

Intervention #1 **Choose Your Hard**

3/27/16 – Easter Sunday

- Has anyone here ever watched the show “Intervention?” Intervention was a series on A & E Network dealing with the struggles faced by many different kinds of addicts.
 - o Each episode follows one or two participants, each of whom has a substance dependence or other type of severe addiction. The subjects believe they are being filmed for a documentary on their problem, but their situations are actually being documented in anticipation of an intervention by family and/or friends.
 - o During the intervention, each participant is given an ultimatum: go into rehabilitation immediately, or risk losing contact, income, or other privileges from the loved ones who instigated the intervention.
 - o The addicts featured on the show are offered a chance to undergo a 90-day, all-expenses-paid treatment plan at one of a number of rehabilitation facilities. As in real life, not all interventions depicted in the episodes end well. But, some do.
 - o Let’s watch a clip.

- What a heart-wrenching clip to watch this grandmother who obviously loves her granddaughter so much and the granddaughter loves her grandmother so much. But, choices were made and the drugs took over and the granddaughter chose drugs over everything.
 - o What we didn’t get to see was that this young woman was raised in the church. She believes she was called by God to be a missionary. But, one poor decision led to another to another until she is in a place where the family is has to take drastic measures to get her back.

- That’s just what God did for us! He loves us so much that he sent his only Son to initiate an intervention on our behalf! He allowed his Son to die on a cross as the sacrifice to intervene for our sin and our human condition. And, he rose Jesus from the grave and death in order to fully complete the intervention so that we might find hope and life and freedom!
 - o You see, often drug addicts think that they have their life under control when in reality the drug or alcohol or whatever they are addicted is really the thing in control. They definitely don’t think that what they are doing affects anyone else.
 - o The point of the intervention is to show the hurt their addiction is causing everyone around them and how out of control they really are. It’s a reality check and a call for that family member to make a choice. Getting

treatment is hard. But, abusing drugs is hard on them and on those around them. Choose your hard.

- We all need to choose our hard. See, we might think we have life under control. Most of us here aren't struggling with drug addiction. But, if we look hard enough and really are honest in our heart of hearts, there is something else in.
 - o When I watch this clip, I'm reminded that there is so much pain in people's lives. There are so many struggles in this world today. And, the fact is, you don't have to be addicted to drugs or alcohol or anything else to know that.
 - o None of us is immune to pain and struggle. No one is here today because they have it all together. If you think you have it all together, we might need to gather around and do an intervention today because you are delusional!
 - o For the most part, we're all just doing the best we can in a fallen and flawed world. Sometimes, our "best" leads to the absolute worst decisions that we can make. Addicts, for instance, are doing their best to survive by numbing, self-medicating, trying not to feel the pain.
 - o But, we all are susceptible to doing that in some way. We all try to numb the pain and avoid the struggles. But, nothing we do makes the pain or the struggles go away for good.

- This is the human condition and the human struggle. God saw this. That's why he sent Jesus. That's why Jesus said in Luke 5:31 "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do."
 - o Jesus is the doctor to help us because we are sick and we live in a sick society. We are sick of the struggle and of the pain and we're trying, trying, trying, but our attempts don't seem to be working.
 - o See, you might not be an addict. But, each of us is sick in one area: We all sin.
 - o Sin often is a result of how we are responding to life's struggles and pain. We are trying to deal with things and end up dealing with them in a way that is wrong and detrimental to our lives and to those around us.
 - o And, when it comes to man's sin problem, we simply cannot help ourselves. That is why God sent His son, Jesus, to be our intervention.

- There is so much pain and struggle because, let's face it – we get let down...a lot! Who here has been let down? We all have. We get let down by a variety of things.
 - o Things let you down. I love technology and computers and cars. I often say, technology and vehicles are great...until there's something wrong with them. Then, I'm overwhelmed because I don't know what to do!
 - o How many have ever been let down by things? Your printer won't work when you need to print an important assignment? Your computer is locked up? Your tire goes flat during a torrential downpour? Your refrigerator goes on the fritz after you just went to the grocery store and stocked up?

