



GREATER



Addiction, Anxiety, OCD, Self Harm, Depression and Suicide. These powerful names wage war on our spiritual, mental and emotional freedom. But what if there is a greater name?

Thankfully there is and His name is Jesus Christ. Because of His wonderful sacrifice, dying on the cross for us, taking our pain, sickness, brokenness and, of course, sin all onto himself, Jesus won the right to lead us step by step into freedom.

Over the next four sessions, this guides will help you discover the amazing love and power of Jesus to bring healing into our spiritual, mental and emotional world.

We pray this will be a journey of encouragement, insight, hope and restoration as you embark on this time with Jesus.

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Mala's Story

**Opening Prayer**

“Lord, guide me in understanding who You are. Help me to understand your love, that I am not alone, and that I am not defined by the things that have happened in my life. Guide me in discovering who You think I am.”

Jeremiah 31: 3

“The Lord said... “I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.”

Introduction

Today we are going to be walking alongside Mala, as she shares her incredible story of God's love, in spite of the horrific circumstances that surrounded her life. We will be challenging you to think through some tough questions.

Before you watch the episode, ask God to soften your heart towards what He may want to talk to you about. Ask God to give you wisdom and provide His incredible peace to you as you journey forward. Even if abuse isn't something you have suffered, He will have something for you to learn.

Mala's story begins at birth, where she suffered rejection as a baby and abuse as a child. Things got worse as an adult when she married a man, in her words, "just like my father." Alone in a foreign land, suicide seemed the only way out. But this is the moment when Jesus spoke to her and so began her journey of freedom.

God was always there in her life but it wasn't until she was at her absolute limits that she heard Him the clearest.

This story will be hard for some to watch, if you or someone you love has been through abuse.

It is estimated in the USA that 1 in 2 women and 1 in 4 men have suffered abuse. NZ statistics show a similar trend. We highlight this to show that if this is you, you are not alone and we believe there is hope. This study we pray will be a starting point for you on your journey. Or maybe for you to walk with someone on theirs.

When you are ready, watch "Greater: Episode One" - 28min in duration

<https://www.fantailstudios.com/greater/greater-episode-1>

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Mala's Story



First Thoughts

This may have brought up a number of thoughts and reactions from you. As you continue on through the study remember that you are not alone, God loves you, and there are people who can help you if you need them.

Q1: What impacted you the most from Mala's story and why do you think that is?

Q2: Was there anything said that you disagreed with or found difficult to hear?

Q3: Were there any aspects from your past that this has brought up that you may want to receive prayer for? Who could you ask to pray for you?

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Mala's Story



Why does bad stuff happen and where is God in all this?

This is a big question and while it is easy to say, "Well we live in a broken world," that can sometimes seem a bit of a cop out.

The panel address this with the conversation around free will. We have the unfortunate ability to hurt ourselves but the even more unfortunate ability to hurt others.

In fact, in the book of Romans, it addresses the first act of free will that impacted all of humanity.

Read **Romans 5:15-16**

As you see from these verses, Adam and Eve's free choice led to the death and harm of the human race. Jesus' free gift leads to redemption.

Our choices, both good and bad, reverberate into the world of others. In Proverbs 27:17, it says that iron sharpens iron. When we work together, we sharpen each other. However, it makes sense that we could also *blunt* someone else with our choices.

So where is God in all this? Why doesn't He stop terrible things from happening?

Again, it comes down to free will. Romans 3:23 states we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God. If God stepped in every time we fell short then there wouldn't be much free will.

In Matthew 5:45, Jesus tells us that the sun will shine and the rain will fall on both the righteous and the unrighteous.

As Mala stated in her testimony, she knew He was always there but just wasn't ready to trust Him completely. It wasn't until her absolute lowest that she reached out and He led her out of her darkness.

In her own words, "Sometimes life can suck, but with God we have hope."

God is always there to bring restoration to our lives.

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Mala's Story



Why does bad stuff happen and where is God in all this?

Q4: Mala talked about sensing God with her as a child but still enduring so much suffering. Why do you think that a loving God can still allow so much pain to take place?

Q5: Abuse and rejection, along with other events, can negatively shape how we see ourselves. What thoughts or feelings about yourself do you struggle with which are contrary to how God sees you?

Q6: Who does God really say you are?

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Mala's Story



Forgiveness

As the panel discussed, forgiveness is the most misunderstood and hardest topic.

Rita made a comment that forgiveness is a word that is not to be used in the secular treatment of survivors of abuse. But in her mind, it is the most important thing to discuss.

Q7: What were your thoughts on forgiveness coming into this episode? Now that you have heard the panel discussion, have your thoughts changed?

Q8: The panel discussed what forgiveness is and is not. Write down some things that are commonly associated with forgiveness that are not true.

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Mala's Story



Forgiveness

Forgiveness isn't about pretending that the event didn't happen or that the offender doesn't need to be held to account. It is more about you letting go of it so that it doesn't haunt you and impact how you live your everyday life.

This is not an easy thing to do, but remember that you don't need to do this alone. Find a community, a counselor, a friend, or a support group. Walk alongside others as you journey through this process.

As a survivor of abuse, you didn't deserve what happened, and God, as Mala said, has always been there. He knows you better than anyone, including yourself, and He wants you to discover your true self.

Read **Psalm 139: 1-16**

The panel said you cannot truly figure out who you are independent from God. We often attach external, material, or temporal things to find our identity but it is only discovering ourselves in Him and trusting in Him that we find freedom.

Q9: As Richard said, if letting go were as simple as flicking a switch, what objections would you have?

Q10: Forgiveness was a powerful part of Mala's healing journey. Do you have areas and people that you need to forgive so that you can receive a deeper level of healing?

Q11: If you were to let go of the hurt, how do you think you would live life in the freedom God intended for you to live?

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Mala's Story



Final Thoughts

One of the major things that helped Mala in her recovery was the children coming and telling her they loved her. This comes back to us and our actions. A verse we read earlier talked about iron sharpening iron. We can sharpen and bring freedom to others with our actions.

Q12: How can you bless others and bring potential freedom to someone else's life?

Mala learned to let go and rely on God for her future. She called God her rock, shelter, security, and learned that she could trust Him.

Q13: How do you see God? What are some words that you would use to describe Him?

The issues we discussed today are very heavy and run deep. Have a prayer time with God and honestly go through your answers with Him. There will be things that you may work with Him over time and there may be things that He will bring immediate light to.

Just remember the words out of Psalm 23, *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, **for you are with me.**”*

GREATER



Congratulations on completing the first part of this four part series as we explored the wonderful truth that no matter what challenges we face in life, there is always one name that is greater and that name is Jesus Christ.

This course has been produced by Fantail Studios with the support from the wider faith community.

We would like to thank those who gave generously both financially, with their time, and especially those who bravely shared their own personal testimonies.

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