

# That Was a Bit Awkward

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## Summary:

There are lots of awkward moments for Biblical characters in their encounters with Jesus. What did they teach them, and what do our awkward moments teach us?

## Call to Worship

Psalm 42:1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

## Prayer

Lord, as I enter into a time of worship, as I bring myself before you, the living God, the God I can call Father, my soul thirsts for you. I desire to be in your presence. And as I come before you, I am aware of my unworthiness, aware of my sins which have sullied my relationship with you. Forgive me Lord. Thank you that through Jesus' death and resurrection I am forgiven. Praise your name Lord, praise your holy name. Amen

## Song: "Only a Holy God" by City Alight

1. Who else commands all the hosts of heaven? Who else could make every king bow down? Who else can whisper and darkness trembles? Only a Holy God.
2. What other beauty demands such praises? What other splendour outshines the sun? What other majesty rules with justice? Only a Holy God.  
*Come and behold Him, the One and the Only. Cry out, sing holy, forever a Holy God. Come and worship the Holy God.*
3. What other glory consumes like fire? What other power can raise the dead? What other name remains undefeated? Only a Holy God.
4. Who else could rescue me from my failing? Who else would offer His only Son? Who else invites me to call Him Father? Only a Holy God.

## Prayer of Intercession

Father, I pray for Taiwan under threat from China. I pray for wisdom from both governments, for a concern for other people. And I pray for the Christians there, for their prayers lifted up in petition to you – and I pray with them.

I pray for Ukraine, suffering from the aggression of Russia. I pray for their parliaments, and that a spirit of compassion might emerge and grow. And I pray for the Christians. Hear their prayers and mine as I pray with them.

I pray for Gaza and those suffering from daily missile attacks and the consequent hunger and deprivation. And I pray against the terrorism in the Middle East and the actions which precipitated this current disaster. I pray for the Christians there – give them courage, and a deep love for you and their neighbours. Hear their prayers and mine with them.

Thank you Lord that there are those committed to aid in these

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circumstances. I pray for Barnabas Aid, in these and many other places around the world, that you will bless their efforts to bring food and medical aid, and support for those Christians who are rebuilding their lives.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen

### Bible Reading:

- Luke 22:54-62

Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. A servant girl saw him there seated in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said.

A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."

"Man, I am not!" Peter replied.

About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this man was with him, for he is a Galilean."

Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you are talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

### Song: "How Deep the Father's Love for us" (Stuart Townend)

1. How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure,  
That He should give His only Son to make a wretch His treasure.  
How great the pain of searing loss, the Father turns His face away  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One bring many sons to glory.
2. Behold the man upon a cross, my sin upon His shoulders.  
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.  
It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished.  
His dying breath has brought me life. I know that it is finished.
3. I will not boast in anything, no gifts, no power, no wisdom,  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection.  
Why should I gain from His reward? I cannot give an answer.  
But this I know with all my heart, His wounds have paid my ransom.

### Message: "That was a bit Awkward"

The scene is the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus has finished praying and submitting himself to the will and purposes of his Father, and his disciples are gathered around him. In the distance they can see the torches and hear the sounds of a crowd, armed with swords and clubs, approaching, with Judas, to arrest Jesus. In the ensuing confrontation. Peter drew his sword. One wonders why he had a sword, and some of the other

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disciples were similarly armed (Luke 22:49). Perhaps it was because Peter, and the others, were still not coming to grips with what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God, thinking the kingdom would come back to Israel and force might be required. Impetuous Peter attacked one of the arresting crowd, a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Jesus rebuked his disciples and immediately healed the servant's ear.

Have you ever imagined what the servant, whose name was Malchus, was thinking in this encounter? He had come there under the instruction of the high priest to arrest this "dangerous man", Jesus. He was probably caught a bit by surprise when Peter took his ear off. But then, this dangerous man Jesus, reached out and healed his severely damaged ear. That was a bit awkward – the man he had intended to forcibly arrest showed kindness and gentleness towards him. What was he feeling when they marched Jesus back to the high priest's house? Embarrassed? Regretful, that he was part of the arresting group? What did he think of Jesus now?

I wonder whether there was a change in this man's life after his encounter with Jesus. We too can lead our lives heedless of Jesus, the Son of God, and then may encounter him, be exposed to his glory, even healed by his touch on us. We may encounter him through a message in church, through a reading, or hearing something from the word of God. Through the Holy Spirit we encounter God's grace toward us – is our response repentance and discipleship?

The scene is Golgotha. Jesus has endured the agonies of hours on the cross and has finally drawn his last breath and died. Standing at the foot of the cross, keeping a close eye on proceedings, is a Roman centurion. He has probably overseen the whole process from start to finish. He was probably there when Jesus was mocked and gifted with a crown of thorns. He no doubt supervised the brutal flogging, the procession up to Golgotha, which Jesus was unable to complete unaided, and the affixing of Jesus to the cross with metal spikes. Then at Jesus last words, "It is finished", and his last breath, this centurion praised God and said loudly enough to be heard, "Surely this was the Son of God". That must have been a bit awkward. The man who had so much pain inflicted on Jesus has a revelation that this was the Son of God. Very awkward. He was a Roman soldier under orders, but I wonder what this encounter with Jesus made on the rest of his life. Was he repentant, regretful? Did he become a believer.

