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Win the Day – Flip the Script

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On April 20, 1913, Sir William Osler delivered a speech at Yale University, it was a simple message. I'll give you the cliff notes, "live in day-tight compartments". Now, that is easier said than done but if you can pull it off, if you can put it into practice, it is the solution to a 1,000 problems. According to psychologists, Matthew Killingsworth and Daniel Gilbert, the average person spends 46.9% of their time thinking about something other than what they're doing in the present moment. In other words, we're living in the wrong time zone. We're depressed about the past, we're worried about the future, we're distracted, we're frustrated, we're overwhelmed by this, that and the other thing. We're half present half the time, which means we're half alive. If you want to be fully alive, you have to be fully present. And the only way to be fully present is to live in day-tight compartments.

This is not just a good idea, this is a God idea. "*Give us this day, our daily bread*". "*Take up your cross daily*". "*This is the day that the Lord has made I will rejoice and be glad in it.*" "*His mercies are new every morning.*" "*Don't let the sun go down on your anger.*" "*Don't worry about tomorrow.*" The idea of living in day-tight compartments is a thread that is woven all the way from Genesis to Revelation. In fact, I find it fascinating that in the Genesis account of creation, the day doesn't begin with sunrise, there was evening and there was morning, the first day. There is a genius to this sacred sequence to this ancient algorithm. Here's the bottom line - Yesterday is history, tomorrow is mystery. Our job is to win the day. Now I have no idea what goal you're going after, what problem you're trying to solve, what habit you're trying to break or build but I know the secret to your success. It's going to happen one day at a time. You have to win the day, then you have to get up the next day do it all over again. And if you do, I think that's called a winning streak. I think it's also called sanctification.

Here's what we're going to do over the next four weeks, we're going to unpack seven habits that are going to help you stress less and accomplish more. We're going to talk about flipping the script, kiss the wave, eat the frog, fly the kite, cut the rope, wind the clock and seed the clouds.

Let me plant a seed of faith, right up front. Almost anyone can accomplish almost anything if they work at it long enough, hard enough and smart enough. You are capable of more than you can imagine. Why? Because God is able to do immeasurably more than all you can ask or imagine. That said 75% of New Year's resolutions fail within the first month. Why? When you think in one year timelines, it's overwhelming. You feel like quitting before you even get started? Here's the question that we're going to keep coming back to over and over again during this series. Can you do it for a day? Pick a habit, any habit? Here's the good news. The only ceiling, on your intimacy with God and impact on the world is daily spiritual disciplines. If you do the right thing day in and day out, I believe God is going to show up and show off.

Well, welcome to 2021. It has been a year right but it is a new year, a new series a new season and if you have a Bible you can meet me in Genesis chapter 50, verse 20. Before we zoom in, let me zoom out. There are decades when nothing happens, said Vladimir Lenin and then there are weeks when decades happen. Now, let me push that envelope a little bit. I think there are days when decades happen. And we had a few of those days a few of those weeks in 2020 the day we heard the news about this invisible virus called COVID-19. We didn't know it at the time, but it was a day that decades happened. The day we heard about Ahmaud Arbory or George Floyd or Breonna Taylor, the day RGB died, the day a woman of color was elected vice president. Listen; regardless of race, religion, gender or politics, those are days when decades happen. Now, the same is true in each one of our lives. I am believing that this is one of those series that has the potential to change the trajectory of your life.

Destiny is not a mystery, destiny is a decision, and you are one decision away from a totally different life. I don't know about you, I am ready for a new year. Can I get an amen on the chat at our online campus? I am ready to hit reset. I'm ready to gather again as a church. I'm ready for herd immunity, ready for the kids to go back to school, ready to go see a movie with my wife, ready to grab dinner with friends. I am ready for any semblance of normality, even a new normal. Having said that, let me say this, you can't just flip the calendar, you have to flip the script. It is the first of seven habits that I write about that you can read about in 'Win the Day'.

