

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

What is a Life That Excites the Heart of God?

October 29, 2018

This past weekend Ben asked us this question, “What is a life that excites the heart of God?” When answering that question, many of us go right to a list of do’s and don’ts. If I go to church every weekend, if I read the LivingItOut Study or another Bible study, if I pray enough, if I give financially to the church, then God will be pleased with me, and my actions will excite his heart. On the other side, there is the list of don’ts that I need to keep in mind. If I don’t smoke, don’t drink too much, don’t look at that or say this, then God will be pleased with me. We all know the list of don’ts pretty well, right?

God is more interested in our hearts than our actions though. We can rock the list of do’s and avoid the list of don’ts, but if God doesn’t have our hearts, then he isn’t excited about those actions.

What excites God’s heart is when we trust him. Our memory verse for this series tells us that he is actively looking for people who have trusted him with their hearts.

2 Chronicles 16:9a

⁹The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

So, what does it look like when we trust him and when we are fully committed to him? Ben used a passage in 2 Corinthians 9 to help us understand what it looks like when we live a life of trust.

2 Corinthians 9:6-10

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. ⁷ You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. “For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.”⁸ And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. ⁹ As the Scriptures say, “They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.”

¹⁰ For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you.

In these verses, we see that a farmer has two choices. The first choice is to keep the seed that he uses for his daily bread in his hand. When he does this, he is placing his trust in something tangible. He can see it, touch it, and taste it. It makes him feel safe, comfortable, and secure. The choice to keep his hand closed, displays his fear of letting go. Ultimately it is his fear that produces scarcity in the future and causes him to miss out on the harvest.

The second choice is to open his hand, letting go of the seed, placing it in the dirt, and trusting that God will provide his future needs. He can't yet see or touch the crops, but he has faith that they will come. Opening his hand and letting go of what he currently has is what brings abundance in the future. It results in him receiving everything he will need and produces a harvest of generosity.

This is an excellent illustration of how we can choose to live our lives. We can live with open hands and an open heart that trusts God, or we can live life with closed hands and a closed heart trusting in that which we are holding onto to provide for our needs. How we decide to live, open-handed or closed-handed, will determine the direction of our life, because our capacity to receive depends upon our willingness to open our hands.

God has so much that he wants to give to us and do through us. If we will open our hands and trust him with our hearts, then we can stop living in fear and start living freely. Free to know him, free to be who he intended us to be, free to be generous and free to make an eternal difference in the lives of others.

Questions:

Do you live your life open-handed or closed-handed?

Do you believe God is worthy of your open hand?

What are you afraid of that might prevent you from living your life more open-handed?

Next Steps:

Make a list of all the areas in your life where you are living open-handed and closed-handed. Pick one area where you are more closed-handed and write out a possible next step that will move you toward trusting God.

Prayer:

Dear Father, thank you for all that you are providing me with in my life. Please give me the wisdom and strength to open my hands and keep them open to

show you my trust in you and to receive what you have intended for me. Please use my open hands to serve others and make an eternal difference in their lives. Amen.

Unconditional Trust

October 30, 2018

One Saturday night several years ago, I was leading a group of teenagers on a retreat. During the evening, I presented an object lesson that I prayed would make an impact on their lives. I asked for a volunteer and a 7th grade girl jumped at the chance. She came forward from the group, and I gave her a blindfold. She dutifully placed the blindfold over her eyes as I checked to make sure that she really could not see. Then I led her up on a table in the center of the room. I asked her, "Do you know that I love you?" She responded enthusiastically, "Yes, I know that you love me!!" I asked her, "Would I do anything that would hurt you?" She replied, "No, you would never hurt me." I then said "I want you to fall backwards off the table, and I will catch you." She responded, "Noooooooooooo!!!" I repeated my statements of my love for her three more times, and she continued to respond with a mournful "No!" Finally, she said yes!! With tears in her eyes, she let go of her place of security and fell back into my arms. She trusted my love for her would keep her safe.

We are often like that 7th grade girl on our walk with God. He comes to us and tells us he loves us and assures us that he will always be with us and meet our needs. We have already trusted him with the most important decision of our life—our eternal relationship with him. Jesus demonstrated this great love and commitment toward us in the sacrifice he made on the cross. What great love he has for each of us! Then he comes to us through his Word and says, "Trust me".

2 Corinthians 9:7-8 (NLT)

You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.

Most of us read this passage and think, "we're supposed to give away what we have, and God will provide all we need??? That does not make sense." We resist, just as the young girl resisted trusting me to catch her. We cry our mournful "No, I cannot let go and trust you!" and try to make our excuses sound as righteous as possible. Sometimes we do not understand. Sometimes we are afraid. Sometimes we are filled with doubt regarding the promises of God. God calls us to give, to serve, to sacrifice. He calls us out of the boat to walk on the water in the storm. We prefer to trust the boat because we cannot see yet how things will

work out. But, what we ***do know*** is it's the one who loves us more than any other that beckons. It is the one who has given his all for us who asks us to take that step and trust him. We resist, but we *want* to trust him. And he is always lovingly reaching out to catch us when we do step out and trust him. Fall into God's arms for he will never fail you!

