



Ground Hog Day

Some may call it.....

a "rut," others call it "one more time around the mountain," the Apostle Paul may have called it "a thorn in the flesh," and lately, I've come to call it "ground hog day."

What in the world am I talking about? Well, I'm glad you asked! You see, I'm noticing a pattern lately... an amazing, yet disturbing pattern that seems to be happening with people, (context of Christians)...ready? We are having one or more

"recurring themes or issues" that seem to be stuck on 'repeat' in our lives. These issues are not "sin," but we sure have the propensity to sin while we're in them. They are more like issues that seem to find us wherever we go, and plague us at every turn, they are like the song that never ends....or "Ground Hog Day" as the movie is called. We're 'stuck' in this same story, and we're captive in a certain part of the story...the frustrating part. Up until now I had never identified it or seen this as having any effect on our lives, and now, lately, I'm seeing that it's not only affecting our lives, it can pretty much ruin them. IF we let it, our Ground Hog Day could seem like a l i f e l o n g nightmare, both for us, and for those around us.



The Movie.....(DISCLAIMER: I am NOT Recommending this movie!)

I am simply using it as an example of some of the stages we may find ourselves in.

Please don't feel like you need to watch this movie because I'm about to tell you all about it anyway...so, I'll save you the time:)

Actually, the movie is quite tortuous, I could barely watch the whole thing. It starts with a prideful (big city) TV weather man who has to cover the "Ground Hog Day" story every year in this little (nothing) town. He hates going there and can't wait to get home after reporting on whether or not there will be 6 more weeks of winter, which totally depends on "Phil," the ground hog, and if he sees his own shadow.

The weather man's name is also Phil:) So, this particular year Phil goes to the small town to cover the story only to be kept from leaving the town by a blizzard. (Incidentally, a blizzard that he predicted would not come to the area.) Phil and his crew have to stay over night because the roads have been shut down on account of the blizzard. Phil wakes up the next morning to the same day as yesterday, it's "ground hog day" all over again, and again, and again. It's so hard to watch this movie, like I said, "tortuous."



Phil goes through a few stages in this journey. 1) shock and disbelief 2) Denial 3) anger/rage 4) bitterness 5) depression 6) Acceptance/Humility 7) Productivity/ FREEDOM

The reason I think those stages are relevant to this discussion is because I think we are also going through similar stages in our day to day lives. Can you think of an issue (or two, or three) that seems to keep coming back in your life? It could be a relationship that doesn't seem to heal no matter what you do, or a Biblical issue that seems to matter more to you than to any other person on the planet, or you find yourself constantly on the outside, disrespected, and not appreciated? Whatever the (repeating) issue is, it just gets your blood boiling, you have a passion about this particular thing. And even though you try to explain it to others, they just don't really get it like you do....this is also frustrating because they can't see why it bugs you so much. People say things like, "yeah, you just need to get over it," or "let it go," etc. And you know you should let it go, but just when you do, it comes right out of nowhere and slaps you in the face again...., and again, and again....that's *your* "ground hog day."

The closest thing I can come to describing this phenomenon Biblically, is The Apostle Paul's 'thorn in the flesh.' This is found in 2 Cor. 12:1-10. Paul clearly and surprisingly tells us right out that (vs. 7) "there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of satan to buffet me to keep me from exalting myself!"

Ok, let's look at this inductively. Q. What was Paul given? A. A thorn in the flesh. Q. What was it for? A. to buffet Paul. Q. WHY was he given this? A. to keep him from exalting himself. WOW! Paul asked, no, begged (entreated) the Lord on 3 occasions to take it away,let's stop right here for a minute. Do we have these 'thorns in the flesh?' If so, have you ever asked the Lord to "take away" your 'thorn in the flesh?' How many times have you asked? Do you ever stop asking Him to take it away? What is His response? Probably the same as it was to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for MY power is perfected in weakness."

You see, I think it all comes down to humility. Even the guy in the movie was prideful at the beginning of his ground hog day, but by the end of it was humble and productive. The Apostle Paul had more than a few reasons to be proud: See Philippians 3:4-6 Here, Paul gives a list of his 'accomplishments,' then says, "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ." Today we know him as the "great apostle Paul" who wrote a good portion of the New Testament of our Bible, but back then Paul was hard pressed to find any respect at all, especially from the Church at Corinth. Consider how Paul had to constantly defend and prove his apostleship to the Corinthians: 1 Cor. 9, 2 Cor. 3:1-3, 10:7-10, all of Chapter 11, 12:11-12, and 13:3 and so on) Let's go back to 2 Cor. 12, verse 10: "Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults (mistreatment), with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."



Do you think these things mentioned in verse 10 were possibly Paul's 'thorn in the flesh?' If that list wasn't, we can be sure that those things kept him from exalting himself. His ground hog day was in getting very little respect from those who should've known better and listened more.

