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Growing With God – Needing to Burp

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Let's pray: "Father in Heaven, we are about to open Your Word and we are praying Heavenly Father for You to be the One to teach us. We are longing to hear from You. We are pleading that You would pour Your Spirit upon us and that You, Heavenly Father, would be the One to teach us, instruct us and to lead us in the ways of righteousness. And we ask and pray this in Jesus' name, Amen."

Jonny was howling. He came running down the stairs, screaming of the top of his lungs; ran into the kitchen, ran to his mother. She threw open her arms, and lifted him up to her and said: "What is wrong?" And after he was able to contain himself a little bit and stopped the sobbing and the bawling, she said, "What happened, what happened?" And he said, "Well, I was upstairs where Daddy is working. And Daddy took the hammer, and he was pounding and he pounded his thumb." And the Mother looked at him and said, "Well Jonny, Daddy is a big boy, he's hurt himself before, he will be okay. You don't need to cry about that. In fact Jonny, you should have laughed at him." He said, "I did." And Jonny received some pain. He ran to Mama for that pain.

Pain! It comes in life. It comes in all flavors, and all sizes. Physical pain, emotional pain, pain in relationships, there is pain everywhere. Where do you go to relieve your pain? Some of you may be in pain right now. Your back hurts, your side hurts, your leg hurts, I don't know. Pain, it just comes so unexpectedly. It came to me this week stepping into the bathtub. I stepped over the side of the bathtub and my foot landed on that wet floor. My left leg went that way, my right leg went into the cabinet, I had a nice bruise. Before it was over, I was doing the splits, I got the sore knee and the rest is none of your business.

Pain, it just comes. Lot of pain we can run to the doctor or to a nurse or to mama. We can get help for. But there is a pain that can be so deep, it's the pain that causes us either to not fall asleep, or to wake suddenly in the middle of the night. It's this annoying, agonizing pain of insecurity, of anxiety, of guilt, self loathing, "Why did I say this, why did I do it, here I go again, I am so..." whatever, on and on and on. "I am so lonely, I am so hurting," pain, deep, deep pain! That pain only God can deliver us from.

Last week we began a four part series called, "Growing with God." We are looking at Spiritual growth in the Lord. And last week we likened the baby, well I'll just say it, Connor, my grandson cries for four reasons unless he is sick. He is either hungry, has to burp, has issues with his diaper, or he is tired. And last week we looked at hunger in the context of growing spiritually. And we looked at how you feed the baby with a bottle. And I was teaching you how to read the Bible devotionally. Just enjoy the process, let God hold you, read and enjoy the exposure you have. You must understand that when it comes to reading the Word of God, something supernatural will take place. The Bible says that faith comes from hearing this Book. Faith comes from hearing this Book! Many times faith and being faithful are confused. Faith is active, faithfulness is passive. What we need is an active faith that comes from God.

If you go to sermons, you can go to sermons for twenty years talking about being faithful. "Be faithful to God, be faithful to Him." And no one can deny the theology of that. We need to be

faithful to God. But those messages will never create faith in our lives. Faithfulness is passive. Faith is active! Faith comes when we read the Word of God, when we connect with God, when we find out who He is, and we fall in love with Him, and we are motivated to serve Him. Faith will always result in faithfulness! But faithfulness does not result in faith. And so reading the Word of God creates a dynamic experience with the Lord where He begins to supernaturally create confidence and trust in our hearts towards Him. And when that happens we'll be faithful to Him.

Well, we are learning about babies as we go. We are learning about spiritual life. So I've done research on burping. Well, it's true. There is actual science, there is history, and there are all kinds of things associated with burping a baby. When I did this research I discovered that burping is primarily a Western phenomenon. In the East they don't worry about burping their babies so much. I don't know how that is entirely, although they said they use a very few bottles in the East. I don't know if that's true or not? But I know that here in the West, the baby takes a bottle, and after a certain amount of ounces, maybe one or two ounces, the baby is held, patted, burps and everybody goes, "Yeah, now yeah, yeah," and we are all excited about that.

Well, there are burping positions. You take the baby and fellows I am going to help you here. Some of you are going to be young fathers some day; you have to be careful with these things. They are really fragile. You must hold the back of their head very carefully because they don't have strong enough necks to support their heads. So after baby has been fed, one of most popular ways to burp the baby is you gently put the baby on your shoulder. Emphasis on gently! Keep the head supported, and you can rub the back or pat it gently. You don't want to, you know, cause whiplash. That's worse than having the pain of a burp. So you just do this... and I've also learned there is an official title, the scientific title, it's called, "Wet burping." That's when really is good. You need a little cloth to clean that up. Now you can use that method.

