



Why, God?
I Will Worship Through It All
Part 2 – Worship When Life Is Uncertain
Shay Robbins

Good morning, Woodland Hills Family Church. It's nice to see you. My name is Shay Robbins. I'm part of our teaching team and I'm excited to be with you this morning. We're going to continue our series called *Why, God? I will worship through It All*. Today, we're going to talk about *Worshipping When Life is Uncertain*.

My boy, Knox, and I just got back from our annual Father/Son canoe trip. We go rain or shine... and it rained, but we went prepared. So, we packed up extra tarps and all kinds of resources, we loaded them up in the truck, and we headed down to Tyler Bend off the Buffalo River. Knox and I got there in plenty of time to get everything set up before the monsoon hit us.

Guys were rolling in and everybody was kind of in a scramble to get ready and to get dinner cooked. By the time we had dinner cooked, you could see the black clouds moving in on us. So, we prayed really fast and moved the kids through the line and all of the dads then hid under the canopies. The monsoon hit us, and the boys had more fun than you can imagine. It did not slow them down one bit.

The first thing that happens at the Father/Son is that all the boys pull out their knives and start making weapons. So, there were spears, whips, swords; it's an extremely dangerous environment. But God has somehow protected us year after year. There is only minor bleeding... generally.

We had an awesome time. I had a friend: some friends that come to this church. Adam Martin is his name. I'll just go ahead and throw it out there. He brought an RV to a camping trip. What are you clapping about? It's a camping trip. So, Martin rolls up and it turns out it was probably a pretty good idea. Knox is buddies with Trent, and we've been a part of the Martin's life for years. We were neighbors and had a home group together for years. So, we got in the RV and the boys were in the back playing. Adam's daddy, Fred Martin came all the way from Tyler, Texas to join us for our adventure. Fred is 75 years old. If you've ever watched Lonesome Dove, you know what he looks like. He looks like Gus. Robert Duvall, can you picture it? The cowboy hat, really crisp jeans, starched shirt, pair of boots. He is an awesome man.

I got to hear Fred's side of a story that I've heard from Adam over the years. It was really interesting to get to know Fred on a deep level. Fred, when he was a young man, met a young lady named Pat on a blind date and it didn't take them long to fall in love. A couple years after they were married, they started having kiddoes. They loved each other like crazy.

I think it was 24 or 25 years ago when his kids were 9, 11, and 15, Pat started to have some strange feelings in her hands. They brought her to the doctor and their family doctor checked her out and didn't see anything wrong, but he said to Fred, "If I know you at all, I know that you're not going to stop at this." So, they decided to have an MRI. When they got the MRI results back, they discovered that Pat had a stage five tumor, cancer in her brain. They gave her six months to live and she lasted sixteen, but Pat died and left the love of her life and three kiddoes behind her.

On his own, Fred raised those three kids. He's never been remarried. He's an accountant and runs a little farm down in Tyler. It's just amazing to think that a man could pull that off, to be honest with you. One of the things that Fred said was, "I believe with my whole heart that every man needs to raise their kids for one year all by themselves, and then he'll truly know how amazing moms are. Well, Fred did that for his kids' entire upbringing.

I asked Fred... By the way, he's not from Tyler; he's from College Station. I need to get that right or else I'm going to pay the price. He's an Aggie. You know how the Aggies are. I asked Fred, "How did you maintain faith walking through such a wound?" To have God take the love of your life away, that's a trial that I don't ever want to go through.

I scrambled taking notes as Fred shared because it was so relevant to what we're talking about today. He said, "I don't like it and there's nothing I can do about it, but it's just got to be part of God's plan. I've got to believe that God loves me and my family enough to make some sense of this, and I trust that he will see our way through this. You've got to have faith that there's a reason for everything." He said, "Everything is part of a plan; we just don't know it or realize it until we look back."

