

A black hexagon is centered on a background of a field with a sun flare. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, hazy glow that filters through the air. The foreground shows green grass and some small yellow flowers, slightly out of focus. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

OVERLOOKED & FORGOTTEN

DEVOTIONAL

MELANIE J. SAWARD



We are created with a purpose. And we know God has plans for every one of us. But unfortunately, God doesn't always operate in the timing we would like. Often the outworking of God's plans are years in the making. In those waiting moments, we will come against many challenges. None of which are purposeless. But it can feel purposeless. It might feel like everyone has forgotten about you, including God. And you might find yourself being overlooked when opportunities arise that you know you are capable of doing, but for whatever reason the opportunity passes you by.

That kind of rejection can hurt. But oftentimes this is the exact kind of preparation that God has intended for you because they present many deeper questions: Whom will I be when I don't have favour? Whom will I be when the promise seems to be moving further away from completion? Scripture gives us some key examples of people who endured being forgotten and overlooked and came out stronger. Over the next 5 days, this devotional will walk through these stories and give you thoughts to consider when you find yourself forgotten and overlooked.

Melanie J. Saward

Day 1

Leah

Genesis 29:31-38

When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless. Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now." She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the Lord heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon. Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Now, at last, my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." So he was named Levi. She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the Lord." So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.

There isn't much space dedicated to the story of Leah in the scriptures.

But her story resonates with those of us who have often felt deeply forgotten. Leah was the wife that Jacob didn't want. She was traded by her Father in a deceptive way and is referred to in scripture as the un-beautiful one. In spite of the words spoken over her, God had compassion for Leah and made her fruitful by giving her six sons and one daughter. In the beginning, she hoped that bearing children would cause her husband to love her, but it didn't. Jacob continued to love and adore Rachel, often favouring her children over Leah's. But God continued to honour her in many ways, even years after her passing. Leah is honoured by being the mother of Judah in the lineage of David and of Christ. Leah's story is a reminder that though we might be overlooked by man, God has compassion for the unloved and forgotten.

A dandelion seed head is shown in silhouette against a warm, orange and yellow sunset sky. The image is overlaid with several diagonal white lines that create a geometric pattern across the scene.

PRAYER:

Father for every time I have felt unloved, I ask that you would multiply experientially, your love for me. I want to feel your love and know that it is true. You see me intimately, where others have overlooked me. But I am not invisible to you. You know everything about me, even my thoughts. I pray that your favour would be upon me, and that I would know that you adore and bless me.

Day 2

David

1 Samuel 16:6-12

When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, "Surely this is the Lord's anointed!"

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Then Jesse told his son Abinadab to step forward and walk in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "This is not the one the Lord has chosen." Next Jesse summoned Shimea, but Samuel said, "Neither is this the one the Lord has chosen." In the same way all seven of Jesse's sons were presented to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." Then Samuel asked, "Are these all the sons you have?" There is still the youngest," Jesse replied. "But he's out in the fields watching the sheep and goats."

"Send for him at once," Samuel said. "We will not sit down to eat until he arrives." So Jesse sent for him. He was dark and handsome, with beautiful eyes. And the Lord said, "This is the one; anoint him."

David continues to be one of the most popular biblical characters. His story and his psalms continue to give hope and freedom. However, David's beginnings would not be described as awe-inspiring. As you read the passage today, you will notice that Jesse (David's father) was asked to present his sons before Samuel, because Samuel was going to anoint one of them to be the King. This was God's instructions to Samuel. When Samuel arrives, Jesse presents his sons. Except one son is missing, busily attending to His Father's sheep. David wasn't even included in the lineup. Was he not a son too? In fact, when Samuel realised that none of the sons Jesse had presented were God's choice, the family had to fetch David from the fields. He wasn't even dressed just in case the other sons fell through.

Jesse had so overlooked this son that would be a great King. For some reason, Jesse wasn't convinced that David could be the one that God was looking for. Likewise, we can feel like we are everybody's last choice. What hope does it bring you today, to know that man's last choice can be God's first?



PRAYER:

Father, I am so humbled that I am your **FIRST CHOICE** for delivering your will on this earth. I pray that you would help me have courage when others fail to see the significant life you intend for me to live. Heal those parts in me that have hurt from the pain of rejection, and make me whole.

