New Hope Global Sermon God Will Make A Way 5 26 22

**Introduction**

Are you “weary and leary” of seeing God’s goodness as circumstances and world news in 2022 continue on a downward path of brokenness, anxiety and outright evil? Those two rhyming words “weary” and “leary”. i.e., suspicious, skeptical, are what Don Moen uses as the title for the Introduction in his book *God Will Make A Way* (Emanate Books, 2018). This is the book that I’ve been reviewing this week and it has brought great encouragement, restored faith and hope into my own life.

Sometimes our weariness is from the stress of chronic negative circumstances. Other times, it is just an incident like what happened to the “umbrella thief”:

 One day on his way to work, my husband, Jermaine, stopped at the cafeteria as it began to rain.

 Forgetting that he hadn't brought an umbrella, he reached for the nearest one when he got up to

 leave.

 That's my umbrella," a woman immediately scolded.

 Abashed at his mistake, he walked on to his office. He was drenched by the time he arrived.

 Once there, he discovered three umbrellas that he had left in the office over the months, and

 decided to bring them home at the end of the day.

 That afternoon he ran into the same woman who had confronted him earlier.

 She looked at the umbrellas, then at him, and tartly remarked, "You did real well for yourself

 today, didn't you?" (GCFN 9/24/18).

Circumstances like the pouring rain, our forgetfulness, and the cynicism of others in our plight can make us weary. We can each substitute our trio of negatives that chip away at our positive attitudes, but the bottom line is that when we focus on our negatives, we lose our focus on the Lord and the blessings He wants to bring each day. Moen’s book has helped me stay positive and anticipate how God will work.

I love the graphic posted for this sermon because it so clearly highlights the situations where “there seems to be no way” and God’s creative plans that “make a way” possible.

Moen focuses on God’s good plans through his emphasis on worship and praise. In fact, his song with the same title has been a mainstay for me throughout the ups and downs of this last decade, particularly with the volatile character changes in Keith due to Alzheimer. It is the reason I purchased his book. It was a wise purchase.

So, for your encouragement, let me start with four simple excerpts from *God Will Make A Way* and then expand on this principle and its applications in our lives today.

* “Although the song ‘God will make a way’ was written for a desperate situation, I had never thought it to be a song of *desperation,* but one of *declaration*. The lyrics do not present a question, ‘Can God make a way?’ but rather a statement, ‘God will make a way.’ If He is God, then He has a way. In fact, *the way*” (Don Moen, *God will make a Way*. Emante Books, 2018 p. 5)
* “Psalm 22:3 tells us that ‘God is enthroned on the praises of His people.’ When we lift our voices in praise – with or without a song – we are building a throne for the King of kings and Lord of lords. The World English Bible says that ‘God ‘inhabits’ the praises of His people,’ and when God is with us, He will save those who are lost, heal the sick, deliver the oppressed or depressed, and provide for every need” (p.155).
* “God is faithful to bring about His promise and prophecies, even when we see no way they could happen. He has a journey prepared to get us there, and places people in our path to help us. . .God uses key relationships to challenge us to go places we would never choose on our own. The right person whom God ordains and places in your life can accelerate your growth in every way, spiritually, emotionally, mentally as well as in your gifts and skills” (pp. 67, 70).

**Alex and my Story**

This week Alex and I can testify to how God has made a way with the launching of our new book *Supracultural Gospel: Bridging East and West.*  This book has been 7 years in the making! The catalyst for the book began when Alex became a Christian at our church those years ago and then returned to China and tried to share his faith in his home culture. People were not receptive. That began a dialogue and research on what the obstacles were that kept the gospel as he had understood it in western terms from being welcomed in Asian contexts. We discovered that his struggles were mirrored by many other Asian internationals who returned home as Christians and were met with opposition and rejection.

This is where so many of our New Hope Bible Fellowship members become part of the story. Not only did you, as international students, share the problems with the western constructs of the gospel from your perspective, but you also added stories from your own experiences. It helped us weave the book together. You were the “right people God placed in our lives who accelerated our growth in every way, spiritually emotionally, mentally as well in our gifts and skills.” What a joy to have published a book we wrote together! God made a way.

In fact, our pattern of 7 years fits another principle Moen shares:

 There seems to be a pattern that the Lord often uses in our lives. He will birth a vision in us. Then there will

 be a point where we feel led to lay it down, even to the point of letting it die. Once we believe the vision is

 dead and gone, He will revive and restore it in us, often making our passion stronger than ever (p. 37).

Although our vision of the need for a book like *Supracultural Gospel* was birthed 7 years ago. A few years passed while Alex went on to earn his PhD in Chinese law in Hong Kong while he also sought to convey his new life in Christ to his colleagues, family and friends. And I began my focused research on contextualizing the gospel in Asian terms and pastoring our house church for internationals (most of whom were Asians!). It seemed like the vision died. But then our joint passion rekindled as we reconnected in earnest after his graduation and focused on completing the book. We gathered the stories many had shared with us, combined it with our research and passion behind the subject matter, and the book took shape. God was making a way.

Still, there is yet another lesson in our story that Moen highlighted in his book. Three years ago Keith and I felt it would be wise to move to Florida, so we sold our house (which effectively closed the in-person house church) and went to live with Bruce and Becky. It turned out to be a detour in God’s plan and we have subsequently returned to Wheaton. But Don’s lesson applies to our situation:

 “There are times when we take inventory of our lives and call certain seasons “mistakes.” But if no overt or

 intentional sin was involved and we just made a choice that created a detour or diversion for a time, often

 God uses these circumstances to grow us in ways we might not have grown otherwise” (p.20).

This was true in our Florida move. I have self-published two other books, *Of Bananas and Hardboiled Eggs* and *Salmon Swimmers*, both with WestBow Press. But it was in Florida that Bruce and Becky introduced me to Ted Esler, the CEO of MissioNexxus, a vast network of mission organizations. At that time, I had an abstract for our book (which we had called *Thinking Outside the Box)*. When Ted read the abstract, he immediately said, “I have been asked by William Carey Publishers to be on the look-out for new books that they should publish. I will send this abstract to them for their consideration.” And he did. Through his personal recommendation, they accepted our proposal. He was the key contact with a publisher that we needed and had not had with my previous books. It makes all the difference!! For the past two years we have worked on all the editing process with them, and now together we launched our published book this week!

God made a way where there seemed to be no way!

I share our story in detail because of the timing of our book launch, my reading of Moen’s book, my pastoral concern for the weariness of our people and their need for encouragement, and the truths behind Moen’s song. In fact, this song has resonated with so many millions around the world that it has become the signature song of Moen’s worship career. Here are the words:

 “God will make a way where there seems to be no way. He works in ways we cannot see; he will make a

 way for me. He will be my guide, hold me closely to His side. With love and strength for each new day He

 will make a way. He will make a way!

 By a roadway in the wilderness, He’ll lead me; rivers in the desert I will see.

 Heaven and earth will fade but His Word will still remain; He will do something new today.

 God will make a way where there seems to be no way. He works in ways we cannot see; he will make a

 way for me. He will be my guide, hold me closely to His side. With love and strength for each new day He

 will make a way. He will make a way!”

I expect many of you also have stories of how God is making or has made a way for you when things seemed impossible. If that has not happened yet, then I want to encourage you to believe that God can still make a way in the future. God will make a way. His way is based on His character, His promises, His prophecies, His plan for history and His calling for you to step into your part in that plan. What a source of hope and life fulfillment this is – for all of His followers. Thanks be to God. Amen.

 Dr. Mary Lou Codman-Wilson

 Pastor, New Hope Global Fellowship 5 26 22