waiting and still present in the valley.

God Was Writing a Different Story | Robbie Hinckley

There was a season in our lives where we were walking through infertility and miscarriage, and it was completely outside of our control. We were praying, believing, and hoping for something good, and yet it kept ending in loss. It didn't make sense. It felt like grief layered on top of confusion, with disappointment that just kept coming back.

That was our "40."

On the outside, we kept moving forward the best we could. But internally, it was a constant battle, trying to hold onto trust in God while also carrying deep hurt. There were moments of isolation, questions we didn't have answers to, and a quiet tension between what we believed and what we were experiencing. We didn't understand why God would allow something like this, especially when our desire was something good.

There wasn't one single turning point where everything suddenly changed. It was more of a slow shift over time. Choosing, again and again, to keep trusting God even when we didn't understand. A significant step in that shift came when we stepped into fostering. It wasn't the plan we had originally imagined, but it was the door that God placed in front of us.

That decision changed everything.

God met us in that season mostly through people. He surrounded us with the right voices, the right support, at the right time. And slowly, our perspective began to change. We stopped only focusing on what we had lost and started to see how God might still use our story. Our hearts opened, not just to fostering, but to others who were walking through similar pain.

Now, our "41" looks like our family. Through fostering, God brought two children into our lives, and we were able to adopt them. It's not the story we would have written, but it's better than we could have imagined.

Looking back, I can see that God was working the entire time, even when it felt like He was silent.

If you're still in your "40," it's okay to wrestle with the questions. But don't lose sight of this, God is still working, even when you can't see it yet.

From the 41 Series

Aaron spent years living in the shadow of expectations, plans, and assumptions about how life would unfold. And then one failure, one unexpected moment, threatened to redefine everything.

But God's grace kept writing the story.

I think one of the hardest things for us to accept is that sometimes the story God is writing looks very different than the story we planned for ourselves.

We often imagine how life should go.

What prayers should look like when answered.

What blessings should arrive like.

What healing should feel like.

And when reality looks different, disappointment can quietly turn into confusion, grief, or frustration with God.

But throughout Scripture, God repeatedly works through unexpected paths.

Noah's ark looked strange before salvation came.

David looked unqualified before victory came.

Elijah felt alone before God revealed He was still working.

Again and again, God moves in ways people do not expect.

That doesn't make the grief less painful.

It doesn't erase loss.

But it reminds us that God's silence is not abandonment and His plans are often bigger than our immediate understanding.

Sometimes the "41" moment is not getting the exact outcome we originally wanted.

Sometimes it is realizing God was faithfully leading us toward something we never would have chosen on our own, but later could not imagine life without.

God's grace has a way of turning painful detours into meaningful purpose.

Scripture Encouragement

- Romans 8:28
- Proverbs 16:9
- Isaiah 43:18–19

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Robbie's story? Why?

Have there been moments where life unfolded differently than you expected or planned?

How have you seen God working through unexpected paths or painful detours?

What areas of disappointment or uncertainty do you need to surrender to God today?

Prayer

Father, thank You for remaining faithful even when life unfolds differently than I expected. Help me trust that Your plans are greater than my own understanding and that You are still working even in seasons of disappointment or uncertainty.

Give me peace when the path feels unfamiliar and help me remain open to the ways You may be leading me toward something greater than I can currently see.

Thank You for continuing to write my story with grace, wisdom, and purpose.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly struggle with disappointment when life does not unfold the way they hoped. As you reflect on Robbie's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God is still faithful even when the path looks different than expected.

Peace in the Waiting | Teri McKay

My “40” has been the pain of watching my son choose a path I know is not God’s plan, and if I’m honest, I am still walking through it. This story isn’t one where everything has resolved neatly. It is a story of waiting, pleading, and learning to trust God in the middle of unanswered prayer.

There have been days filled with anger, and others filled with deep sorrow. At times it has felt like grieving someone I haven’t physically lost, but whose presence in our family has been deeply altered. I have wrestled with thoughts I know are not from God, thoughts that tell me to lose hope, that maybe God has given up on him. Even when I know that isn’t true, the battle in my mind can be real.

That has been my “40.”

But something began to shift when I realized I had a choice. I could stay in self-pity, blame, and shame, or I could keep living and trust God to do what only God can do.

I chose to place my son in God’s hands.