I also learned there is a couple from England that created a brand new way and it has a name that goes with it. Again, supporting the head, hold baby under the arms, use your fingers to support the head, hold baby under the arm and you just hold the baby out and you go like this! This is called "The Tick-Tock" method. And according to the authors, you want to say it: "Tick-Tock, tick-tock," and I guess after a while you are going to say, "It's time already! Come on, get this taken care of." Well you see the reason a baby has to burp is especially if it's taking its nutrition from a bottle, it will also take in air. That air gets in the stomach and it causes pain. The baby has no way to get rid of that pain on its own. It needs gentle hands. It needs loving care to do it.

There is another way to help baby, okay? Again, protect the head, so you want to put your hand under the chin, you lay baby on your lap, gently rub the back. This one works good, I know from experience. Karen does it to me after a big meal. Actually that's not true! But that one works. Another way, you can take baby, again be careful with the head, sit the baby on a knee, lean baby slightly forward, hold his chin, and work the back, just rub and tap gently and baby will take care of the rest. And after the baby has burped, he feels so much better.

Well there is a process spiritually where God wants to take your pain and He wants to work it through you until it is gone. And when it's gone, all the angels will gather around and say, "Yeah, they did it! They burped out that pain." That's what I'd like to study with you today. Let's go to Mark chapter 2. Last week we looked at just reading the Bible, today we are going to go more deeply into the Bible. We are going to learn to read a story in the Bible. 70% of the Bible is stories. So if you learn this method, you can do 70% of the Bible and be very, very close to God.

Mark 2 verse 13-17 simply says this: "Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' And he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

So we've read a story. First question we are going to ask is, "What is the story?" Now I've been teaching this method for many years. I've taught it to small groups and large groups and to individuals. One thing I've noticed, Seventh-day Adventists have a hard time answering that question. "What is the story?" They don't quite get it. We are so cerebral that we have a tendency to try to make application of the story. We look for theology that supports our beliefs. We look for eschatology that "...oh yeah, this is that" and we look for doctrine and so on and so forth, and we miss the story. We kind of skip the story and we don't get the romance of the Scripture nor do we develop a relationship with God.

And so, we need to stop, we need to pause and we need to tell the story. That means to retell the story and here is how you do it. Just suppose you have just read that story. Now imagine that the three year old comes up to you and says, "What have you just read?" You tell the story to them. Now there is a reason for doing that. Number one, if you tell that story, especially if you tell it out loud, you will have that story in your mind for the rest of your life. And some night when you can't sleep, you can recall the story back and you can meditate on it between you and the Lord. You may be driving some day and you can't get to your Bible to read while you are driving, you can recall the story and you will have it in your mind and you can talk to God about it.

Once you know the story, once you've told the story, you will have that story for the rest of your life. This is especially good for some of us like myself. I am not good at rote memorization. My wife is an ace at it. She can memorize a chapter of Scripture in twenty minutes. I never get it. I never get it! There is only one text I've completely memorized in all of the Bible. It's found in John 11 and it simply says, "Jesus wept." Now I've got that one. But I can't get the others; it just doesn't work for my mind. But if I tell the story, I can remember the story and I can just about tell you all the stories in sequence from creation all the way until about the Fourth King after David, then I get a little confused. And I can recite most of the New Testament's stories. Not verbatim, that's not my purpose because I can't do it anyways, but I know the story.

So if you do this, you will know the story. So you tell the story as if you are telling it to a three year old: "Jesus went down by the sea and He was teaching a large group of people. When He was done, He walked pass the place where a man named Levi was. He said to Levi, 'Follow me.' And the next thing you know, Jesus is in Levi's house, and a lot of people are there who are called sinners and tax collectors. And while Jesus is there dining with them, some religious people come and criticize Jesus to His disciples. And Jesus said that He came to be with people who are sinners to make them well." That's the story. That's the first question, "What is the story?"

The second question is, "Who is in the story? What people or people groups are in the story? Well there is a multitude, there is Jesus, there is Levi, there are other tax collectors, there are sinners, there are Scribes and Pharisees, and there are Jesus' disciples. That's just about it. They are there in the story. But let's pause for a moment. Who is in the multitude? Who is there? Who is in that crowd? Well, there would be family people. Family's representative, there would be people of all ages, and you know, the young, the old, there would be family units such as single people, single parents, married people, some happy some unhappy. There would be widows, widowers; divorced, separated, those that are dating and those that can't get a date. They'd all be there.