Have you inflicted pain in Jesus? Have I? A resounding "yes"! The Roman soldiers were doing the dirty work, but the reason Jesus was there is because of my sin and separation from God, and Jesus was there suffering the death that was rightly mine. I love the line in the above song, 'it was my sin that held (nailed) him there'. I hope it made a difference to that centurion. Has it made a difference for you?

Speaking of awkward moments, the disciple Peter had his fair share of them. The scene is the Caesarea Philippi, which was probably the farthest north that Jesus ventured, except perhaps to nearby Mt Hermon where the transfiguration took place. Jesus was asking the disciples what people were saying about him, and Peter, in a moment of revelation, declared that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. A few days later when Jesus was explaining the implications of being the Messiah, that is, being killed,

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Peter rebuked him and said that it shouldn't happen. Jesus said to him, "Get behind me Satan....!" A bit awkward! Despite the revelation, Peter still didn't understand.

And the scene is the courtyard of the high priest's house. Peter has rather courageously snuck into the yard while Jesus was being questioned. And we know about Peter's denial of Jesus. At his third outburst he glances up and sees Jesus looking directly at him. A bit awkward. Beyond awkward, devastating! So devastating that Peter broke down in tears.

Have you ever denied Jesus or disappointed him? Maybe you haven't done so as spectacularly as Peter, but the truth is, we all have. And our response to our failing should be like Peter's, and our hearts should grieve for the disappointment it has caused our Father. A grief that should lead us to repentance.

But that was not the end of the story for Peter. A few weeks later at Pentecost he was filled with the Holy Spirit and stood in front of thousands to declare that Jesus was raised from the dead and alive, the Messiah for all. At the temple he healed a lame man, declaring the healing to be in the name of Jesus. These cumulative events put him and John in front of the Sanhedrin where Peter courageously spoke of Jesus and his death and resurrection. Peter went from a series of awkward moments, through the forgiveness of Jesus and through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, to a series of victorious moments.

That is for us as well. Despite failures, denials, disobedience, God forgives us when we repent, he fills us with his Spirit when we are empty and powerless and enables us to be his disciples, enjoying victories on every day we wake up to. That should be our response to God's call on our lives where God is glorified, and his kingdom built.

But it's not always so. The scene is the temple a couple of days before Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. He is teaching the crowds and the Pharisees, Sadducees and teachers of the law, having seen him healing people, raising the dead, and teaching from the Scriptures, are intent on discrediting him and catching him out. At every attempt, Jesus answers them clearly and confuses them (no one could say a word in reply (Matt 22:40)). And then to a hypothetical question from the Sadducees about marriage in heaven he says, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God" (Matt 22:29). That's a bit awkward. A few red faces there!

Their response was not repentance, but a hardening of their hearts. Their response was anger and hate and the fruits were the arrest, trial and death of Jesus. Many fall into that trap when they face challenges, difficulties and crises of faith and turn away from God and our hearts are hardened. In all these things God has our good in mind and wants our hardened hearts to be softened. A promise from Ezekiel 11:19-20 is, "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh ..... they will be my people and I will be their God."

The floor of the Sanhedrin was the scene of another couple of awkward moments. Jesus healed a blind man whom the Sanhedrin examined and questioned (including his parents) about Jesus. The man's reply – "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see." (John 9:15). Awkward! How can you argue against that? And then again, after the lame man was healed by Peter and John and was walking and leaping and

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praising God in the temple, they were questioned by the Sanhedrin about in whose name this miracle occurred. Again, they heard it was in Jesus' name. This called for some sort of punishment, but the healed man was standing right next to them! Very awkward! Even with the living proof of the power of Jesus standing right before them their hardened hearts could not believe. The Messiah, for whom they had waited so many years, had been in seeing and touching distance and they missed it. The fact of the resurrection they were well acquainted with as they had tried to cover it up. The healings and miracles and teaching from their Scriptures was right in front of them and they ignored it. Awkward!

We face many awkward moments in our lives and in our relationship with the Father, but if our eyes are opened to all that he has done in our lives, even if we are in the middle of suffering, we can accept in faith that everything that happens is for his glory and our good. He is worthy to be praised.

### Song: "His Glory and My Good" (City Alight)

1. I have seen my Father's glory revealed in Jesus Christ  
And the more that I behold Him, the more He satisfies.  
When I gaze upon His beauty, when I see Him as I should,  
Then my eyes are lifted upward for His glory and my good.
2. There is hope in every trial for I can trust the Lord.  
He will turn my heart towards Him and help me bear the thorn.  
So in faith I follow Jesus on the road not understood,  
For I know that he is working for His glory and my good.  
*To our God be the glory, to our God be praise  
He alone, the name above all names, I will boast ever only in the Lord my God,  
For I know His glory is my good.*
3. See the open arms of Jesus upon the cross that day  
What they understood as weakness deserves my every praise,  
For the charge that was against me it was nailed into the wood.  
Yes, I know that He has saved me for His glory and my good.
4. Would I gladly be made nothing that Christ would be made more?  
Would I seek the only kingdom that far outweighs them all?  
I will stand before my Father where the faithful saints have stood,  
And with joy my heart shall praise Him, for His glory and my good.

### Benediction

May the glory of God shine on you this week. May you walk in obedience to him in all circumstances, knowing that his glory is your good. Amen

*This service was prepared by Ron Tiller, HopeNet SA*