And in that surrender, I began to see God’s faithfulness in ways I might have missed before. He sent people to listen, pray, and carry this burden with me. He strengthened my faith. He deepened my relationship with my daughter as we grieved together. He even used this pain to help me give more of myself to others, especially the children I teach.

What changed most was me.

The circumstance has not fully changed, but my heart has. I have peace, even while I still struggle. I have learned that control was never mine to carry.

Sometimes “41” is not the absence of pain, but the presence of peace in the middle of it.

I think I am living a perpetual “41”—still waiting, but waiting with hope.

If you are still in your “40,” keep believing, keep praying, keep obeying, and keep living. Don’t let your season stop your life. Stay in the Word. Stay close to God’s people. Turn over what you cannot control. God is still working, even in the waiting.

From the 41 Series

One of the most powerful moments in Elijah's story happens after the victory. After the fire. After the answered prayer. After the rain finally comes. Elijah still finds himself exhausted, discouraged, and struggling emotionally in the wilderness.

That part of the story matters because it reminds us that faithfulness does not always remove pain immediately.

Sometimes we assume that if we pray enough, trust enough, or obey enough, every difficult situation should resolve quickly. But many seasons of life simply do not work that way.

Some prayers take longer. Some burdens remain heavier than we expected. Some wilderness seasons continue longer than we hoped. And yet God's presence remains steady through all of it.

When Elijah sat overwhelmed beneath the broom tree, God did not shame him for struggling. God met him there. He provided for him. Strengthened him. Spoke to him. Reminded him he was not alone.

Sometimes "41" is not the complete removal of pain. Sometimes it is learning to experience God's peace while the struggle continues.

That kind of peace only comes through surrender.

Surrendering what we cannot control.

Surrendering people we cannot fix.

Surrendering outcomes we cannot force.

And trusting that God is still working even when we cannot yet see the full outcome.

"What was true of God, is always true of God."

His faithfulness remains steady in both the breakthrough and the waiting.

Scripture Encouragement

- 1 Kings 19:4–8
- Philippians 4:6–7
- Isaiah 40:31

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Teri's story? Why?

Are there situations, people, or prayers you have struggled to surrender fully to God?

How have you experienced God's peace even in seasons where circumstances remained difficult?

What would trusting God in the waiting look like for you today?

Prayer

Father, thank You for remaining near even in seasons where prayers feel unanswered and burdens feel heavy. Help me trust You with the things I cannot control and remind me that Your faithfulness does not disappear in the waiting.

Give me peace where anxiety, grief, or discouragement try to take hold. Strengthen my faith to continue praying, hoping, and trusting You even when the outcome is still uncertain.

Thank You for carrying me through every season.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly carry ongoing pain, unanswered prayers, or difficult family situations. As you reflect on Teri's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God's peace is still available even in the middle of waiting.

God Used the Hard Season to Shape Me | Andy Renfro

My “40” started about a year and a half into working in Child Welfare Case Management in Florida. I went into the job wanting to help families and children, but over time the weight of it all began to wear me down. The stress became constant, and eventually I started having panic attacks. I felt trapped, alone, and like I had no other options.

That was my “40.”

Every day felt like conflict. Parents were upset. Foster parents were upset. GALs were upset. No matter what decision was made, someone felt wronged. At one point, foster parents who claimed to be Christians, along with a GAL, tried to get me fired by spreading lies about me. One even falsely accused me of having an inappropriate relationship with another foster parent. Thankfully, I had built a strong reputation, and the people around me didn’t believe it, but it still took a toll on me mentally and emotionally.

I kept praying through that season, but honestly, it often felt like my prayers were unanswered. I even went to my pastor a few times asking for prayer because I didn’t know what else to do. I was exhausted and questioning whether I was really cut out for the work.

Things began to shift around the two-and-a-half-year mark. I heard about a position at Sunshine Health and applied. Around the same time, we also started attending church at Kairos. Slowly, God began changing my perspective. Instead of only focusing on the stress and criticism, I started trusting that maybe He had me in child welfare for a reason. And He did.

Now, my “41” looks very different. I still work in child welfare, but in a healthier, lower-stress role. And for the first time, I’ve been able to clearly see the fruit from those difficult years. Families I worked with still reach out to thank me. Looking back, I realize I did more good than I gave myself credit for at the time. What once felt like failure was actually preparation.

