**Chutes & Ladders #3**

Well tonight we are going to wrap up our series called, “Chutes and Ladders” by looking at the other half of what we started looking at last week. Last week, we unpacked the idea that there are things in life that can start out as “ladders” but can quickly turn into a “chute” when we allow things to get off balance. Last week, we talked about Adam and Eve and how their lack of trust in God, how their belief that they probably know better than God is what turned their “ladder” into a “chute.

Tonight I want to take a few minutes and look at the reverse of this idea which is how things that we assume are “chutes” could actually be “ladders”.

Now, like I said last week, it isn’t too difficult to pretty quickly create a list of things in life that feel a lot like a “chute” right?

* Parents divorce
* Grades are suffering
* Loss of a loved one
* Getting bullied
* Feeling like you have no friends
* Your heart gets broken

These are all things that can make us feel like we’re on a long downward slide.

The Bible is full of these types of examples. I mentioned just a few of them last week.

* Moses had a speech impediment
* David was the littlest of the brothers
* Jospeh was sold into slavery by his family
* Paul was shipwrecked, beaten and imprisoned

These are all things that can without a doubt make us feel like we’re taking the long slide. But here’s what I want to do tonight. I want to try to figure out what the necessary ingredients are for turning a “chute” into a “ladder”?

What has to be going on in our mind, our hearts and in our relationship with God in order for something awful to be turned into something great?

I want to give you just a quick real life example of a guy who experienced this type of turnaround. Check out this video.

“Phil’s Testimony” video…

What I love about this guy’s story is that nothing changed about his circumstances right? His sister wasn’t miraculously raised back to life. It wasn’t a story book, fairy tale type of ending. His sister passed away and his outward circumstances didn’t change. What changed was, what was occurring in his heart.

It was as if Phil had this realization that what he was doing wasn’t working. He was tired, and broken and beaten down and discouraged.

In Psalm 38:6-8 (NLT) David says the same thing, *“I am bent over and racked with pain. All day long I walk around filled with grief. A raging fever burns within me, and my health is broken. I am exhausted and completely crushed. My groans come from an anguished heart.”*

Verse 10 (NIV) says, *“My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes.”*

Verses 13-14 (NIV) says, *“I am like the deaf, who cannot hear, like the mute, who cannot speak; I have become like one who does not hear, whose mouth can offer no reply.”*

In other words, this guy was at the bottom of chute and was headed towards another. You get this image that David, like Phil in the video was just tumbling out of control. There was nothing good on the horizon.

In much the same way that Phil’s outward circumstances didn’t change, David’s circumstances didn’t change. David goes on to detail the number of enemies he has for reasons that he can’t explain, he details the people that are paying back his goodness with evil, nothing was getting better in David’s life.

But listen to what David says in verse 15 of chapter 38. Psalm 38:15 (NIV) says, *“Lord, I wait for you; you will answer, Lord my God.”*

I love David’s attitude change in this passage. He basically says, *“Hey, I can’t control or change how things are out here, but I can control and change how things go on in here.”*

David says, “God, I’m just going to wait.” I’m going to wait for you to…

* Show me what I need to do.
* Show me how to pray.
* Show me what I need to think.
* Show me the peace that only you can supply.

Both David from that generation and Phil from this generation came to the realization that the only thing within their control was how they viewed their circumstances.

Here’s the problem that we deal with today when it comes to experiencing tough times. We focus all of our energy on trying to change what’s happening rather than changing our perspective.

What if we began to see our “chutes” from God’s perspective? What if when we experienced tough times, we started to ask God what he was up to? What if we asked God to show us what we’re supposed to learning?

It’s like we’ve forgotten passages in the Bible like Romans 8:28 (NIV) that says, *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

It’s like we somehow think that when tough stuff happens in our lives that God is somehow caught off guard. Listen, God’s not unaware of your struggles. What He wants is that in the midst of us tumbling backwards, He wants us to scream out, “God, show me what this means.” “God, show me how this fits into the plan that I know you have for my life.” He wants us to scream out in the midst of our long slide down, that we will wait for Him.

I mean listen, the ultimate transformation of a chute into a ladder is your willingness in the midst of struggle to look to God for answers.

The ultimate transformation, when nothing is making sense and you feel completely confused and alone, if in the midst of that, you look to God and draw close to Him, you have indeed transformed a chute into a ladder.