Day 3

Jesus

Matthew 13:53-58

When Jesus had finished telling these stories and illustrations, he left that part of the country. He returned to Nazareth, his hometown. When he taught there in the synagogue, everyone was amazed and said, "Where does he get this wisdom and the power to do miracles?" Then they scoffed, "He's just the carpenter's son, and we know Mary, his mother, and his brothers—James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. All his sisters live right here among us. Where did he learn all these things?" And they were deeply offended and refused to believe in him. Then Jesus told them, "A prophet is honoured everywhere except in his own hometown and among his own family." And so he did only a few miracles there because of their unbelief.

Jesus was no exception from the experience of rejection. Specifically, Jesus was disqualified based on place of origin. Have you ever experienced that? Have you ever felt like your past, your origins or some other attribute, you aren't even in control of has caused others to disqualify you? In Matthew 13, Jesus has been abroad teaching these incredible parables. He comes to his hometown and intends to continue but instead they remark on His worthiness and authority to speak as He was. They had known of Jesus and His family and couldn't imagine that such power could come from someone they had deemed ordinary. Despite the fact that He performed miracles, they rejected Him and were offended by His audacity to be something more than they had known. They weren't willing to recognise Him as a prophet, let alone a Messiah. Maybe your friends and family have found it hard to recognise what God is doing in you. Take courage, because God does not disqualify you! If you don't have their endorsement, it means that you never needed it! He sees you for who you are, and whom you are meant to be. And God's opinion is the only one that counts.

The background is a teal, cracked, and textured surface. Overlaid on this are several pieces of green leaves, some with water droplets, arranged in a collage-like fashion. The leaves are cut out and placed over the teal background, creating a layered effect. The water droplets are clear and glistening, adding a fresh and natural feel to the design.

PRAYER:

Father, I know that there isn't a trait you have put in me that you reject. No quality disqualifies me from your anointing and power. I pray that you would heal any hurt I have felt from this kind of rejection. But I also pray that you would show me the qualities that man sees as a limitation as the precise qualities you intend to use for your glory.

Day 4

The Israelites

Exodus 4:29-31

Then Moses and Aaron returned to Egypt and called all the elders of Israel together. Aaron told them everything the Lord had told Moses, and Moses performed the miraculous signs as they watched. Then the people of Israel were convinced that the Lord had sent Moses and Aaron. When they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

Not a single soul would condemn you for feeling forgotten after 400 years of slavery and oppression. That was precisely the experience for the Israelite people under the cruel leadership of the Egyptians. They were the chosen people of God, and yet they were being treated far less favourably than their identity warranted. Then one day two young men came

along and gathered the Israelite elders to inform them that God had seen their misery and would deliver them. After such a long time it's possible that the Israelite people had given up on any hope that God would deliver them. But God certainly did not forget His people and ensured that they were rescued whilst their oppressors not only lost their precious 'labour' but faced annihilation in the well known story of Moses parting the Red Sea. Yes it may feel like we have been forgotten, but God is all too aware of our situation. Psalm 139 tells us that we can't leave His presence even if we tried. He keeps a watchful eye on all, like the doting Father. So today, allow His comfort to come as you share in honest

communion.

When we abide in Him, the circumstances are unlikely to rule our sense of peace.





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Day 5

Joseph

Genesis 39:19-23

Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife's story about how Joseph had treated her. So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, and there he remained. But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison and showed him his faithful love. And the Lord made Joseph a favourite with the prison warden. Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. The warden had no more worries because Joseph took care of everything. The Lord was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.

From the time of announcing his dream, it would have seemed that Joseph was getting further away from the promise. First, he is sold into slavery. Then He rises up in Potiphar's house only to be wrongfully accused and sent to jail. Fortunately for Joseph, his commitment to faithfully serve was not influenced by where he was on the journey. Even when He was condemned to a life in prison without any hope of freedom let alone leadership...he was still faithful!

See God's map for success is unusual. We see a destination: A is where we are, and Z is where we want to be. We then work out what we think B, C, D...are so that we can ascertain how far or how close we are to our destination. Unfortunately, God's idea of milestones aren't usually locations but mindsets and character traits. God's plans aren't 'destination-oriented' they are 'journey-oriented'. He cares about how you get there, not only that you arrive.

You may feel overlooked and forgotten, but is it possible that God is trying to produce something in you? That can't be achieved if you were being seen and included? Because Joseph was faithful as a serving son, as a slave, and as a 'criminal'. Every season has its own opportunities for faithfulness. What opportunities do you have today, to be faithful?



PRAYER:

Father, help me not to miss the opportunity for growth through this season. Show me and change in me those things that could affect my future destiny. Help me to be content with the approval and inclusion that you have already lavished in dying on the cross and forgiving my sin. Help me to be faithful whether in the lowly places or the high.



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