If you’re still in your “40,” trust God’s timing. Even when you can’t see what He’s doing, He may be using the hardest season of your life to shape you and impact others in ways you won’t understand until later.

From the 41 Series

For forty days, Saul and the armies of Israel stood frozen in fear before Goliath. Every morning and evening the giant returned, repeating the same threats over and over again.

Fear has a way of doing that. It repeats itself. It wears us down. It convinces us nothing will ever change.

And over time, fear can begin shaping how we see ourselves, our work, our relationships, and even our calling.

That's what makes difficult seasons so exhausting. Sometimes the pressure isn't just external. It becomes internal too. Anxiety, discouragement, emotional fatigue, and isolation slowly begin taking root beneath the surface.

But David's story reminds us that giants are not defeated through our own strength. Victory comes through surrender and dependence on God.

Sometimes the wilderness reveals things in us we would not have noticed otherwise: our limits, our fears, our need for help, our dependence on God. And while those seasons are painful, God often uses them to reshape our perspective.

Elijah thought the wilderness meant God was finished with him. But God was still preparing, strengthening, and redirecting him.

The same is often true for us.

Sometimes what feels like failure or burnout is actually preparation for a healthier season ahead.

“What was true of God, is always true of God.”

He is still present in the pressure.

Still working in the waiting.

Still shaping us through the struggle.

Scripture Encouragement

- 1 Samuel 17:45–47
- Isaiah 41:10
- James 1:2–4

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Andy's story? Why?

Have you experienced seasons where stress, anxiety, or exhaustion began affecting your perspective or sense of purpose?

How have difficult seasons revealed areas where you needed to depend more fully on God?

What signs of growth, perspective, or healing can you now see looking back on those seasons?

Prayer

God, thank You for remaining faithful even in seasons where I feel overwhelmed, exhausted, or discouraged. Help me trust that You are still working even when life feels heavy or uncertain.

Give me strength to keep relying on You instead of trying to carry every burden alone. Use difficult seasons to shape my heart, deepen my faith, and remind me that my hope is found in You.

Thank You for continuing to guide me through every wilderness season.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly carry stress, anxiety, burnout, or discouragement while trying to keep moving forward. As you reflect on Andy's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God is still present and still working through difficult seasons.

The Test Became a Testimony | Adam Smith

My “40” wasn’t some massive public failure. It was something quieter, something that slowly kept pulling at my heart. I work at a school, and honestly, I love it. The relationships, the students, the staff—it really can feel like family. But with that closeness comes something dangerous too: gossip. At first, it felt harmless. Just conversations, venting, joking around. But over time, I noticed myself getting pulled into it more and more. The problem was, I knew it was wrong. The Holy Spirit kept convicting me, but I kept ignoring it.

That was my “40.”

I would leave work feeling heavy. I’d drive home repenting, asking God to help me stop, promising I’d do better next time. But then another opportunity would come, and there I was again. I started wrestling internally with questions like, “Do I just avoid everyone?” or “How will people react if I don’t join in?”

Things began to shift when I went through the 31 Day Resiliency Challenge and then started the Wilderness devotional journey. Through those seasons, God challenged me to stop hiding my struggles and let Him expose and lead me through them. Not long after, I was tested.

A coworker publicly offended me in a way that genuinely hurt. And suddenly, I had every opportunity to fall right back into gossip. Coworkers came to me one after another, giving me chances to vent, retaliate, or join in tearing this person down. But instead of reacting out of hurt, God softened my heart. He showed me that hurting people hurt people. And instead of responding with judgment, He led me toward grace.

What amazed me most was what happened afterward. As people asked why I responded differently, God opened doors for me to share what He had been teaching me. One coworker even broke down crying after hearing my story and shared their own struggles with me. I got to pray with them right there in the moment, and later they told me they had started attending a church group because of that conversation. The test became a testimony.

My “41” now is still a journey. The temptation is still there sometimes, but God is changing my perspective day by day. He’s teaching me humility, grace, and the power of listening to His Spirit instead of my emotions.

Looking back, I can see that season wasn’t just about gossip. God was stretching me, refining me, and teaching me to trust His way over my own.

If you’re still in your “40,” keep pressing into God. Keep listening when He convicts you. He isn’t trying to shame you—He’s trying to lead you into something better.