- But, it gets even deeper than that. We could probably deal with the things letting us down, but it's when people let us down that it really begins to create some pain and struggle in our lives. There's nothing as disappointing as being let down by someone else in a critical moment when you needed someone the most.
 - o Have you ever been let down by someone? It causes a loss of innocence and the building of distrust in our lives, doesn't it?
 - o The first time I had to talk to Josiah about good touch and bad touch just about broke my heart. I had to share with him how no one should ever touch the body parts that are covered by his underwear except Mommy and Daddy when we are giving him a bath or a doctor when they are examining him and then Mommy or Daddy should be right there. I had to tell him that if anyone tries to touch his private parts that he should tell us immediately and to never keep this a secret.
 - o I'm telling you. After I shared this with him and he went on his way, I cried. The talk didn't seem to phase him at all. He was just like, "Ok, Mommy. Got it."
 - o But, I knew the loss of innocence that occurred. Now, he would know to be on alert. We've had to have other conversations about people and situations that further have caused little bits of his innocence to be chipped away. Subjects like stranger danger and how people take little boys and girls away from their parents and hurt them.
 - o It all points to the fact that people will let you down and we, unfortunately, have to be on the lookout for this and teach our children to be on the lookout, too.

- And, it's one thing to be let down by a stranger, but another to be let down by someone you trust. It cuts deep when someone you thought you could count on says one thing, but does another. This might be deliberate or unintentional, but either way, it still hurts.

- Sometimes, we are the one doing the letting down. We care about others and want to help.
 - o We do all we can to help one another, but sometimes our best efforts just aren't enough. We try to intervene when friends or family are in need, but we can only do so much. Often, we let people down and may not even realize it.
 - o People let us down and we let people down.

- We even let ourselves down. We think we have things figured out and then they all go to pot. We react and sometimes our reactions get us in even more of a mess. Our instincts aren't always right.
 - o Our own efforts fail. We end up questioning if our retirement will be enough, if our marriage will last, if we are good parents, if our job is secure.

- Our actions seem to be hit or miss. Sometimes, our plans work and a lot of times, they don't. As much as we try to control things, it's like trying to hold water in our hands without any of it dripping out – it's impossible!
- See, we need something else. We need Someone else. We need Easter! Easter is when God fully intervened in our human condition to give us the power source we need for true living. God's intervention provides a way through the pain and struggle and let downs of life. God's intervention is a permanent solution, an eternal solution.
 - When Jesus burst forth from the grave, he became our divine and ultimate intervention. His resurrection marked an intervention between us and sin, death, pain and struggle. That doesn't mean that we don't experience all of those things, but through his intervention, we don't have to be consumed by them or controlled by them.
 - Instead, he gives us another way to live above the stuff of this earth. What we can't control or deal with fully on this level, God can on his level.
- Jesus, the only Son of God, provides a power source on another level! His resurrection shows the power that can only be found on another level! That is why today, all around the world, we join a multitude of believers to celebrate the greatest event in human history – the RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD!
 - He really came to earth. He really died. No serious historian denies the life and death of Jesus. There is more evidence of his life than of the lives of most Caesars and other political powers of his time.
 - His resurrection is not a myth, allegory, fable. His resurrection is what prompted all of his original disciples to be martyred for they would not deny that they saw the risen Christ. No one would die the kind of deaths they died for a fable, for something that they made up. And, millions of his followers since then have done the same as they encountered his intervention in their own lives.
 - Beyond that, numerous historical records from (Romans, Greeks, Jews & others) tell of this man's public execution and His public resurrection!
- Does a fairytale change the course of history? Does a myth change the face of the planet? Does a fable endure through generations upon generations? Are millions upon millions upon billions of people duped?
 - There is no logic in that. Lies are eventually exposed. Truth never fails and only is proven to be truth over and over. The truth is that Jesus Christ rose from the grave just as He said He would!
 - **HE IS ALIVE! HE IS ALIVE! HE IS ALIVE!**
- And the one thing that makes the story even more amazing is the FACT that He did it all for you! He came for you! He came to intervene in your life so that the power

that raised him from the dead might be available to you to bring full and complete intervention and healing.

- See, all of those things that let you down culminate into life, in general, letting you down.
 - But, there is a solution to this let down of life. It's God's intervention through Jesus!
 - Things might let you down, people might let your down, you might let yourself down, your own body might let you down, life might let you down, but God has never failed once! He is not going to let you down! His intervention is complete!
- What makes Jesus' intervention complete to the point that we can rise above the let downs, pain, struggle and sin of life? Let's look at some parts of his Easter intervention and how by accepting those parts, we will experience new life.
- The first thing about God's intervention is that God sets his own agenda. When you accept his intervention, he will set the agenda for your life. He sets the agenda not just for your life, but for life and the world in general.
- God is like Babe Ruth, one of the greatest baseball players of all time. I'm not a big baseball fan, but I know about Babe Ruth. There's never been a player like him.
 - He actually called his own shot one time. You've probably heard this story. One game, he looked out at the pitcher, pointed his bat out and told the whole stadium where he was going to hit the homerun and did it!
 - Now that's pretty incredible. I've played some softball and baseball in my time and I couldn't even tell you if I was going to hit the ball at all and if I did, where it the world it might go. It might be a pop up or a line drive or foul. I never knew. I was just trying to make contact!
 - But, Babe Ruth set the agenda and did it!
- We're here today celebrating the Resurrection because Jesus set the agenda for humanity and the course of history!
- Some think that Jesus was a victim of circumstances that day. But, over the last month, we went through a series called "One Month to Live" and saw that Jesus' actions were very deliberate as he approached his death. In fact, he knew it was coming. His words let us know that the events on the day of His crucifixion were His own agenda.
 - In Matthew 20:17-19, it says this, "As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside privately and told them what was going to happen to him. "Listen," he said, "we're going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man (side note: Jesus often referred to himself as the Son of Man. This was a reference from the Old Testament about the Messiah) will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence him to die. Then they will hand him over to the Romans to be