Here's the big idea, if you want to change your life, you have to change your story. In the science of cybernetics, there are two kinds of change. First-order change is behavioral; it's doing something more or less. If you're trying to lose weight, eating less, exercising more is certainly a step in the right direction. First-order change can facilitate a quick fix. But second-order change passes the test of time. Second-order change is conceptual. It's mind over matter and that's where the magic happens. Everything is created twice. The first creation is mental, it's internal. The second creation is physical, it's external. Everything was once a thought. And by the way, that includes you, you don't just bear his image you are his idea. In fact, you are His workmanship, which means you are a unique expression of God's imagination.

We tend to think of habits as external exercises that increase proficiency or productivity. It's practicing scales, its practicing skills. And those external habits will pay dividends, no doubt. But the biggest returns on investment are what I would call high leverage habits and they're internal habits that no one else can see. It's your internal monologue. It's the way that you explain experiences to yourself. It's the stories that you tell yourself day in and day out. In the words of John Quincy Adams, "Whoever tells the best story wins."

On average, about 60,000 thoughts fire across our synapses every single day. According to a study done by the Cleveland Clinic, about 80% of those thoughts are negative. Okay, Houston, we have a problem. Our problem is stinking thinking right? "*As a man thinketh in his heart*", said the writer of Proverbs, "*so*

*is he.*" Your thoughts have a psychological and physiological effect? Your thoughts have the power to lower blood pressure, slow your pulse, boost immunity, or do the exact opposite, right. The battle is won or lost in the mind. Either way, it's the stories you tell yourself that are more important than the situations you find yourself in. That's when and where and how we flip the script.

With that as a backdrop Genesis 50:20 - let me set the scene. When Joseph was a teenager, he had a dream, a dream of his brothers bowing down to him. He makes the mistake of sharing this dream with his brothers who don't take kindly to it, sell him into slavery. And things go from bad to worse; he ends up in prison for a crime he did not commit. Then something happens, Joseph interprets a dream for Pharaoh. Next thing you know, Pharaoh puts a signet ring on Joseph's finger, ends up second in command. And 13 years, long years after selling him into slavery, his brothers come knocking. In fact, they come begging for food because of a famine. Genesis 43:28 says that in that moment, his brothers bow down. I can only imagine the thoughts and the feelings. The vision he had at 17 the vision that went off the rails that took a wrong turn, that seems so far away, that ain't never gonna happen that vision in a moment becomes reality. It's the day that decades happen. Do not give up on the dream that God has put in your heart.

I might make one observation right here. A God ordained dream does not mean a boat cruise up the Nile River. In fact, the bigger the dream, the more risks you're going to have to take, the more sacrifices you're going to have to make. I say, so be it. God give us a dream that's gonna keep us on our knees.

Alright, chapter 50 verse 20. It's like a time lapse video. Joseph looks back on the ups and the downs, the twists, and the turns. And this is what he says. <sup>20</sup> *You intended to harm me, BUT GOD (come on BUT GOD, BUT GOD, BUT GOD) intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*" May God give us a 5020 vision.

Let me make this as simple as 1, 2, 3. If you want to flip the script - three things.

- \* One, you have to know your name.
- \* Two, you have to fix your focus.
- \* And three you have to change your story.

More than a century ago, Charles Horton Cooley, founder of the American Sociological Association, said, "I am not what I think I am and I am not what you think I am. I am what I think you think I am." Well, how much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood? It's a little bit of a tongue twister, a little bit of a mind bender but it might sound vaguely familiar because you probably heard it in a class. Cooley called it the 'looking glass self'. And it's basing our sense of self on how we believe others see us. Now our sense of self it comes from a lot of different sources. And here's the

irony, sometimes it's something as simple as someone saying, you're good at that, or you're bad at that. And we buy into it and it becomes this script for our life. Well, either way, it's letting people narrate your story; it's living your life according to their expectations. It is so critical that we take our cues from scripture. Why? Scripture is our script, and our script-cure. The book of James likens the Bible to a mirror. This is where we discover who we are in the eyes of God. This is how we know our name. This is how we flip our script. Its right here, you got to take a long, hard look in the mirror.