From the 41 Series

Aaron's story reminds us that failure does not have to become the end of the story.

One mistake. One sinful decision. One careless moment. And suddenly shame begins trying to define who we are. That's exactly what the enemy wants.

He wants people trapped in guilt long enough that they stop believing God can still use them. He wants failure to become identity instead of allowing grace, repentance, and transformation to shape the future. But throughout Scripture, God consistently works through imperfect people.

Aaron failed. David failed. Elijah struggled. Peter denied Jesus.

Yet God continued calling, restoring, teaching, and using them.

That does not make sin small.

It does not remove consequences.

But it reminds us that God's mercy is greater than our worst moments.

Sometimes God allows our failures to expose things in our hearts that needed to change all along: pride, selfishness, anger, gossip, fear, or the need for approval.

And often our greatest growth begins the moment we stop defending ourselves and finally allow God to transform us from the inside out.

Sometimes the test becomes the testimony when we stop hiding our failures and start surrendering them to God.

Scripture Encouragement

- Psalm 51:10
- 1 John 1:9
- Romans 5:20

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Adam's story? Why?

Have there been moments where failure, guilt, or shame began shaping how you viewed yourself?

What areas of your heart may God be trying to grow or refine through conviction and repentance?

How have you experienced God's grace and restoration in your own life?

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your mercy and grace even in moments where I fall short. Help me stop allowing shame or failure to define my identity and remind me that forgiveness and transformation are found in You.

Give me humility to repent honestly, wisdom to learn from my mistakes, and courage to continue growing instead of hiding in guilt. Shape my heart to reflect Your truth more each day.

Thank You for continuing to restore and redeem broken people.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly carry guilt, regret, or shame from past mistakes. As you reflect on Adam's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that failure does not have to be the end of the story when grace steps in.

I Finally Understood What She Carried | Whitman Lopez

For a long time, I thought the problem in my life was everyone else. I was stubborn, prideful, demanding, and convinced that if everyone around me would just do better, things would be fine. I worked long hours as a truck driver for Coca-Cola, often gone from home and exhausted when I returned. My wife had become a stay-at-home mom after daycare costs became too much, and instead of appreciating everything she carried, I focused on what wasn't getting done.

That was my "40."

I would come home wanting peace and quiet, a clean house, dinner ready, and everything in order. But with kids, laundry, dishes, errands, and the chaos of life, home rarely looked like that. Instead of helping, I blamed my wife. I saw her as the weak link instead of seeing my own selfishness and pride.

At the same time, my health was falling apart. I gained a lot of weight and was dealing with sleep apnea, high blood pressure, anxiety attacks, pre-diabetes, and more medications than I could count. A doctor finally sat me down and warned me that if I kept living the way I was, a heart attack was coming. Then I lost my job. That's when everything began to shift.

In the middle of all the stress and confusion, I had a real moment with God. Somehow, through all of it, I knew we needed to move to Florida. We left behind everything we had ever known—family, friends, security, my career—and started over with almost nothing.

After bariatric surgery and the move, the biggest change came when my wife got a job and I became the stay-at-home parent. And I failed miserably at it. Suddenly I was the one juggling school drop-offs, cleaning, laundry, cooking, errands, and caring for a little one all day. Dinner wasn't ready. Laundry piled up. The house stayed messy. I finally understood firsthand what my wife had been carrying all those years. God was opening my eyes.

What changed wasn't just our situation—it was my heart. God kept me home for a full year, and in that season He completely changed my perspective on marriage, family, and love. I stopped demanding perfection and started learning partnership. My wife and I became a team instead of opponents.

Now, my "41" looks like peace, understanding, and gratitude. I'm not the same man I used to be. I help because I understand now. I love differently now. Looking back, I can see God took me through the fire to make me into a different man.

If you're still in your "40," keep your eyes on God instead of the chaos around you. Don't try to carry it alone. Sometimes the hardest seasons are the very ones God uses to transform you the most.

From the 41 Series

Saul's greatest struggle was not Goliath standing in front of him. His greatest struggle was the pride, fear, and self-reliance growing within him.

That's often true for us too.

Many of the hardest battles in life are not the visible ones everyone else sees. They are the internal struggles quietly shaping our attitudes, relationships, and responses.

Pride convinces us we are right.

Selfishness convinces us our pain matters more than everyone else's.