Economically, you'd find the rich, you'd find the poor, you'd find the man with a good job, the man with the bad job, the man that can't find the job and the man that hates the one he has. They are all there. Physically, you would find those that are sick, those that are well, emotionally the same, socially the same. There will be solders there, religious people there, Gentiles, Jews, there'll be curious people, sincere seekers, there will be bored and unresponsive people there, there will be friends and supporters of Jesus and there will be enemies and spies seeking His destruction. They'd all be there in the crowd. I'll tell you, it doesn't take much imagination to realize we are in the crowd somewhere. There are people just like us. And that's one of the benefits in studying the Scriptures this way. Those people become real, and when they become real and you see how God ministers to them, then all of a sudden He becomes real as He ministers to us.

Now, the next question is, "What do they experience? What do they experience in the story? So let's first of all picture this. Jesus is teaching by the sea shore. A great multitude is gathered around Him. Let's ask some questions. What did Jesus leave Heaven for? What was the burden on His heart? What did He want this people to hear? What would cause Him to step away from His throne and come to earth? What was the message that was so powerful that He just had to preach it? Let me give you some examples and you tell me if you think this would cause Him to leave Heaven, to come here, to make sure He gave us this information.

Which denomination is right? Is it the Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees, or Zealots? Common Jesus, clear it up for us. If You were here today, who would You worship with? Do you ever hear questions like that? Or maybe He left Heaven to settle the issue of the role of women in the church? And of course, this eternal question, "Is the wedding ring, jewelry, or isn't it?" Maybe He was there to tell them which political party they should be supporting? Or maybe it was that constant conversation about proper and improper recreation. Maybe He was straitening them out on the order of service and style of the acceptable music, and the worship at the

synagogue. Perhaps, He was teaching them how to live their life perfectly so God could finally come back. And maybe, He was trying to help them understand the difference between robes worn by women and robes worn by men. Obviously, you realize, I think that would be foolish for Him to spend His time on those topics. But I'll tell you, that's what it's in most pulpits across America today, those topics like that. And we wonder why the Christian church is so weak? They have weak topics, topics that don't really matter in the light of eternity.

What would Jesus be preaching that day? Don't you think He'd be talking about how great is our God? Look at God, how great He is. And that God is a God of mercy and that mercy endures forever. Would He not be talking about God's righteousness and how He wants to give it to us through Himself? Would He not be teaching them about sin and the forgiveness of sin? Would He not be teaching them about hopes and strength and courage? Teaching them how their heart, their mind and their body can be healed by Him, teaching them how to get along with others? What your potential is in God? Would He not talk to them about a plan, a plan for their life now and a place for them in Heaven for eternity? Would He not teach them of God's desire for an intimate relationship with them while they walk from here to Heaven? I believe brothers and sisters those are the types of topics Jesus would talk about.

So' let's be in the crowd for a minute and just imagine Jesus telling us about His father, telling us about His father's love, telling us about His father's care, telling us about His father's mercy, telling us about His father's power. Would we not be held captive? Tell me, is there any preacher on the planet right now that you would listen to all day? No, and some of you are looking at your watches now even. I can't imagine somebody so compelling in presentation that people would stand here all day until it's the end of the day. Jesus' disciples will say one day, "Hey this people are hungry." They didn't even know they are hungry. They were so captivated by the teachings of this Man! I will tell you, it must have been life changing to hear Him preach. So the crowd is moved in their heart by the message of Jesus.

But we go on here. In verse 14 it says, "As He passed by, He saw Levi." Levi, interesting name! And here you may want to use a Bible dictionary, a commentary, or a Bible concordance? Do a little research. Who is Levi? Levi! By the way, you don't even really have to buy a Bible dictionary or a commentary or a concordance. They are all on the computer anymore. You can Google in Levi and come up with all kinds of information about him. It's amazing! Well you discover he is Levi Matthew. This guy that the story is about is the guy that is known other places as Matthew. He writes the Gospel of Matthew. And so you discover well, he is a tax-collector. And you can look that up and you'll discover that they are called, 'publicans or publicus' in the Greek. And it literally means "A buyer of taxes, a buyer of taxes."

They had an interesting system back then, Romans did. And the way that they collected money is that they hired people to collect the money for them. They put it out to bid so that the largest bidder got the services. So you had to have money even to be in the game. And they would bid. So let's say Pastor Kevin was a wealthy man back then, and he wanted to increase his wealth. He could bid on the taxes here in Collegedale. So he says he'll collect \$50,000 a year in taxes for Rome. If that's the highest bid, Rome says, "You got it body." All Rome wants is \$50,000. They'll provide solders to help him get it. What Kevin makes over and above \$50,000 is for him to

keep. And so it actually was run by crooks. And it was great money getting scam and scheme, and the local people hated the tax collectors.