**GETTING BETTER NOT BITTER**

Moses seemed to have this 'ground hog day' in common with Paul, in that he had to endure mistreatment and disrespect from the very people he was called to serve. Those people God delivered THROUGH MOSES from Egypt. For crying out loud, how did they forget so easily...."ok folks, another day, another time around the same mountain!" "Let's pick up the pace, we've only been at this for 20 years, we've got another 20 years (laps) to go!" 1-3 million people in the same ground hog day and most of them stuck in the same stage of anger and bitterness.

In my (humble) opinion, Moses' ground hog day wasn't the 40 years, it probably wasn't that same mountain time after time, I submit to you that Moses' ground hog day was **the people**. The Israelites in the wilderness were his 'repeating' issue. They disrespected Moses on a regular basis, they complained and whined and doubted him at almost every turn, but he kept leading them. Even though, (in the anger stage) Moses messed up and ruined his chance to actually 'enter' the promised land, he still did finish well, and did write of himself in Numbers 12:3 "Now the man Moses was very humble; more humble than any man on the face of the earth." :)

There are other examples in the Bible I could point to, but I would run out of room on this paper, then people might begin to see this writing as their tortuous ground hog day, and stop reading :)

Nevertheless, we can still glean some valuable lessons from Paul, Moses and even the movie. Let's go back to the stages again. First, identify your 'repeating issue,' then look at the stages to see which one you are in.

- 1) shock and disbelief 2) Denial 3) anger/rage 4) bitterness
5) depression 6) Acceptance/Humility 7) Productivity/FREEDOM

What we need to do if we are stuck in stages 1-5 is to #1. Accept what we don't understand...it is what it is, it's out of my

control to change it. (not with a bad attitude) 2. Lay down your pride, humble yourself- stop fighting (the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God- James 1:20) 3. determine to make the MOST of it, in it and out of it....walk in freedom even if the situation hasn't changed on the outside. This last step is preceded by humility and with the goal of getting **BETTER not Bitter!**



The Movie ends with the man who has become humble through all the trials of this 'day,' and deciding to get better instead of bitter. He learns how to play piano, learns a new language, helps people who need help, he serves, he begins to really

live and be productive. He is now free INSIDE his once self proclaimed prison. How? Simply by changing his perspective on 'one day.' 'Hey, I can be of use in here after all,' 'hey, I can help people instead of wallowing in my lack of understanding, or drowning in my pride of 'I don't deserve this,' etc.' That's where we come in as Christians in this world. We are to be 'salt and light,' shining examples of what it means to have freedom in any and every circumstance. Remember, God's power is perfected in our weakness. The bigger the weakness/ issue, the stronger God's power will be shone in and through it! Remember Paul, "I will gladly boast in my weakness that the power of Christ may dwell in me." 2 Cor. 12:9

If anyone should be in the "freedom" stage, it should be Christians!!! Mainly, because God has equipped us with EVERYTHING WE NEED to live godly lives in this world!

2 Peter 1:2-3 : *Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine nature has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.*

WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER!!

And just when you think I have said all I could possibly say on the subject, There's Still More!! And here it is: **We can HELP each other in our 'ground hog days!'** How? Again, I'm so glad you asked :). If I know you have a 'repeating issue' in your life; if I see you get fired up about something; if I've seen you being disrespected by others even though God is using you...I can and I will show you honor, or appreciation, or I will listen more, spend more time with you. I will do whatever God leads me to do that will help you get to that final stage of productivity and freedom. Are we our brothers (and sisters) keepers? You bet we are! We need to pay MORE attention to each other in the Body of Christ; we need to SHOW MORE ATTENTION to

those in the body as we are all members of one another. And where we can't DO something physically, we can PRAY MORE for each other, especially as we see the 'ground hog day' or if we see that someone is stuck in one of the hard stages. PRAY, PRAY, PRAY! Sometimes one of us may be in the depression stage, not only have we given in, but we've given up, and I'll tell you what, someone coming along to throw us a life preserver with a card or a call or lunch can go a long way in restoring our hope and getting us back on track in our effectiveness for the Kingdom of God in this world!

Just one more thing, just because Paul or Moses or Joseph, or anyone gets such a hard time in this life,

doesn't mean God won't use them mightily...what if the weaker we are, the more powerful God can be in and through us? How important is our humility and weakness then? How important are our "Ground Hog Days," or our 'thorns in the flesh' to helping that process? I'd say it makes a world of difference, and we can make a difference in this world for Jesus Christ!



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NOW MAY THE LORD OF PEACE HIMSELF CONTINUALLY GRANT YOU PEACE IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE. 2 THESS. 3:16