

POST SCRIPT

FINISHING STRONG

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- **What does a guide do?**
- **What gives a guide credibility?**

The God Who Took Away My Wife

- About half-way through our 24-year marriage, doctors discovered my wife Susan's brain tumor. She had been God's gift to me, my "heart's desire," as the Psalmist says. Yet over nearly 20 years, through her brain disease, slow decline and eventual death, God took away what he had given.

The God Who Took Away My Wife

- Susan was 38 years old when she was diagnosed. The doctors treated her aggressively and successfully, and the cancer never came back. But the treatments damaged her brain, putting her on a slow decline. She lost the ability to plan projects. She slept 10 or more hours a day. When awake, she retreated into a rich world of books and puzzles. Her mental acuity never disappeared, but she found it increasingly difficult to share her thoughts with the world.

The God Who Took Away My Wife

- Many people knew Susan, as she was the wife of an Episcopalian priest, and she developed a reputation for friendliness. Quick to smile, she possessed what seemed like an intuitive ability to understand the suffering of others. Although she walked with a cane and spoke only a few words, my wife never suffered from depression. Yet her physical condition continued to deteriorate, and she died in 2012 at age 57.

The God Who Took Away My Wife

- About a year later, I found myself preaching on a sentence that Jesus spoke from the cross: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” The son of God, with that simple question, plumbed the depth of my loss.

The God Who Took Away My Wife

- **The crucifixion was a real horror scene, “particularly gruesome,” according to Catholic priest and biblical scholar Raymond Brown. The gruesomeness was in part auditory, the victims screaming wildly and cursing in their despair. Such was the scene around Jesus. And at the end, Jesus himself screamed that God had abandoned him.**

The God Who Took Away My Wife

- To enter the human condition, Jesus came down from heaven. Then down further. He pierced into the saddest and lowest human conditions – grief, degradation, betrayal, and torture. Then he died in the worst way possible, his unimaginable physical pain accompanied by the mental anguish of being abandoned by God. *There is no darkness into which a human being can descend that Jesus has not already descended.*

The God Who Took Away My Wife

- In Jeffrey Eugenides's novel "The Marriage Plot," the character Mitchell moves to India as a young man to volunteer. After a couple of weeks, he is faced with a man who has massively defecated in his own bed. In the midst of the chaos, Mitchell suddenly cannot stand it. Despite knowing he will forever regret this, he turns away from the wretch he should be taking care of, runs out of the building, scoops up his belongings, and escapes by train.

The God Who Took Away My Wife

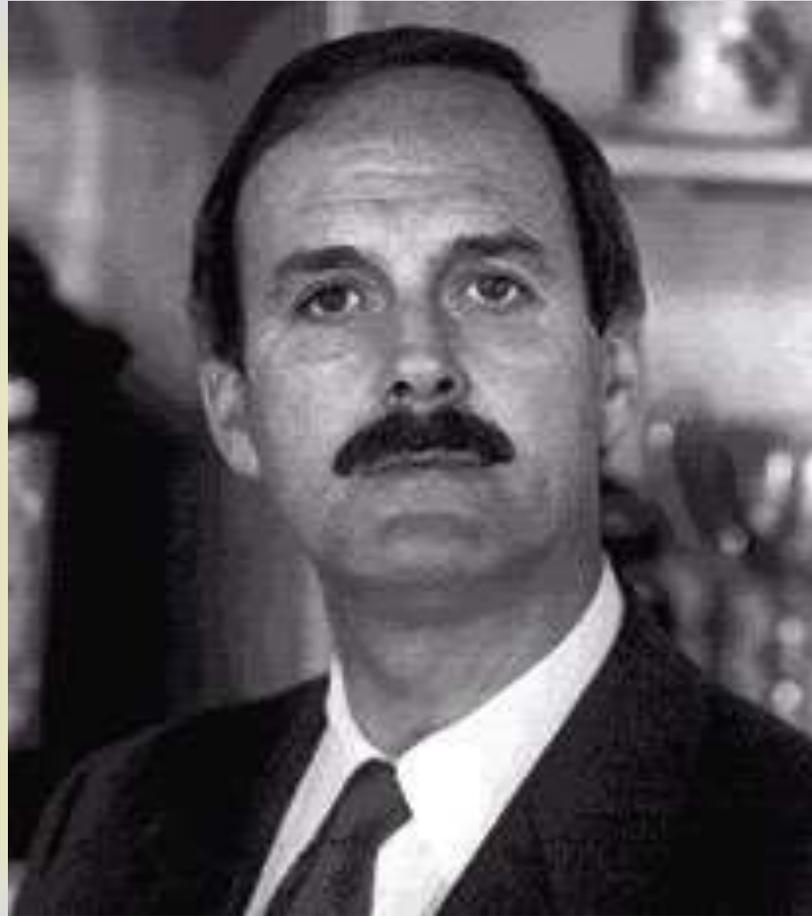
- **Mitchell discovered something true and awful about himself: There were things he could not stand, depths into which he could not plunge. He discovered that he had untested limits. Challenging himself exposed his frailty. There was a point beyond which we could not go.**

The God Who Took Away My Wife

- **In the years that I was the principal caregiver for my wife, I did things I never imagined I'd have to do: caring for her body, thinking for her, arranging her days. My shortcomings often humbled me. But what if it had gotten even harder before she died? I do not know for sure that I could have gone on. For all of us, there are always untested limits.**

The God Who Took Away My Wife

- **But not for Jesus. All the way down, he screamed from the cross something strange: a prayer. He no longer felt an intimacy with God, so he didn't pray to his father. Instead, he questioned God as any human could. A human being can still pray to God, even in the absence of any sign that he has a divine father, even there at the bottom. Someone can still ask, if nothing else, why God has forsaken him. God gives, and God takes away. But he is still there.**



Marketing 101

- **Brand Awareness**
 - **Top Of Mind Awareness**
 - **Unaided Awareness**
 - **Aided Awareness**

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- **Brand Awareness**
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- **Let's do a test, but not of a product or service**
 - **Keep mental track of the first thing that comes to mind**
 - **Keep track of the next two**

Marketing 101

- I ask “what is America doing that God detests and for which we risk his judgment on us as a nation?”