Fred loves to two-step. He goes about three times a week to this day as a 75-year-old. He has probably two-stepped with a thousand ladies down there in Texas and he says, "I've just never been able to find one that could measure up to Pat." Yet, this man, one of the phrases that he said over and over again in our conversation... And we had hours of conversation at different times this weekend. He kept talking about how blessed he was. "I am so blessed." We were sitting in the RV and he looks at his two grandkids and he says, "It's by the grace of God that I raised these kids and these grandkids are my heritage. I am so blessed."

I Face Timed my wife when we were in the RV and I was laughing. I'm like, "Look at where we're staying tonight; we're roughing it." I showed her Fred and Adam and the kids in the back. She proceeds to say, "That is so funny because you were just making fun of Adam for bringing an RV this afternoon." I'm like, *Where is the mute button on this?* She threw me under the bus.

So, guess what? We go out of the RV that night to go to my tent. I had put an extra tarp underneath it, thinking that would keep us up off the ground. Come to find out, water had poured down and pooled underneath. It was working against me. Then it bubbled up from underneath through some pinholes in my tent. Our pillows were like sponges. The next morning, I walked out of the RV after a full night of sleep. I just woke up and we were there. It was a good trip.

As we talk about uncertainty... I was praying toward this and asking God, "Where do you want me to take God's family? What scripture do you want us to stand on?" He put it on my heart to go to Lamentations 3. This is a place where I run when I need help. Looking at Fred's life, he has done what Ted charged us with last week in a really healthy way. He has expressed his feelings. He has dealt with the emotion and the hardship and it's still tender to this day. But time and time again, he stakes his claim on God's truth. He declares that truth – as Pastor Ted charged us. "God's got a plan, God loves us enough, and I trust that he's got a plan."

When I am struggling, I run to Lamentation 3. Actually, this is a picture of my Bible. Of all of the pages in my Bible, this is the page that has the most worn out corner on it. I want to make it clear. I don't know what thoughts you might have when you look at that Bible, but I'll tell you this, don't be impressed. The reason that Bible is so worn out on that page is because Shay Robbins is an absolute mess. This morning, as I was praying, God impressed me with two things he wants me to do: 1) Open up his Word; 2) Put my heart on the table. So, that's my intention today.

That page in my Bible is all torn up because I am a control freak when things are out of control. When my future is uncertain, things are unraveling, my natural tendency, in my flesh, is to white-knuckle everything. If you would honestly ask the people who have served underneath me over the years, and they gave you an honest take, they would tell you that when Shay is tired and in the flesh, his default is to be a dominator and to just crush the people who are following him. Generally, it's the people that I love most. That is my default tendency and that's why I find myself running to Lamentations 3 time and time again.

I want to jump in. This wrestling match with control... Some of you guys may be familiar with that. It might be something that you wrestle with too. In Exodus 20 when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, the first two commandments are the linchpins of all other commandments thereafter. The first one is that you'll have no other God before him and the second one is that you'll make no other idols and you will not worship them.

Stress and Anxiety are Symptoms of a Control Complex

When I go into control mode and I try and lay hold of my own destiny, what happens is it's like the reverse of *Jesus Take the Wheel*. I take the wheel out of God's hands and I take control and I take the roll of God. **I just call it a control complex. The reality is that it is functional idolatry.** When I do that, the outcome is that my life begins to well up with stress, anxiety, worry, anger, etc. Ultimately, those things are just symptoms of my control complex. What I want to encourage you with today is that there is good news here. Those symptoms that pop up can actually... Stress and anxiety can serve as a tool to drive you into intimacy with your heavenly Father. They can be a daily reminder that you need to let go, to open up your hands and surrender, and run to God for help. That's literally what we are going to do today.

