

Take Back Your Story

A 5-day devotional · From Pain to Purpose · Week 4

Day 1

The Sentence

ANCHOR VERSE

David was now in great danger because all his men were very bitter about losing their sons and daughters, and they began to talk of stoning him. But David found strength in the LORD his God.

1 Samuel 30:6 NLT

Every man in that camp lost the same thing on the same afternoon. Their town was burned to the ground. Every wife, every son, every daughter was gone. And inside one verse the road forks. The whole army goes bitter of soul and reaches for stones. One man takes hold of the LORD his God.

Same fire. Two hearts.

This is the sentence to carry with you this week: bitterness is pain you kept; purpose is pain you gave to God. It isn't a formula. It's a fork. Kept pain is going somewhere, and if it isn't going to God it's going out sideways at whoever is closest — your spouse, your kids, the person in the next cubicle, or God Himself.

You are carrying something right now. The only question is where it goes.

REFLECT

What have I been carrying without ever handing it to God?

PRAY

Father, I've been keeping some things I never meant to keep. Help me name them today, and give me the courage to hand them over. In Jesus' name, amen.

Take Back Your Story

A 5-day devotional · From Pain to Purpose · Week 4

Day 2

A Place to Put It

ANCHOR VERSE

In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD listened; he saved me from all my troubles.

Psalm 34:6 NLT

If you've walked away from church, or if you've never really walked in — this day is for you.

The men who wanted to stone David were not evil men. They were grieving men with no one to grieve to. They reached for rocks because a rock was the only thing within reach. David had Someone within reach. That's the whole difference in verse 6 — not that David was stronger, but that he had somewhere to put it.

You have probably heard people say Christianity is a crutch for people who can't handle life on their own. Read that verse again. David couldn't handle it. The whole army couldn't handle it. The Bible is not embarrassed about that; it's the starting point. The question isn't whether you're strong enough. The question is whether you have anywhere to put what you're carrying.

You do. He is closer than you think, and He is not offended by desperation.

REFLECT

If I were honest with God today about what I'm carrying, what would I say?

PRAY

God, I don't know if I believe You're listening. But if You are — here's what I've been carrying. I'd like to hand it to You. Show me if You're real. In Jesus' name, amen.

Take Back Your Story

A 5-day devotional · From Pain to Purpose · Week 4

Day 3

Bitter in a Day

ANCHOR VERSE

"Don't call me Naomi," she responded. "Instead, call me Mara, for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me."

Ruth 1:20 NLT

Naomi buried a husband and two sons and came home a different woman. She was so undone she stopped answering to her own name. Call me Mara. Call me bitter. The wound became her identity.

The Hebrew for bitter in Ruth 1:20 is the same root that shows up in 1 Samuel 30:6 — the men were bitter in soul. Same word. Naomi got there over years. David's men got there before sundown.

Bitterness isn't a mood. It's a condition. It's what an untended wound becomes if nobody digs it up. And it doesn't announce itself as bitterness — it announces itself as "I'm just being realistic" or "I've been through too much to trust anybody" or "I just don't do church anymore." It sounds like strength. It's a wall.

You do not have to answer to Mara for the rest of your life. God has a different name for you, and He is willing to trade the wall for a new heart. That is what last week was about. This week we are learning what a new heart does the next time it gets hit.

REFLECT

What have I been calling "realistic" that God might be calling "bitter"?

PRAY

Lord, I don't want to be called Mara. I don't want the wound to be my name. Give me a soft heart again — even where I've built a wall. In Jesus' name, amen.

Take Back Your Story

A 5-day devotional · From Pain to Purpose · Week 4

Day 4

Before the Promise

ANCHOR VERSE

Then David asked the LORD, "Should I chase after this band of raiders? Will I catch them?" And the LORD told him, "Yes, go after them. You will surely recover everything that was taken from you!"

1 Samuel 30:8 NLT

Notice the order. David asked before God promised anything. He didn't wait until he had a guarantee to worship. He worshiped, then he asked, then he got an answer.

The chapter next door tells the other story. King Saul, the same week, in the same crisis, asked the same God — and heard nothing. He went looking for answers in the dark and it ended in a grave on a mountain. Two men. Two questions. Two outcomes. The Bible is not promising you a specific answer. It is promising you Someone to ask.

You have prayed for something and heard nothing. Maybe for years. That does not mean you are Saul. It means you are still asking, which is exactly what David did. Keep asking. Bring Him the question again today, out loud, even if it feels like nothing changes.

Ask before there is a promise. That is what a soft heart does.

REFLECT

What is the honest question I've stopped bringing to God because I'm tired of the silence?

PRAY

Father, I've stopped asking because I got tired of not hearing. I'm asking again today. Speak, Lord — Your servant is listening. In Jesus' name, amen.

Take Back Your Story

A 5-day devotional · From Pain to Purpose · Week 4

Day 5

Go Back to the Brook

ANCHOR VERSE

Who will listen when you talk like this? We share and share alike — those who go to battle and those who guard the equipment.

1 Samuel 30:24 NLT

The story does not end with recovery. It ends with a ruling.

Two hundred of the six hundred men were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor. A third of the army. When the winners came back with the plunder, some of them wanted to cut the exhausted ones out. David refused. He made it law. Everybody gets a full share — the ones who fought and the ones who couldn't get up.

There are people in your life sitting at the brook right now. The single mom running on fumes. The neighbor whose marriage just came apart. The friend who used to be at church and quietly stopped. God did not restore your story so you could stand at a distance and admire it. He restored it so you could go back for them.

That is the difference between healed and bitter. Bitterness keeps score of who deserves what. Grace goes back to the brook.

God never promised us an outcome. He promised us His presence — and He promised that what He puts in us, He wants to feed somebody else with. That's how the story ends.

REFLECT

Who is at the brook in my life right now — and what would it look like to go back for them this week?

PRAY

Father, thank You for coming back for me. Show me one person You want me to go back to the brook for this week. Give me the courage to actually do it. In Jesus' name, amen.