

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Unexpected Blessings

June 18, 2018

I never wanted children of my own for several reasons. First, my childhood was not the best. Second, this world is a scary place and I didn't want to be responsible for bringing more people into this insanity. But mostly, I didn't want children because I thought I would be a terrible mother.

I was not raised a Christian and I was admittedly, and sometimes rather proudly, a selfish heathen. I had neither time nor inclination for rugrats. When I met my husband, although he had children, he was happy to have them every other weekend and be done. I was okay with that because they were cute and well-behaved and didn't really get in the way. Until one day, they did.

Their mom's situation had gotten really bad and they wanted to come live with us - wait, what??? Oh no, not me! The thought made my anxiety level go through the roof! I knew nothing about raising kids, I never even WANTED to know anything about raising kids. How could this be happening? I was so scared that I would mess them up, but I made the decision to do the best I could. I could feel my stomach rising to my throat even as I said "Of course!" And guess what? It was the best thing that ever happened to me. Those children completely changed my life and ultimately helped lead me to Christ.

So often, we let fear keep us where we think we will be safe. It could be fear of failure, discomfort, or disapproval. The list goes on, but what do we miss out on by not trusting God? What if Abraham had not left his home, or Moses had refused to return to Egypt? Joshua crossed the Jordan River, Joseph courageously forgave his brothers, and David defeated Goliath. All of these guys stepped out of their comfort zone into something they were sure they were not qualified for and their decision to do so changed lives.

Granted, these are the heavy hitters from the Bible, but look at what I did. Just by stepping into something I was terrified of, I changed my life and the lives of two children forever. My kids are the most wonderful people I know - smart and funny and full of love. I know God sent them to me for a reason, and I'm so glad I said yes. I also know now that he will not give me anything without also providing me with the help I need to get through it. He tells us this over and over throughout the Bible, but this verse is one of my favorites:

Joshua 1:9

This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Questions:

Have you ever backed down from doing something courageous? What fears held you back?

If you didn't back down, what motivated you to move forward? How did that make you feel?

Next Steps:

It takes a lot of courage just to admit we are afraid! When you feel yourself balking at or pushing back from something uncomfortable, look at your core motivation. If it's fear driven, ask yourself why. Write down pros and cons and pray over your list. Ask God to help you do what you need to do.

Prayer:

Papa, thank you for always being with me. I praise you for giving me constant reminders through your word that I can trust you and that you will never leave me to fend for myself. Help me to remember that in times of fear and uncertainty. Give me courage to step out of my comfort zone, knowing you are with me every step of the way. Amen.

Should I Stay or Should I Go?

June 19, 2018

Monday we learned that when we are courageous, God can use us to create something extraordinary out of every situation.

Today we are going to look at the courageous choice of staying when it would be easier to go. King David, known as a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), faced just such a situation as a young boy.

In 1 Samuel 17, the Philistine army was camped on a hillside in the Valley of Elah, and King Saul's army was on the other side. But this was not to be the usual army versus army battle for territory. Instead, the Philistines sent Goliath of Gath, a giant of a man with the physique of a world class weightlifter with a spear, shield, and javelin weighing more than most of the Israelite soldiers. For forty days, twice a day, Goliath would walk out to challenge Saul's soldiers to send a man to fight him. Instead of the usual blood bath and loss of life between armies, the match up with Goliath would determine who would be the ruler and who would be the slaves.

David, a shepherd boy and youngest son of Jesse, was taking lunch to his three oldest brothers who served in Saul's army. Afterwards, he was supposed to hurry back to tend to their flock of sheep.

But God had other plans - something monumental and unexpected happened that forced David to make a choice: stick with the plan or stay to defend the name and authority of the one true God when others wouldn't.

Instead of being afraid like the soldiers, David was outraged at the insults he heard Goliath hurling at the army of God. David's words at this point, to anyone who would listen, indicated he had one desire - he wanted to put an end to Goliath and his outrageous threats. When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard about this, he ridiculed David and pointed out how inadequate he, a mere shepherd boy, was to dare to claim he could take on Goliath.

But in spite of Goliath's size and strength and his brother's insults, David went to King Saul and said, "Let no man's courage fail because of him (Goliath). Your servant will go out and fight with this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:32, AMP). King Saul, although shocked by David's offer, allowed him to go.

Why was David so set on staying and intervening? It was because he was sure his cause was just and righteous. As he told Goliath when he went down to meet him. "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies - the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. Today the Lord will conquer you" (1 Samuel 17:45-46a).

So, whatever your battle, remember this when you and others doubt your ability: God does not call the qualified, he qualifies the called.