Busyness convinces us we do not need to slow down and listen.

And over time, those things can slowly damage the people closest to us.

One of the most powerful things God does in the wilderness is expose what we could not previously see clearly.

Not to shame us. Not to destroy us. But to transform us.

David approached God with humility and dependence while Saul increasingly depended on himself. And eventually, those internal differences became visible outwardly.

The same is true in our relationships.

Sometimes growth begins the moment we finally recognize the weight someone else has been carrying. The sacrifices we overlooked. The hurt we minimized. The ways our own pride kept us from seeing clearly.

And often, our "41" begins not when we become perfect, but when humility opens the door for healing, empathy, and change.

God has a way of softening hearts that once felt hardened.

Scripture Encouragement

- Philippians 2:3–5
- James 1:19–20
- Ephesians 4:31–32

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Whitman's story? Why?

Have there been moments where pride, selfishness, or lack of understanding affected your relationships?

How has God used difficult conversations or experiences to grow humility and empathy in you?

What relationships in your life may need greater grace, patience, or intentional care right now?

Prayer

Father, thank You for being patient with me even when pride, selfishness, or stubbornness clouds my perspective. Help me grow in humility, compassion, and understanding toward the people around me.

Open my eyes to ways I may have overlooked the needs, burdens, or hurts of others. Teach me to listen well, love sacrificially, and reflect Your grace in my relationships. Thank You for continuing to soften and transform my heart. In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many relationships quietly struggle beneath the surface because of pride, misunderstanding, or unspoken hurt. As you reflect on Whitman's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that humility and grace can begin restoring what once felt broken.

***What Felt Like Collapse Became Correction* / Michelle Labadie**

There was a season where it felt like everything was unraveling at once. Some of it came from choices I made—trusting people I knew deep down I shouldn't have trusted. Some of it came from the wounds and actions of others. Hurt has a way of multiplying when hurt people are involved.

In what felt like a matter of days, my husband lost his job, we lost the place we called home, and our family was suddenly depending on others just to get by. Even in the refuge we were given, tension followed us. Relationships were strained, emotions were high, and eventually we had to move back to our home state.

I felt panic. Anger. Defeat. I felt like we had failed as parents. There were moments I didn't know what to do except praise God for what He was still providing, even when I couldn't understand what He was allowing.

The shift began when family helped bring us home and gave us a place to land. Distance from a place God was not calling us to brought clarity. But even more than a change in location, God met me as I sought Him daily. Through His Word, through prayer, and through people willing to speak truth into my life, He held me together.

What I thought was collapse became correction.

Over time, reconciliation came. Forgiveness came. We moved back to Florida stronger than before. My husband found a new career. Our family found peace and purpose again.

And looking back, I can see blessings I could not see then. I got nearly a year of memories with my mom before she passed—time I would have missed had none of this happened.

My "40" felt like loss. But God was working in it all.

My current situation is not my final destination.

If you're still in your "40," hold on. Things may feel uncertain, but God is not absent. He is working, even in what feels broken, and His ways are better than ours. There is peace on the other side of surrender.

From the 41 Series

When the flood came, everything familiar disappeared for Noah.

The routines were gone. The comfort was gone. The stability was gone. And for a season, all Noah could do was trust that God still knew where the ark was headed even when he could not see dry ground yet.

I think many of us know what it feels like when life suddenly shifts in ways we never expected. Plans fall apart. Stability disappears. Doors close. And what once felt secure suddenly feels uncertain.

In those moments, it's easy to assume everything is collapsing.

But sometimes what feels like collapse is actually correction.

Sometimes God lovingly redirects us away from places, patterns, or dependencies we were never meant to build our identity upon. And while those seasons are uncomfortable, they often become the places where our trust in Him grows the deepest.

Noah eventually realized the flood was not the end of the story. God was preserving him through it and preparing him for something ahead.

The same is often true for us.

God's correction is not rejection.

His redirection is not abandonment.

And the seasons that feel most uncertain are often the very places where He teaches us dependence, trust, and surrender.

Sometimes our "41" begins when we stop clinging to what was and begin trusting God with what's next.

Scripture Encouragement

- Proverbs 3:5–6
- Hebrews 12:11
- Isaiah 43:18–19

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Michelle's story? Why?

Have there been seasons where life changes or disappointments forced you to trust God differently?