Open your Bibles to Lamentations 3. We're going to start in Verse 19. Jeremiah is the author and he says this. **19 Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. 20 Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me.** He's writing to his readers in his present and into his

future. He's literally writing to us and in this section of scripture, he's saying, "I want to remind you of where I'm writing from." Here's the context. Jeremiah, not only did he write Lamentations, but he wrote the book named after him, Jeremiah. He is known as the weeping prophet. The reason he is known as the weeping prophet is because at the very beginning of his service to the Nation of Israel – really the service to Judah – the king he served under was a good king, Josiah. As soon as the next king came on, it was evil king after evil king who had no heart for God and it was Jeremiah's job to stand up, to take his stand in their country and to cry out to God's people to come back to Him. He's called the weeping prophet because, according to the history that we have in our hands, there's not a single convert or active repentance during his lifetime of 40 years of ministry.

You might look at Lamentations 3: 19-41 and read that text and think to yourself, *Wow, this Lamentations is extremely encouraging.* You need to read the rest of the book because the rest of the book was written after he gave his final warning as Babylon is marching on Judah. He tells the king, "You need to go out and surrender. This is God's last act of mercy." Being stubborn and stiff-necked, the king stood his ground, and armies of Babylon surrounded the City of Jerusalem and starved them out to the point where, as he writes in Lamentations, parents were turning to cannibalism and eating their children they were so desperate. Then, finally, they came in, broke down the walls, utterly destroy the city, and then they took captives in exile back to Babylon and left a mess behind them. That's where Jeremiah is writing from and that's why he starts off with saying, "Hey, I want you to remember this. Remember where I'm coming from because I want to give you some truth." It's truth that's going to impact us as we sit in here today.

21 This I recall to my mind... That's what we just did in Communion. And that's going to happen in your life. When you're sitting around your table, Daddies, whatever your circumstances are that are spinning out of control, lead your family by grabbing a loaf of bread and breaking it right then and there and saying, "This we recall to mind as a family. Our hope is in Jesus and what he did on the cross."

This I recall to mind: ***...therefore I have hope. 22 The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.*** That word *lovingkindness* is the Hebrew word *hesed* and it was made famous in Hosea where Hosea was commanded by God to marry a prostitute and to love her regardless of how faithful she was in return. "Love her and love her and love her and love her." He commanded Hosea to love her in that way as an example of how God loves us when we wander and are unfaithful to him. His faithfulness and his love are unceasing. His compassions never fail. They are new every single morning.

Church, I want to charge you. Give God your morning. Every morning... Tomorrow, you're going to wake up and you're going to have needs. I challenge you, give him your morning and bring your overwhelming needs and he will meet you with his unending resources. His mercies are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.

In Jeremiah 33, Jeremiah writes to the people on behalf of God. So, God speaks to Jeremiah and then he quotes God to the people. And God says this, **20 "Thus says the Lord, 'If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time,**

21 then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers.”

He's saying the only way this hope that we have in Jesus can be broken is if you, as a mortal man or mortal woman, can somehow stop that sun from rising. And if you could somehow stop the sun from setting. I bet men could load up atom bombs in a spaceship, fly it into the sun and it's be like dropping a marshmallow in a campfire. There's nothing that we can do to stop that sun from coming up and there's nothing that can break God's faithfulness towards his people.

Watch what he says in Lamentations 3. **24 "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him."** Do you see that? I love how he takes those couple of verses and envelopes God's character in hope. As we walk through uncertainty and we process emotion... Again, that's okay. It's okay to have feelings. We look at David and we see how strung out he was and how honest he was with God. But in the midst of that emotion, we can't let it dictate our decision making and our belief system. Rather, in the midst of that emotion, we make a declaration of truth. And when we look at God's character, they will be enveloped with hope and hope does not disappoint. Cling to God's promises; they are enveloped in hope.

Lamentations 3 – **25 The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him.** One of the most underestimated quality of God is his patience.

I'll remind you of it again. 2 Peter 3 – **9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you (personalized), not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.** His patience is actually a blessing toward us.

One of my favorite Psalms is Psalms 27 - **13 I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. 14 Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the Lord.** For those who wait and those who seek God, there is good that is promised to them.