Let me dive back into this story. Now Joseph, he plays a few mind games with his brothers, which I think is absolutely justified. But he finally reveals his identity. Genesis 45 verse three he says, "*I am Joseph!*" Now when I read that, for some reason, I hear Guardians of the Galaxy I am Groot. Welcome to my world. Not sure why but I love this moment Joseph reveals his identity and we read right past it but Joseph knows his name. Well of course he knows his name it's his name. Well, not so fast. Fun fact - Daily Double if you know this - when Pharaoh makes Joseph second in command, he doesn't just give him a signet ring he gives him an Egyptian name. Anyone? Anyone? Survey says Zaphenath-Paneah. Lotta hieroglyphics in that alter ego, much harder to spell. But there's something bigger at play here. I think it would have been so easy for Joseph to forget who he was.

When tough time hit some times we forget who we are. But that's the moment that you've got to remember your name. Listen, the same thing happens with Daniel do remember this, Nebuchadnezzar calls him Belteshazzar but that's not his name. Listen, if you let it culture will try to name you and tame you, it will label you, it will define you. Cancel culture will chew you up and spit you out. You have to know who you are, you have to know whose you are, you have to know your name. And this brings us all the way back to Ephesians one. Do you remember this from our 'Heaven on Earth series? You are blessed. You are chosen. You are blameless, adopted redeemed. You are sealed. You are stamped. That is who you are. You have to know your name.

Number two, you have to fix your focus. Now we have a saying in our family. Your focus determines your reality. It's what Qui-Gon said to Luke Skywalker, but it's not just a Jedi mind trick right? This is Philippians four, "If anything is good or right pure or just or admirable think about such things." Why? Because it will fix your... if you're looking for an excuse you will always find one. If you're looking for something to be grateful for you will always find something.

Now, there is a concept in psychology called cognitive reappraisal. It's telling yourself a different story about what's happening and I think Joseph is Exhibit A. He could have so easily played the victim card, right? I bet he could have played God and even the score with his brothers but he doesn't do that. Why? He's got a God's eye view.

Dr. Martin Seligman, the former president of the APA, said that all of us have what he calls an explanatory style. Oh man, if we could X-ray if we could, mri it, I'm telling you. This is one of the most important things about - your explanations are more important than your experiences. Here's what he

said, "Explanatory style is the manner in which you habitually explain to yourself why events happen." Okay, so what was Joseph's explanatory style? I think we have it right here its Genesis 50:20. Listen, you intended to harm me, okay, you were going to tell a story but there is a Meta narrative at play. You intended to harm me, but God, but God intended it for good. God is writing a different story in and through these circumstances.

Now, I know that there's a meme circulating right now. It is the 2020 dumpster fire and yeah, I mean, it's funny. It's the wrong explanation. Listen to me, 2020 was not a dumpster fire 2020 was a refiner's fire. Listen, what comes out of a refiner's fire? Something that is more pure and more precious and more valuable. God is doing a refining work in his church, in his people. And if we would allow him to refine us, what would come out of it would be so much better and so much bigger, and we would look a lot more like Him. The Prophet Malachi said, "*Who is able to endure? Who is able to stand?*" It's the one who allows God to do his refining work in their life. How do we fix our focus? Listen, the short answer is fix your eyes on Jesus, the author, and perfecter of your faith.

I love this moment when Peter gets out of the boat in the middle of Sea of Galilee, in the middle of night, that takes some serious faith. But here's the deal, if you want to walk on water, you have got to get out of the boat. And as long as he is focused on Jesus, he walks on water. What happens? He loses focus, he starts focusing on the wind and the waves. It's so easy for us to focus on the circumstance or even what's going wrong and that's when we start to sink because we start to second guess.

Well, let me give a couple of practical applications and I'll keep it short and sweet. Three things you can do to fix your focus. And I might ask you to just pick one of these for 2021 and put it into practice

\* One, keep a gratitude journal, here's what it will do. It will sanctify your reticular activating system, the part of the brain that determines what gets noticed and what goes unnoticed. And it will enable you; it will create a category for the things that you can praise God about. I'm telling you, it will fix your focus.