Questions:

Who have you been listening to? The doubts of others/yourself or the Lord of heaven and earth who has a plan for your life?

Who is right?

Next Steps:

Stop trying to fit God into your schedule. Fit your schedule around your time with God. Begin every day reciting this verse so when trouble comes you will know the Lord is with you in all things: "For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen" (Jeremiah 29: 11-12). The closer you stay to the Lord the more confident you will be in all things.

Prayer:

Thank you, Lord for your assurances that you love me and are with me. Lord, please help me to seek you first in all things in my life so that I may know there is nothing that comes into my life that you don't have your hand on. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

On a Wing and a Prayer

June 20, 2018

When my grandmother was in her early twenties, she had to make a courageous choice. A brave choice. A bold choice. I did not really appreciate how truly courageous she must have been until I became an adult and mother of two young daughters myself.

You see, when my grandmother was in her early twenties with two young children, World War II was just about to end. She was living in Görlitz, a gorgeous town in the eastern part of Germany that is today divided between Germany and Poland by the river that runs through it. My mother and aunt were only a few years old, and my grandfather had been drafted to fight on the Russian front. Before he had left, he had told my grandmother that if it looked like Germany was going to lose the war, she should take their daughters and go west because he feared East Germany might end up becoming Russian-controlled territory.

As the news came that Germany was indeed likely to lose the war, she had to make the difficult choice to leave. She headed west, around 500 miles - probably mostly on foot - with two young girls in tow. All by herself. She left her home, her old life, and her family behind to settle in a new place with an unknown future. This is how I came to be born, many decades later, in München (Munich) in the southern part of Germany. It turned out to be a very wise choice, because Bavaria, of which Munich is the state capital, ended up under the control of American forces after the war, and the citizens of Bavaria became part of the new West Germany. This was a far better fate than ending up behind the Iron Curtain.

Today will take a look at the courageous choice to **leave when it would be easier to stay**. Just like my grandmother, we sometimes have to walk away from something good to walk into something great. Making such a choice takes faith and courage.

Hebrews 11:8-10

°It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. ° And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents.

And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise.¹⁰ Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

God called on Abraham to leave the land where he was comfortable and to travel instead into an unknown land. Ultimately, his decision to leave led him to become the father of a great nation. Sometimes, God will send us an invitation to leave our past behind because he has a much better future for us in mind. It can be very difficult to make the choice to follow his invitation because we are so comfortable in our environment, even if that environment is sometimes not really good for us. We are used to it, it is familiar, and we do not want to leave it. But great joy and happiness can come from taking a leap of faith into the unknown as new opportunities open up that we had never even imagined before. The road might be bumpy on the way, but it is surely worth it.

Questions:

Has God presented you with an opportunity to make the courageous decision to leave rather than to stay where you are? Keep in mind that this might not necessarily mean you physically relocating your life, but he could be inviting you to change your life's circumstances for a better future. Or are you already on such a journey? Are you scared? Have you looked to God to keep you courageous on the way?

Next Steps:

Look in your life for possible invitations from God to go on a journey into an unknown, new land. Ask God for courage and guidance. Ask others in your life to give you support on your journey.

Prayer:

Dear Father in heaven, please give me the courage and strength to follow your calling for a new and better future, even if the path is initially uncertain and scary. Please keep me strong during my journey to the new future you have in mind for me. Amen.

A Familiar Scenario

June 21, 2018

The cliché is all too familiar either in the movies or real life: a couple gets lost. The woman urges the driver (usually her spouse) to stop and ask for directions. He replies in very strong terms: “I don’t need help.”

This scenario always cracks me up. The scene has played out in my own life and sometimes the roles have been switched. We all realize that it is an eventuality - the question is how much time and gas will be wasted before the driver yells “UNCLE!” and help is sought at the local gas station or the nearest person walking down the sidewalk.

Why don’t we ask for help? Why do we always think “I have this!”, “I know where I am!”, “I am NOT lost!”, “I do not need anyone’s help!”.

In one word: PRIDE. And because it is easier to pretend that everything is okay. This is not a shocking revelation to any of us! Especially not to God. He knows my pride is between him and me. He uses it in order to get us to ask him for help. He puts us in those situations over and over so that we will cry “Uncle!” and ask for help: “Abba, Father! I cannot do this!!” What a relief it is just to call out for help. It is immensely faith-building, when the Helper is there and says, “Be still, and know I am God!” (Psalm 46:10).