Lamentation 3 - **26 It is good that he waits silently for the salvation of the Lord. 27 It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke in his youth.** I've said this before and I'll say it again, I hang my hat on this verse because of what it means to me. For those of us who are parents, I'll remind you again that we have got to let our kids struggle. We can come alongside them and support them and point them to truth, but they need to be able to struggle.

They need to wrestle with the difficulties of their life so that this promise is fulfilled, and they can take on the blessings of growth and character and maturity, so that when we launch them, they are not children, but they are adults. That is our job. And as we walk through difficulty, we know, each one of us, that we'll get to sit in the benefit and the blessing of the character development that we gain walking through that trial. That's part of God's goodness. It's part of his plan.

28 Let him sit alone and be silent since He has laid it on him. 29 Let him put his mouth in the dust, perhaps there is hope. So, there's this picture of adversity and how God uses it, when we're proud,

chest puffed out, stiff-necked... When we walk through that adversity, it humbles us and it brings us to the point where our mouth is in the dust and we are in a proper posture before God. He uses it for our good.

30 Let him give his cheek to the smiter, let him be filled with reproach. 31 For the Lord will not reject forever, 32 for if He causes grief, then He will have compassion according to His abundant lovingkindness. Again, this is a reminder of God's character.

The Lord gains our attention in uncertainty

As I walk through uncertainty and I'm reminded of his lovingkindness, I'm reminded of when we had our second child. When Lulu was born, God gave us this big ole heart to just love her and we couldn't believe how much we loved her. And when Ashley was pregnant with Belle, I remember thinking to myself, *I guess I'm going to have to take this love and split it in half, so Lulu will get 50% and Belle will get 50%.* But that's not what happens in the heart of a parent, is it? No, he doubled down. He gave us a full other capacity to love and we're finding that with kid after kid. God's building our heart to love each one of our children with a whole heart. That's how God's lovingkindness can reach out to the seven plus billion people on earth in an intimate way because God has a whole heart, a full heart to love you right where you're at in the midst of your adversity. It's a beautiful promise.

Picking up in Verse 33. ***33 For He does not afflict willingly or grieve the sons of men. 34 To crush under His feet all the prisoners of the land, 35 to deprive a man of justice in the presence of the Most High, 36 to defraud a man in his lawsuit—of these things the Lord does not approve.***

A lot of times, we make the mistake of assigning the brokenness and the atrocity and the perversion of this world to God, when, in fact, it's not God. Those are the works of the devil. God doesn't approve of these things.

It goes on. ***37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? 38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and ill go forth?*** God allows this brokenness to reign on earth for a time for a reason. But it says there is nothing that happens without God's permission. When you look at the beginning of Job, what did Satan have to do before he could afflict Job? He went to God and he asked for permission. That's because God is what we call sovereign. It's a big churchy word for "God is in control." "God's got this." In his sovereignty and in his plan and in his patience, he has decided to let this brokenness play out and even in the midst of it, he's going to use what Satan intended for evil for good things in the life of who love him.

Remember, God is loving, compassionate, just, and sovereign

This is what we stake our claim on this morning, and these are just four of the character qualities of our God that we can hang on, just four.

Lamentations 3 - ***39 Why should any living mortal, or any man, offer complaint in view of his sins? 40 Let us examine and probe our ways and let us return to the Lord.*** This is really interesting.

As Jeremiah comes in and he envelops God's promises with hope, he swings back around and he says, "Hey, hey, hey, wait a minute. Let's have a look at your heart." That's because a lot of times, when we walk through hardship and our attitude gets sour and we camp out in our feelings without declaring truth, those feelings will propagate sin. For those of us who are followers of Jesus, those who have accepted him as Lord and Savior, the blood that was shed on the cross has covered all of our sins once and for all time. You're covered.