\* Two change of pace plus change of place equals change of perspective. Now the key to spiritual growth is routine but once a routine becomes routine, you have to change your routine and so one of my routines is to download a Bible reading plan at the beginning of the year. And I do something a little different, I change translations. Why? Because it makes my synapses fire in a little different way. I loved the Amplified Bible last year, one of my favorite versions, but I'm going back to the New Living Translation. Why? Because I need just the little change of pace. Now there are different ways that you can put this into practice, but nothing will shift your perspective like prayer. Do a silent retreat. 24 days, not 24 day. Good luck with that. 24 days. Yes, that would be awesome, overachievers, 24 days, the rest of us 24 hours, okay. 24 hours, try doing a silent retreat. Just you, your Bible, and the still small voice of the Holy Spirit and you see what happens?

January 11 through 17 we'll do a week of prayer and fasting another great way. Listen, fasting is a phenomenal way to flip the script. But one more idea and this one's kind of unique. Read old books. If you want new ideas, said Ivan Pavlov read old books. Now I've read 1,000s of books but one of my favorite genres is biography. So I'm going to kind of let you into my world a little bit. I love biographies, because they help me see things from a slightly different perspective. It was a biography on DL Moody that led to some of my early morning routines. It was I've read six or seven biographies on Teddy Roosevelt and those biographies resulted in a few of my life goals. It was a biography about Emil Zátopek that inspired me as I ran the Chicago Marathon. In fact, it inspired me so much turned it into a movie script and I'm still shopping it okay. I love biographies.

That said, there is no book that is older or better than the Bible. The Jewish theologian Abraham Herschel, said, "Prophecy is exegesis of existence from a divine perspective." That is so good and so critical. He also said this, "Indecisive hours of history", those weeks to become decades right, "indecisive hours of history it dawns upon us that we would not trade certain lines in the book of Isaiah, for the Seven Wonders of the World." I don't know if he's talking about the seven Ancient Wonders of the World, natural wonders of the world doesn't really matter what he's saying is, during times of crisis, we need a word from God. We need a word from God. We need a place to stand and we stand on his promises.

\* And that brings us to number three. You have to change your story. Now according to a study done by Emory University, the best predictor of a child's emotional well being is not getting into a great school. It's not giving them lots of hugs and kisses. It's not that obligatory pilgrimage to Disney World. It's not Pixar films. Okay according to these researchers at Emory University, number one indicator of a child's emotional well being - drum roll - is a child knowing their family history. What? Huh. Okay, stick with me. Everyone is born into someone else's story. Our kids were born into our story, Lora and I, for better or for worse. I was born into my parent's story. My parents were born into my grandparent's story. We all have a family of origin and that includes an origin story. But here's what happens. When we get grafted into God's family, we get grafted into God's story. This is huge scripture becomes our script. This is not just our mirror, it now becomes our script but it's our back-story, this is our back-story. And your life is the rest of the story. You are the only Bible that some people will ever read. The question is, this is your life, a good translation? You are the fifth gospel, you are Acts 29, you are Revelation 23. Your life is a To Be Continued. And so here's how it works, it starts by surrendering your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ by giving the author and perfecter of your faith, complete editorial control. Here's what happens, God begins writing his-story (history with a hyphen) in and through your life.

Let me close with this, I have a simple theory of spiritual maturity. When you encounter a verse of scripture, you open this book, pick a verse, any verse, at first, it's a theory. Why? Because you haven't experienced it yet. But you put it into practice; you exercise faith, hope and love. You obey what the word says that you live this Spirit led life, you put it into practice and what happens? The theory becomes your testimony. I'll give you an example. Matthew 16:19, "*Whatever you bind on earth will be*

*bound in heaven.*" Listen, that was a theory to me 25 years ago. What does that mean? And then one day, I felt a prompting to pray a perimeter around Capitol Hill. I wasn't praying for property was praying for people, was just obeying a prompting of the Holy Spirit. It ended up being a 4.7 mile prayer walk. Fast forward 25 years, we own half a dozen properties right on that person. I have no explanation for it, other than what you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Listen, the city block that we have turned into our Capitol Hill campus, The Turn Around, we may have bought it in 2014 Oh, no, no, no, no, no. God put a contract on it in 1996. What you bind on earth - - now, I want to be careful right here. Every prayer has to pass a twofold litmus test, it's gotta be in the will of God for the glory of God. Prayer is not outlining your agenda to God. It's getting into God's word into God's presence and letting God outline his agenda to you. But you have no idea how much authority you have if you're operating in the will of God. Come on, exercise your faith, exercise that authority. And what happens? The theory becomes your testimony.