AMOS

AMOS ... OR NOT



Amos, The Man

- From the town of Tekoa – 6 miles southeast of Bethlehem
- Shepherd and tender of a grove of sycamore fig trees
- Appears to have a broad knowledge of history and geo-political forces
- From Judah, but ministered to Israel (the northern kingdom)
- Likely prophesied ~760 - 750

The Minor Prophets

- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos ←
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
 - Period of Assyrian power
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
 - Decline of Assyria
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi
 - Post exilic period

Again With These Pesky Kings

- Judah
 - **792 Uziah** ←
 - **750 Jotham**
 - **745 Ahaz**
 - **715 Hezekiah**
 - 697 Manasseh
 - 640 Josiah
 - 609 Jehoahaz
 - Deposed by Egypt →
 - 609 Jehoiakim
 - Deposed by Nebuchadnezzar
 - 598 Jehoichin
 - Deposed by Nebuchadnezzar
 - 597 Zedekiah
 - 586 Fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar
- Israel
 - 885 Zimri, suicide on defeat by
 - **885 Omri**
 - **874 Ahab**
 - **853 Ahaziah**
 - **852 Jehoram, killed at Jezreel by**
 - **841 Jehu**
 - **814 Jehohaz**
 - **798 Joash**
 - **782 Jeroboam II**
 - **753 Zechariah, killed by**
 - 752 Shallum, killed by
 - **752 Menahem**
 - **742 Pekahiah, killed by**
 - 740 Pekah, killed by
 - 732 Hoshea
 - 722-721 Fall of Samaria

The List Of Charges

- Administration of justice
- Affluence of the wealthy
- State of worship
- Immorality

This Usually Gets Your Attention

- Amos 4:12: “Therefore, this is what I will do to you, Israel, and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”

State Of The Heart And Worship

- Amos 4: 4-5: “⁴Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years. ⁵ Burn leavened bread as a thank offering and brag about your freewill offerings – boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do.’ declares the Sovereign Lord.”

Immorality, Idolatry, And Trust In Wealth

- Amos 2: 4: “ For three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because they have rejected the law of the Lord and have not kept his decrees, because they have been led astray by false gods, the gods their ancestors followed.”
- Amos 2: 7b: “Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name.”
- Amos 3:14-15: “¹⁴ On the day I punish Israel for her sins, I will destroy the altars of Bethel; the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground. ¹⁵ I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished,’ declares the Lord.”

The List Of Charges

- Administration of justice ←
- Idolatry
- State of worship
- Immorality

Administration Of Justice

- Amos 2: 6-8: “This is what the Lord say: ‘For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. They sell the righteous for silver, and needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed.’”
- Amos 4;1: “Hear this, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy, and say to our husbands, ‘Bring us some drinks.’”
- Amos 5:7: “You who turn justice to bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground.”
- Amos 5: 12, 15: “¹² For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts....¹⁵ Hate evil, love good, maintain justice in the courts ...”

Administration Of Justice

- Amos 5:21 - 24: “²¹ ‘I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. ²² Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. ²³ Away with the noise of of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. ²⁴ But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.’”

Administration Of Justice

- Amos 8:2-8: “² ... Then the Lord said to me. ‘The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. ³ In that day,’ declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘The songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies – flung everywhere! Silence! ⁴ Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land....’ ⁸ The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: ‘I will never forget anything they have done.’”

And It Is Not Just Amos

- Micah 6:8: “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly before your God.”
- Hosea 6:6: “For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.”
- Isaiah 1:11, 17; “¹¹ The multitude of your sacrifices – what are they to me?’ says the Lord ... ¹⁷ ‘Seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.’”

The Rest Of The Story

- Israel destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 BC
 - Done with ruthless military efficiency and maximum psychological terror – corpses impaled on stakes, severed heads stacked in piles, captives skinned alive
- The Biblical and Assyrian descriptions match
 - II Kings 17: 5-6; 24 – Israelites out, foreigners in
 - Assyrian documents: “I (Sargon) besieged and conquered Samaria, led away as booty 27,290 inhabitants... I installed over those remaining an officer of mine and imposed upon them the tribute of the former King.... The Arabs who live far away in the desert, who know neither overseers nor official and who had not yet brought their tribute to any king I deported and settled them in Samaria.”

So What Does God's Demand For
"Justice" Mean Today?

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- Disparate outcomes for low income defendants – you get the justice you pay for?
- Disparate sentencing for one gram of crack cocaine vs. 18 (was 100) grams of powdered cocaine?
- Disparate availability to medical care if you are uninsured?

Psalm 23

- Psalms from St. Paul's in London
 - Evensong of Psalm 23