But we still have the ability to take sin and to put it in between our relationship with God and it makes things messy. Just like any earthly relationship, we all know how this works, when a kid is disobedient or rebellious, their relationship with their parent is strained. When we're walking through hardship, a lot of times, we point the finger at God and we say, "God, where are you? Why aren't you helping me? Why are you leaving me out here to suffer?" Many times, the sin that has popped up in our flesh has caused our ears to be clogged that we can't hear from God. In fact, Isaiah 59 says this. ***1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.***

So, as I run to Lamentations in the midst of my flesh, I'm reminded that I am a sinful human being. And I need to run to God and be reconciled to him to get this junk out of my life because frankly, I need every resource I can get from the Lord right now and that's the way we go about it. Many times, feeling of abandon and doubt and times of uncertainty are because of unconfessed sin.

41 We lift up our heart and hands toward God in heaven... I love that picture. We've been reduced to our knees through the humility of hardship and as we look up to the heavens, we open up our heart and our hands. That's what we do every morning. If you choose to give your mornings to the Lord, you're opening up your heart and your hands and what he's going to do is give you the resources to fill up your heart and fill you with hope in the midst of hopelessness and he's going to put the resources in your hands to get through the day.

If his promises are true, then every trial produces life for the children of God.

Fred Martin said it over and over again. "I am so blessed." I want to be pretty vulnerable with you. Ashley and I just walked through nine months prayerfully with our last pregnancy. We walked through this and I have to tell you that it was a lot harder than the first five. There are all these things rolling. We're older and our bodies are weaker and our minds are weaker and we've got five kids pulling at us. We happen to be doing a remodel, which is taking extra time from Daddy.

We have dear friends that are struggling to get pregnant with miscarriage after miscarriage. They are precious friends, but we are in this awkward space of how to be who we are around them because the Robbins, for whatever reason, get pregnant and have babies without any issue. Then we have another couple who just had their first baby. They are precious friends of ours. She spent the first three weeks of her life in the NICU, fighting for life.

As all these things are swirling around, we're in the midst of our days and we're just asking each other, "How in the world are we going to get through this?" "How can we go another two months, six weeks, four weeks?" It just felt so heavy. Yet, as we ran to God on a daily basis, he gave us what we needed to overcome. That life that is promised in the midst of hardship, Jesus talked about it in agricultural terms. He talked about the vinedresser who prunes off our dead branches and when that happens, it's a painful process in the life of his followers, but it always results in good fruit.

As we endured nine months of pregnancy... It's funny how you forget. We've been through this a few times before, but we just forget what it's like, you forget the experiences, you forget how you feel about the child. A week from Wednesday, so about ten days ago, this picture was taken by one of our nurse. If you're wondering what kind of guy I am, I'm the kind of guy who puts on gloves in the delivery room and gets ready. This picture was taken immediately as Sage, our last baby girl, was delivered. I'm sitting there literally laughing, I'm giggling out loud, Ashley probably would have hit me if she could have reached me. But I was just blown away. I had forgotten about how awesome this moment was. And that's what happens; you forget. You forget about God's goodness – how good he is when you're in the midst of the trial. It's hard to see the forest when you're standing in the trees, but God gave us this reminder and I need to run back to this over and over again of how awesome He is and how much He loves us.

I don't want to make this about our family at all right now. I just want to make this point: God is good. He has a plan for your life and no matter what you're going through, if you run to him, he's going to see you across the finish line.

This Bible, some say, has over 7,000 promises in it. I've never counted them. But what I do know is that the thousands of promises that are in it, you can count on them. God is good.

Jesus didn't promise us an easy life; he promised us an abundant life. I'm going to pray and, on your way, out, as a reminder today, we are collecting our mercy offering, which goes towards the needs of our church members that are around you. I encourage you to give on your way out.

Jesus, we come to you and we thank you for your goodness. We thank you for the potency of your Word. We thank you, God, for your promises and your unwavering character. We want to pray, Jesus, that you would meet us right here today and give us everything that we need. And I want to pray for those that are hurting, that you would comfort them, Jesus, and that they would run to you.

It's in the mighty name of Jesus we pray... Amen.