You know what one of the best things you could do this year is to choose a verse of the year. Choose a verse of the year, pick a verse, any verse, and then start to just put it into practice. Now I did this years ago with Proverbs 19:11. *"It is to the glory of man to overlook an offense."* Oh man, choose you verse of the year wisely because God will give you an opportunity to put it into practice. Okay, and but I tell you what, that needed to be my script that year. I'd written a book called *The Circle Maker* and listen; it's impacted a lot of lives. And but some of those early reviews, whooo I had to check my ego, I had to calm my inner man okay, had to overlook an offense or two. There are some reviews, you can go read them. There were some reviews, oh man, oh man whooo. But I made a decision. I will be unoffendable. Why? Because I'm not above or beyond rebuke, because I'm human because I'm not perfect. I'm going to put my pride and my prejudice on the altar, and I'm going to try to live in an unoffendable life. Pick a verse, any verse, start to put it into practice. Make it the script of your life and then you see what God does.

Well, it wouldn't be the first sermon of the year if there weren't two conclusions. So let me just share what I feel like God has put in my heart for us, and I'm holding on to it. I believe that we are coming into a season of acceleration. Now here's the irony. That really is the subplot of this story, right? I mean, for 13 years, things go from bad to worse. And then in one day, in one day, God can do more in one day than you can accomplish in 1,000 lifetimes. God was working his plan, God was writing his story. Now for 13 years, it sure didn't seem like it was going to play out. But in a season of acceleration, Joseph goes from prison to Pharaoh's palace. In physics, velocity is a change in position over time while acceleration is a change in velocity, over time. There will not be a quiz at the end of this message. A change in acceleration over time is called a jerk. That is the technical term. A jerk is the first derivative of acceleration, the second derivative of velocity and the third derivative of position. I'm not even sure exactly what that means, okay? But it's not just a concept in physics; it is a promise in Scripture. "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes." The New Living Translation says it this way, "when grain and grapes" (come on, are you ready for this?) *"will grow faster than they can be harvested."* Isn't that what

happened? Seven years of plenty, there's so much we don't even know what to do with it. They would have wasted it but for a word from God, but for a dream that was interpreted. And Joseph wisely stored for seven years, the plenty so that it would provide, save two nations with an act of courage with an act of wisdom.

I believe that we are coming into a season of supernatural acceleration. Do you feel it? Do you sense it? Well, not if you're looking at the circumstances around us? Oh, I feel it. I sense it. God is activating the gifts of his spirit in an unprecedented way. We're going to see supernatural demonstrations of love and power, we're going to see God's kingdom advance and it's going to seem like a jerk. Okay, it's not going to be linear. That's never how it works. Joseph's story is not linear if you're looking for linear, you came to the wrong place. But I have some good news. When you have a setback, you do not take a step back because God is already preparing your comeback. That's what God was doing in Joseph life. I believe that that's what God is doing in your life.

Listen, you have to flip the script. How? You got to know your name; you got to fix your focus, right? You got to do it. You got to change your story. And if you do that, you better buckle your seat belt. Because you're going to see God's kingdom come in a powerful way in your life, in your marriage, in your family, in your job. I believe it Why? Because God is writing his story in and through you.

Let me pray for you. God, I pray, oh God, I pray at the beginning of a new year God I pray that we would have the courage to submit to your will and your way. Lord, there are so many things we cannot control. We have been reminded this year of how mortal we are. But God, we have also been reminded that you are bigger and longer and stronger, that there is a story that you are writing. And that administration's may come and go, but your kingdom does not end. And so Lord, we put our faith in the end of the story and not just the end of the story, but the story that you're writing in and through each one of us. And so Lord, I pray that you would activate faith in our hearts that you would give us the right explanation for the experiences that are happening around us. Lord, help us see things the way that you do. And Lord, those that find themselves in circumstances where lots of people intending to harm them God you are intending it for good. You're going to work your plans and purposes in us and through us. We believe it. In Jesus name. Amen.