- mocked, flogged with a whip, and crucified. But on the third day he will be raised from the dead.”
- This was actually the third time that Jesus predicted not only his death, but how he would die.
- Now, who’s agenda was the world on that day? The same one who sets the agenda everyday. Sometimes it looks like heaven has lost control, but God always sets the agenda. He can set the agenda because he holds the ultimate power.
 - Phil 2:9-11 tells us this when it says, “Therefore God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...”
 - Did you get that? His name is above EVERY name. That means the thing or situation or person you’re struggling with falls under the authority of the name of Jesus! The thing or circumstances or person that has let you down or brought you pain is under the authority of Jesus.
 - I don’t care what the problem’s name is: Divorce, disease, cancer, drug addiction, abuse, abandonment, rebellion, depression, family dysfunction, financial distress, unforgiveness. It is under the authority of Jesus Christ! And, it has to bow before and submit to the authority of Jesus Christ!
 - When we accept God’s intervention, Jesus points his baseball bat at those problems and says, “I’m about to knock those out! I’m calling the shots!” Woo hoo!!!
 - Maybe you’ve let your problems set the agenda for your life. You’ve been living under the agenda of something, someone, some situation. You need an intervention!
 - I want you to know that God has a different agenda. Jeremiah 29:11 says For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” We looked at this verse extensively at the beginning of the year during the series called “Got Junk?”
 - His plan is not for you to have junk set the agenda. Did you notice His plan? It’s all about HOPE and about your FUTURE.
 - If you haven’t accepted the intervention of Jesus, the agenda you’ve been living on is all about your past and circumstances that you can’t control; it’s all about hopelessness. It’s all about junk!
 - Can I just tell you one of the most heart-breaking and frustrating things to see in people as a pastor – this very thing. People trading their good, their purpose, their hope and their future that God promises for junk.
 - When I see people allowing problems, people, situations and everything else under the sun make their agenda rather than allowing Jesus to intervene and

accepting his intervention. It makes me want to shake them up in hopes that it will help them see what they are doing and see the life God has for them that they are missing out on. Don't worry – I haven't ever shaken anyone! 😊

- It doesn't mean that the problems all disappear, but it does mean that you can rise above those problems as you refuse to allow them to set the agenda for your life!

- You need to recognize that He sets the agenda for your life! You can live within his agenda and experience an intervention that will change the course of how you live from death, frustration, struggle and pain to life with joy, hope, future, peace and purpose! Which one do you want to choose? Choose your hard.

- Know this, because God sets the agenda, God never panics, even when it gets hard. If God never panics, then we don't have to panic, either.
 - That's a big difference in us and God: When the world starts to cave in around us, we panic, and get frantic. We start running around trying to figure out what to do, how to fix things, how to deal. Or, we run away and try to numb the pain and the circumstances or try to run away by ignoring the struggle. Or, we fight.

- But, God doesn't do any of those things because God doesn't panic. He always has a plan. And, we just read that his plan includes having a plan for you. He is strong enough to carry out that plan and to protect you and provide for you in the process.
 - The writer of Psalm 46:1-3; 11 says this, God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.
 - ²So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea.
 - ³Let the oceans roar and foam.
Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!
 - The LORD of Heaven's Armies is here among us; the God of Israel^(b) is our fortress.
 - Those are some bold claims – let the earthquakes come and the oceans roar and the mountains crumble, we won't be afraid because we serve a big God who sets the agenda, who doesn't panic because he a strong fortress and who will protect us as we follow his plan and agenda.