There were several types of taxes and they hated all of them. The head tax, they were taxed just for being there. And that reminded them that they were under Roman bondage and they despised that tax. There was the land tax and they hated that one because God owns the land anyways, not the Romans. And then, they also had a tax where, as you were going down the road and you entered from one area to another, Kevin could have barricades up all around the Collegedale. You want to get through Collegedale, you had to pay a toll. And if you have a big truck and it's filled with stuff, to go through it, and a tariff on all of those goods. And anything above \$50,000 he gets to keep.

And so they were hated individuals, these publicans. In fact, they had a very close society because nobody liked them. And so, Kevin being an enterprising young man would probably hire his cousin Shawn, and a few other people to keep it in the family because nobody else likes you anyways. And nobody else wants to be around you. And then, in order to insulate himself from the pain of all the hatefulness that people have for him, he is going to try to save himself by getting more money and so he'll have this vicious circle going on. The more he tries to save himself the more people hate him, and on and on. This is Levi.

Levi apparently is seated at this seat of custom. He is there. Now he is not too far from the sea, and nobody is passing by because everybody is listening to Jesus down by the sea. So you can picture Levi sitting there. He can hear what Jesus' is saying. He is hearing this message about God. He is hearing these wonderful concepts, large broad pictures of God. And something is stirring in his heart. He doesn't even notice Jesus has stopped talking until he hears a little rumble as people are near him. And he looks up and there is Jesus, looking at him, and He says, "Hey, follow me!" He does. He gets up and he follows Him. And the next thing we know of in the story, he's got Him over to his house. And not only does he have Jesus there, he's got his fellows there, the other publicans and other sinners.

So we've identified Levi. What we want to do now is look at what is his experience. What is his individual experience in this? Here is a guy rejected by society but loved by God. Isn't that fascinating? Here is a man whose religious experience is what he can make of it while he is at home or with fellow family. The reason for that is he doesn't dare go to the synagogue. Do you remember when Jesus told the story of the publican and the Pharisee? How the Pharisee is standing there with his arms open saying, "Thank God I am not like these other people. Whoa, man am I happy!" And where is the publican? He is in the back with his head bowed. He's got his back against the wall. You know why? He doesn't want to get stabbed in the back. It was a real problem back then. Publicans were, you know, you kill them. If somebody saw you kill a publican, they are not going to squeal on you, they didn't like him either. And so these guys wouldn't go out in public, they wouldn't even go to church.

So here you have a whole group of people. They have no access to God through the normal means, so God comes to them. Jesus comes right to their house. What is their experience? Wow! Jesus takes Matthew, the tax collector, and turns him into Matthew, a fisher of man. He turns his life upside down and gives it meaning. And He takes that pain that is deep down inside

and He works it out until Matthew is complete and Matthew is whole. And he indeed does follow Him.

So what is the story? Who is in the story? What did they experience in the story? You just use your imagination and God will direct you. And He will guide you, and you will have a wonderful experience as you go into that story. And you see the people, and you hear the people, and you feel what they feel, and you smell what they smell and you just are there. And we come to the fourth question, "What does this teach us about God?" What does this story teach us about God? Well I'll tell you. This story reminds me that God is on the hunt and that He knows where every single one of us is. He knows those who will say "Yes" He knows those who will say "No." He knows those who are ready should He say right now, "Follow Me." He comes, as the Bible says, with healing in His wings. He comes to take away guilt. He comes to take away pain. He comes to take away all those deep, deep insecurities that are down there and all those failures. He comes for all that.

The Bible says when Jesus was questioned or His disciples were questioned by the religious leaders, Jesus said: "Ah, I didn't come for the righteous. I came for sinners!" This is one time we can rejoice we are sinners because Jesus came for us. And He came to make us well. He came to hold us, and He knows what position is the best to get the pain out of our life. He came to be close with us, He came to be tender with us, and He came to save us. He is passing by right now. Are you wanting to follow Him? That's the only question. Are you wanting to follow Him?

Today, I want to challenge you. The challenge is simple. Last week I challenged you to start reading the Bible, and I hope you have. This week I want to challenge you to find a story that's kind of interesting to you and stop there. Stay there. Stay there for several days. Stay there all week. Get into that story. What is the story? Who is in the story? What are they experiencing in the story and what does that story teach you about God? You will find God is alive, He is active, and He is alive and He is active in your life. And there is no pain so deep He can't be deeper still. And in this process you will find faith. And when you find faith, you will be faithful. That's the way it works.

So this week, are there any here who would like to say to the Lord, "Yes, I am willing to give it a go. I am going to try that. In fact, I am going to demonstrate I'm willing to try it by making a commitment to do it, and I am going to stand right now, and I am going to say, yes Lord, count me in. I am going to study a story that way." Good for you, God bless you.

"Father in Heaven, bless these dear people. Bless them with your very presence. And bless them Heavenly Father with the removal of deep, deep pain. I pray this in Jesus' name, Amen."