Looking back, how have you seen God redirecting or shaping you through difficult circumstances?

What areas of your life do you need to surrender more fully to God right now?

Prayer

Father, thank You for remaining faithful even when life feels uncertain or difficult to understand. Help me trust that Your correction and guidance come from love, not rejection.

When plans change or stability disappears, remind me that You are still leading me with wisdom and purpose. Teach me to surrender what I cannot control and trust You with whatever comes next.

Thank You for continuing to guide me through every season.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly struggle when life does not unfold the way they expected. As you reflect on Michelle's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God can still bring purpose, growth, and hope through unexpected changes.

God Had Been Leading All Along | Larry Renfro

There was a season in my life where everything seemed to fall apart at once. I returned home after not finishing my education, newly married but already feeling defeated. Then loss hit even deeper. My brother and his wife passed away, leaving behind a 14-month-old child. Around that same time, I went through multiple jobs, and even a stretch with no job at all. It was a heavy season, and if I'm honest, there were times it felt like punishment.

That was my "40." And yet, even in that season, God didn't stop working.

While I was struggling internally, questioning and carrying grief, God was still using my wife and me. I was teaching an adult Sunday school class, singing in an Easter musical, and starting a home Bible study. My wife was faithfully serving too—helping in the nursery and leading in our county Right to Life. In the middle of loss and uncertainty, God also blessed us with three children.

Looking back, it didn't make sense at the time. I felt defeated, but God was still moving.

The turning point came years later. After nearly ten years of carrying that sense of calling, I went to our pastor and told him I still felt drawn to ministry. I didn't know what that looked like, but I knew it hadn't gone away. His response surprised me. He had just received a letter from a children's home looking for house parents.

We stepped through that door. That moment changed everything.

Through Scripture, through people, through prayer, and through circumstances, God made it clear that He had been leading us all along. What felt like wasted time or detours were actually preparation.

What changed wasn't just our situation—it was our understanding. We were no longer looking at our past as something to regret, but something God had used to shape us for where He was calling us.

Now, I can look back with no regrets, only gratitude. There's no way to fully explain all the ways God prepared and refined us for ministry, but I can see His hand in all of it.

If you're still in your "40," I would ask you this: is it possible God is shaping you and preparing you for something you can't yet see?

From the 41 Series

When David walked onto the battlefield, it looked sudden to everyone else.

A shepherd boy arrives.

A giant falls.

A nation celebrates.

But what nobody saw were all the quiet seasons beforehand.

The fields. The loneliness. The ordinary days.

The private battles. The years of preparation no one applauded.

And often, that's how God works in our lives too.

We tend to focus on the visible moments—the breakthroughs, the victories, the answered prayers. But many times, God has been shaping, preparing, and leading us long before we recognize what He is doing.

Noah spent years building the ark before the rain ever came.

Elijah spent years in the wilderness before stepping onto Mount Carmel.

David fought lions and bears in obscurity before facing Goliath publicly.

“What was true of God, is always true of God.”

He is faithful in the hidden seasons too.

Sometimes we look back and suddenly realize that moments we once viewed as delays, interruptions, or detours were actually preparation. God was teaching us dependence, humility, perseverance, and trust long before we understood why.

And often our “41” is not discovering that God finally started working. It's realizing He had been faithfully leading us all along.

Scripture Encouragement

- Psalm 37:23–24
- Proverbs 16:9
- Romans 8:28

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Larry's story? Why?

Have there been seasons that once felt insignificant or frustrating but later proved meaningful?

Looking back, where can you now see God's guidance or preparation in your life?

How can you trust God more fully in the "hidden" or uncertain seasons you may be in right now?

Prayer

Father, thank You for faithfully leading me even in seasons where I could not clearly see what You were doing. Help me trust that You are still working through the ordinary, difficult, and hidden moments of life.

Teach me to remain faithful in every season and remind me that nothing surrendered to You is wasted. Give me patience to trust Your timing and confidence that You are guiding my steps with wisdom and purpose.

Thank You for always being present, even when I did not fully recognize it.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people wonder if the quiet or difficult seasons of life have any real purpose. As you reflect on Larry's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that God is often doing His deepest work long before we fully understand it.