- Now, let's just be real - sometimes His plan may scare you. There are so many things when God has led me to do something and I have a "What'chu talking about, God?" moment.
 - Like when are in a crisis and God says, "Wait on me." When someone does you wrong and God says, "Don't do anything. Let me intervene for you. In fact, forgive them instead." Whatchu talking about God? When God says,

“Go do something that is completely outside of your comfort zone.”

Whatchu talking about God?

- Or like when Moses was cornered between the Red Sea and the Egyptian army and he wanted to run, but God’s plan: “Stand Still!” Whatchu talking about God?
 - Or, when Peter wanted to stand still on the bow of a ship in a storm, God’s plan: “Step Out!” Whatchu talking about God?
 - He may ask you to do some unusual things, but when you’re obedient to Him, He never leaves you alone. Because he never leaves you and he holds all power, who or what should you fear? Because he sets the agenda, why should you panic?
- Maybe you and everyone around you is in panic mode. Maybe you live your life in panic mode or in drama mode. Maybe you live your life in fear.
- God’s not in panic mode. God’s not ringing his hands in fear. **GOD IS STILL IN CONTROL!**
 - You need an intervention to know his peace rather than panic, to know his strength rather than fear, to know his control rather than life’s drama. Choose your hard.
- He is still in control and he still sets the agenda because Jesus IS the Resurrection. He was the resurrection and the intervention before he ever actually rose from the dead. Can you imagine the kind of power that can overcome death?? Resurrection power is the ultimate power.
- Has anyone been watching the political races lately? I’m already sick to death of it all and we still have months left!! But, politicians are highly skilled individuals, aren’t they? Who else can field question after question...Talk for literally hours on end...And not say a SINGLE THING???
 - They can come down on neither side of the issue every time. They are all trying to gain a position of power and they are supposed to serve while in that position, but we know how that often works out!
- Let me tell you, GOD is nothing like that. When He speaks...hang on! He has something to say. He has the real power to back it up. And, his whole purpose was to use that power to serve and to save us from eternal death.
- This is displayed when he raised Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, were his friends. Lazarus died and Jesus gets there four days after he died. intercepted
 - Martha went to him and said, “If only you were here, he wouldn’t have died.” Then, Jesus made one of the boldest promises ever made:
 - In John 11:25 it says, "Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life.^[a] Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying.”

- Then, before anyone has time to argue with Him, He makes good on His promise. Jesus calmly walks up to the door of the tomb and says, “Lazarus come forth!” And here he comes!
- I can just imagine Jesus looking at Martha as she stood there in shock. It was then that she realized what Jesus said. Jesus said, “You’re talking to the Resurrection! You’re talking to the one who holds the power over death and if I hold the power over death, there is nothing beyond my power. I can breathe life into anything!”
- Then, here’s the kicker! When we accept Jesus’ intervention, we have access to that same resurrection power! Paul is writing to the Ephesian church and in Ephesians 1:19-20 he says this, “I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms.”
 - Do you get how incredible that is? The same resurrection power of Jesus is available to us as we allow Jesus to intervene in our lives.
 - This was God’s plan from the beginning of time – to intervene and save us from ourselves, from the let down of others, from the let down of life and give us real life!
 - Because of this fact, He has the authority to RESURRECT everything dead/dying around you! Do you have family relationships that are dying? Is your marriage dying? Is your heart hard? Are you filled with distrust for other people and even God? Jesus can breathe life into dead relationships and dead hearts!
- Some of this may seem too good to be true to you. This is just religious Easter hype. How could Jesus do all of this for me? Well, he created you and he loves you. He loves you enough to lay down his life for you. He desires to have a sit down intervention with you. And, just like that grandma did in our clip, he wrote a letter to you of how much he loves you. It’s called the Bible.
 - You know, when those who are addicts accept the intervention, it is hard. It means they have to change their lives completely. They have to go through the agony of withdrawal. They have to go to rehab. They have to give up old friends, maybe relationships that have enabled them. They have to learn a whole new way to cope with life that doesn’t involve numbing the pain with drugs or alcohol. It’s going to be a hard road.
 - But, being a drug addict is hard. And, the results are deadly. They have to choose their hard – the hard road of addiction that leads to death or the hard road of recovery to reclaim their life.
- Likewise, accepting the intervention of Jesus is hard. You have to learn a new way to live. You have to give up your independence and learn to depend on God. You

have to give up control to the One who really has the power to be in control. Life change is hard.

- But, not accepting the intervention of Jesus is hard. Trying to live on your own and seeing that you just keep messing it up is hard. Living in fear or panic or frustration or despair, being overwhelmed by situations and problems is hard.
- The bottom line is: which hard leads to resurrection life and power? Choose your hard.