This is the human condition. Even millennia before Christ, human pride got in the way of mankind seeking help. Today, we take a look at Naaman, leader of an army and second only to the king in the kingdom of Aram (2 Kings 5). This was Naaman’s one problem: Naaman had leprosy. He could pretend everything was okay, but it was LEPROSY, a very visual disease. He did not want to admit he had leprosy, nor tell his king, nor deal with it. But Naaman’s wife’s captive Israeli servant girl spoke truth to the wife about a prophet in Israel who could heal him.

We can only imagine the curse that disease was and the desperation it brought on its victims. It was a place of desperation that Naaman had to reach before being willing to ask for help. He was on his last straw, at his wit’s end, with no further last resort, and out of ideas. Is that when *you* finally turn to God? Is this the place where you find yourself over and over before surrendering to the Almighty and calling on him? He is waiting, ready, willing, and able to help each of us if we call on the name of the Lord.

Naaman finally did ask for help and humbly told the king there was possible help in Israel. The king sent Naaman with a generous monetary gift to seek out Elisha, God's prophet. But all Elisha tells Naaman to do is wash himself in the Jordan River seven times. Again, Naaman's pride would not allow him to do such a simple, humbling thing. His servants, however, who apparently esteemed and loved him, suggested that if the prophet had required Naaman do a **great** thing, wouldn't he have done it? Humbly, he washed himself in the Jordan seven times and was restored to health with skin as fresh as that of a young boy. Ultimately, asking for help not only led to his physical healing, but it was also the starting point to his FAITH, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel" (2 Kings 5:15).

It takes courage to admit, "I need help." It takes humility to call on the Lord. It takes faith to obey. But when these steps are taken, the Lord will never fail you, forsake you or forget you, and you will declare, "Now I know there is no God in all the world except the God of Israel."

Questions:

When has God placed you in a situation of desperation over and over again? Did you finally ask someone for help or did you ignore the situation?

Can you think of a time when you humbled yourself before the Lord and prayed for help? If not, it is ok. Start today!

Next Steps:

Look for those situations that God puts you in where you are lost. Journal your helplessness. Pray about your responses when things are tough. Do not pretend. Be real! Pray that you will call on God for help, for the courage to admit you need help, and for the faith to obey his instructions. Journal your walk through this season.

Prayer:

Father God, you are the one true God. Thank you for allowing me to come to you in prayer. Help me to turn to you FIRST. Give me the courage to be honest with my spouse, best friend, pastor, and to be vulnerable enough to ask for help and counsel. It is easier to pretend things are fine, but you call me to have courage and faith. Thank you for always being available and able to help and heal. Amen.

This post was written by Julie Roehl. A regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

We Are Not Meant To Do Life Alone

June 22, 2018

We were not created to do life alone. God created us to be relational beings, to have close friendships and a personal relationship with God himself. What does it look like to truly have a good friend and to be a good friend? What characteristics come to mind when you think of a good friend? Maybe it's someone you want to spend time with and with whom you share the same interests. Maybe it's someone with a sense of humor. Maybe it's someone who is a good listener. The Bible describes a good friend as someone who sharpens you. And in return you sharpen them.

Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.

So, what does that practically look like in our relationships?

To start a good friend cares more about giving GODLY advice than GOOD advice.

Proverbs 13:20

Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.

Secondly, a good friend tells you what you NEED to hear, not what you WANT to hear.

Proverbs 27:6

Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.

And finally, a good friend wants more for you than they want from you.

Proverbs 18:24

There are "friends" who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother.

Wow! A good friend is honest, helps you become the best version of yourself, and helps you grow closer to God. How amazing a good friend can be!

When you surround yourself with friends like this, you can be more courageous. Remember, one act of courage can produce something extraordinary. This weekend your campus pastor detailed what it looks like to have good friends or to be a good friend. As we discussed yesterday, it is important to open up to

others and ask for help. We don't have to open up to everyone, but it is essential that we open up to someone.

What if you don't have friendships like these in your life today? CedarCreek offers several opportunities to connect with other Christ-followers. You can join the DreamTeam or a Group. If you're not sure where to start, GrowthTrack is a great place to meet new people, find out your skills and passions, and make connections. You can find out more about GrowthTrack by visiting cedarcreek.tv/growthtrack or join a group at cedarcreek.tv/groups. Take one step today toward developing the friendships that will help you grow and become more courageous!

Questions:

Think about your close friendships. Based on how Proverbs describes a good friend, how would you rate the quality of your friendships?

In what areas can you be a better friend to someone else?

Next Steps:

Take the first step in making new connections by completing GrowthTrack or by finding a Group comprised of fellow Christ-followers with similar interests to yours. Journal your experiences as you see your friendships blossom.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for the example of what a good friend is. Help me to be the type of friend described in Proverbs. Amen.