You Don't Have to Carry It Alone | Sam Labadie

There was a time in my life when I was in a relationship that slowly became something I couldn't control. Looking back, I can see that some of my own decisions and the way I allowed him to have control played a part, but it quickly became more than that. I was young, just fourteen, still going to church every Sunday night, trying to live a normal life. On the outside, everything looked fine. He looked like a put-together guy. But behind closed doors, it was very different.

That was my "40."

I felt isolated and afraid. I didn't feel like I could talk to anyone about what was happening. He would force me to do things I didn't want to do. He would put his hands on me when no one else was around. It was abuse in every sense, even if no one else could see it. I carried that alone, trying to make sense of it while pretending everything was okay.

There was a moment that changed things for me. He pushed me into a wall and yelled in my face, and this time people were around. No one said anything, but something in me realized that this wasn't okay. That moment woke me up to the reality of what I was in.

I can't say I clearly felt God in that season. It was hard to recognize His presence in the middle of fear and confusion. But He was still working, even when I couldn't see it.

The turning point came when I made the decision to end the relationship. I had my youth pastor there with me when I broke up with him, and that was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

What changed wasn't just my situation—it was me. I began to find peace. I found the courage to talk to my mom, and instead of the reaction I feared, she responded with care and support. God also brought people into my life who showed me that not everyone is like that, that healthy relationships exist.

Now, I have peace about what I went through. I don't carry the same anger I once did. I see that I'm not alone, and that even that painful season has allowed me to help others recognize and get out of similar situations.

If you're still in your "40," don't stay silent. Talk to someone. What you're experiencing is not okay, and you don't have to carry it alone. There is a way out, and there are people who will stand with you.

From the 41 Series

One of the most difficult lies the enemy tells people in painful seasons is this:

“Stay silent.”

“Handle it yourself.”

“No one will understand.”

“You’re alone.”

Isolation is where shame grows strongest.

That’s what made Elijah’s wilderness so dangerous. He became convinced he was completely alone in his struggle. Fear and exhaustion distorted his perspective until he believed no one else understood what he was carrying.

But God reminded Elijah that he was not abandoned and not alone.

And that reminder matters for us too.

Pain often convinces people to hide.

To bury wounds. To avoid difficult conversations. To carry burdens in silence for years. But healing rarely happens in complete isolation.

God created us for relationship, support, encouragement, and community. While people may fail us at times, we were never intended to carry every burden entirely on our own.

Sometimes one of the bravest things a person can do is finally speak honestly about what they have been carrying.

Not because vulnerability is easy. Not because healing happens instantly. But because bringing darkness into the light breaks the power secrecy often holds.

And often our “41” begins the moment we stop pretending we are okay and allow God to begin healing us through truth, support, and grace.

You do not have to carry it alone.

Scripture Encouragement

- Galatians 6:2
- Psalm 34:18
- James 5:16

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in Sam's story? Why?

Have there been burdens, wounds, or struggles you felt pressured to carry silently?

What fears or obstacles make vulnerability difficult for you?

Who are trusted people God may be inviting you to lean on for support, prayer, or encouragement?

Prayer

Father, thank You for caring deeply about the burdens I carry. Help me stop believing the lie that I must handle every struggle alone.

Give me courage to be honest about my pain, wisdom to seek healthy support, and humility to allow others to walk alongside me. Bring healing where there has been hurt and remind me that Your presence and Your people are gifts meant to help carry difficult seasons.

Thank You for never abandoning me.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people quietly carry wounds, fear, or shame in isolation. As you reflect on Sam's story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that they are not alone and that healing often begins when we stop carrying everything in silence.

The Story God Writes Is Better Than the One We Planned | James Robinson

I didn't grow up with a real foundation of faith. We celebrated holidays, but I didn't know God personally. I always believed there was something bigger, that everything was connected somehow, but I didn't know what that meant for me. At the same time, growing up with very little created something in me—a desire to have more. Over time, that desire turned into a mindset where I felt justified in taking what I didn't have or chasing whatever I thought would fill that gap.

That was my “40.”

It felt like I was always chasing something. Even when I got what I wanted, it didn't last. There was no real peace, just a constant need for more. From a young age, I crossed lines. I stole—from strangers, from places, even from people I cared about. It started small, but it reflected something deeper. I didn't really understand what was mine and what wasn't, and I justified it because of what I felt I lacked.

As I got older, the behavior changed, but the heart didn't. I stopped stealing in obvious ways, but I still struggled with wanting more, comparing myself to others, and feeling like I deserved things. Even when I did something good, it was often tied to how it made me feel or what I gained from it. On the outside, I was building a life, but internally there was still a gap I couldn't fill.

The turning point came when I realized that nothing I was chasing was actually satisfying me. I had worked, built, and gained things, but the emptiness was still there. That's when I started to see the issue wasn't what I lacked—it was what I was missing.

Through learning about Jesus and what He had done for me, I experienced something different. It wasn't just about changing behavior. It was about my heart. I began to understand that the gap I had been trying to fill my whole life wasn't material—it was spiritual.

Now, my “41” looks completely different. My life isn't driven by what I can get anymore, but by what I've already been given. I'm learning to give, even when it costs me. And while it might look like I'm losing in those moments, I've actually gained something I never had before—peace, purpose, and a real understanding of what it means to love others. Looking back, I can see that I thought I needed more, but what I really needed was God.

If you're still in your “40,” I'd tell you this—whatever you're chasing won't satisfy you the way you think it will. If something feels missing, don't ignore it. Be open to God. You don't have to have it all figured out, but if you're willing to seek Him honestly, it can change everything. What you're looking for isn't found in things. It's found in Him.

From the 41 Series

Saul spent much of his life chasing what looked impressive outwardly—power, recognition, control, status. But the more he pursued those things apart from surrender to God, the more restless and unstable his life became.

That’s because success without God will never satisfy the soul.

The world constantly tells us that peace is found in gaining more: more money, more security, more achievement, more control, more recognition.

But eventually many people discover that even after gaining what they thought they wanted, something still feels empty inside.

David understood something Saul missed. His confidence and identity were never supposed to come from outward success. They were meant to come from dependence on God.

And often God uses wilderness seasons to expose what we have been trusting in most.

Not to shame us.

But to redirect us toward what truly matters.

Sometimes the plans we build for ourselves are smaller than the purpose God wants to lead us into. And while surrender can feel uncomfortable at first, it often becomes the place where real peace begins growing.

“What was true of God, is always true of God.”

He is faithful enough to redirect us when we are building our lives around temporary things instead of eternal ones.

And often our “41” begins when we finally realize that God’s story is better than the one we were trying to write on our own.

Scripture Encouragement

- Matthew 6:19–21
- Proverbs 19:21
- Philippians 3:7–8

Reflect & Respond

What resonated most with you in James' story? Why?

Have there been things you pursued believing they would finally satisfy or complete you?

How has God used difficult or unexpected seasons to reshape your priorities or perspective?

What would it look like for you to pursue God's purpose more intentionally in this season of life?

Prayer

Father, thank You for loving me enough to redirect me when I begin building my life around temporary things. Help me recognize where I may be chasing success, control, comfort, or approval more than I am pursuing You.

Teach me to value what is eternal and trust that Your plans are better than my own. Give me wisdom to follow You faithfully and peace to surrender the story I thought I needed to write for myself.

Thank You for leading me toward something greater. In Jesus' name, amen.

Share Hope

Many people spend years chasing things they hope will finally bring peace or fulfillment. As you reflect on James' story, consider sharing it with someone who may need the reminder that real purpose and lasting peace are ultimately found in surrendering to God's direction.

WRITE YOUR 41 STORY

Every person has a story.

Some parts are beautiful. Some parts are painful. Some seasons feel clear and hopeful, while others feel like wandering through uncertainty, grief, fear, failure, or waiting.

Throughout Scripture, the number 40 often represents seasons of testing, wilderness, preparation, and dependence on God but then comes 41.

A new day. A new season. A reminder that God is still working, still faithful, and still present even after the wilderness.

Maybe you are already living in your “41.” Maybe you are still walking through your “40.” Either way, your story matters.

God often uses honest stories to encourage other people who are struggling silently with similar fears, pain, questions, or waiting seasons.

As you reflect on the stories throughout this devotional, take time to think through your own journey with God.

YOUR STORY COULD ENCOURAGE SOMEONE ELSE

You never know how God may use your story to help another person take one step closer to Him.

If you would like to share your 41 Story with Kairos Church, visit:

www.kairos.church/41story

A new day will dawn.

SHARE YOUR 41 STORY
www.kairos.church/41story