Questions:

What does God ask you to do, but you resist because of doubt in His love for you or the truth of his word?

In what area do you need to take action to demonstrate your trust in him?

What steps can you take to help you know God's love for you and his desire to provide for your needs?

Next Steps:

Take a step toward trusting God this week. It may be a step in giving. It may be a step in serving. It may be a step that requires sacrifice. Choose a path of believing God and trusting him.

If you are in a group, share an area where your doubts have kept you from acting on your trust in God. Ask your group members to pray with you as you seek to surrender this area of your life to God's control.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the great love that you have shown to me in the gift of your Son. I know that you love me because of that gift. Help me to realize that I can trust you because of that great love. Help me to leave my doubts and fears behind and to fall into your arms as I act in obedience to you. In Jesus's Name, amen.

Generous Provider

October 31, 2018

Who was the provider in your family growing up—the breadwinner, so to speak? For my family, it's basically always been my dad. I'm deeply appreciative, especially during my current stage of life as a young adult, for how willing he and my mom have been to help me however they can. Although I can't fully support myself right now, I don't worry about money because I can trust them to provide when I can't.

I realize that not everyone can relate to this sentiment. Some of us have had parents who wouldn't provide this kind of support—others have had parents who simply weren't able to. However, we all have a heavenly father, who is able to provide whatever we need, and who deeply wants to. In short, we can trust God with our hearts and lives because he is a generous provider.

As Jesus says in **Luke 11:11-13**,

"You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

Just to be clear, these verses are referring to asking for the Holy Spirit—it's not suggesting that if you were to ask to win the lottery, God would give that to you. I'm also not saying you should quit your day job and expect God to give you everything you need to coast through life. If I tried that with my parents, they would probably have some choice words for me.

But here's the point I'm trying to make: while my parents are people of compassion and integrity, they're still imperfect people. My dad's not even a Christian. If fallible humans like them can be trusted to provide for their children, surely a perfect and loving God can be trusted to provide for his children. Therefore, we can trust God with our whole hearts, knowing that when we follow his will and guidance, he will generously provide all we need.

"So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear? Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need'" (Matthew 6: 31, 33).

Questions:

Do you trust God to provide what you need (energy, time, money) when you need it?

How has he provided for you in the past? Have there been times when you felt he didn't provide?

Where do you need God to provide right now?

Next Steps:

Consider the areas of your life where you struggle the most with trusting God. If you feel God has failed to provide in these areas in the past, discuss what happened with a trusted friend.

Ask God to provide wherever you need it most.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for being a God who provides, and provides generously. Thank you for being a God we can trust. Please help us to trust you with our whole hearts, following your will and living righteously. May your will be done in our lives. Amen.

Giving Up Control

November 1, 2018

I admit it: I am a recovering control freak. If you don't believe me, ask my husband and daughters. For the majority of my life, I tried to control everything around me. I had very little peace. I was often fearful. I was a Christian, but I wasn't free. I would cry out to God for help, and then I would tell him how he should fix the situation. If he didn't move quickly enough, I would think he needed my help. As Joyce Meyer says, "I was acting like the Holy Spirit, Jr." It is hard to admit, but I really didn't trust that God really knew me or knew what was best for me.

About five years ago, my twin brother, Mark, died suddenly. I slowly realized I had no control of my life. I learned how short life is and how things could change drastically in a moment. I knew I no longer had the answers. I turned to Jesus because I understood that *he* was really in control, and I wanted him so desperately to change me. I desired to learn to treasure every moment God gave me. I yearned for his peace. He knew exactly what I needed. He created me and he knows me so perfectly and completely. He knows me better than I know myself. Looking back on those times, I now understand how he guided me every step of the way. He saw me and what I needed: his love, patience, caring, peace, hope, and joy. He freely gave these to me through his presence and his Word. He spoke into my life through the Bible, sermons, books I read, my family, my friends, and numerous other ways.

Psalm 139:1-4

You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.

² You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.

³ You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴ Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.

The last five years have had seasons of delight, heartache, fear, pain, and joy. God has taught me he knows best. I must admit at times I do revert to acting like a control freak. I've found that when I try to take control of a situation, I lose my peace, I become anxious, and everything eventually falls apart. On the other

hand, I have learned that when I let go and give the situation to God, everything turns out better. I feel his peace and joy along the journey and have the faith to know he will turn things out for the best. I realize I can trust God. He knows things about the situation that I am clueless to. He knows exactly what I need, before I do. Bottom line: I can trust him completely because he knows what is best for me. I can breathe and relax because he is faithful and loves me in spite of myself.

Questions:

What should you give to God to handle? How much do you trust him? Do you believe God knows you better than you know yourself and that he knows what is best for you?

Next Steps:

Praise God for loving you and knowing you so well. Trust that he knows what is best for you.

Write down ways he has proven himself trustworthy in the past. Meditate on verses that let you know how well God knows you and loves you.

Prayer:

Jesus, I am so overwhelmed that you know me better than anyone else and that you love me anyway. I am so grateful that you have an awesome plan for my life. Please increase my trust and faith in you. Help me to cast all my cares on to you. Help me to grow closer to you. Help me to love others as you love me. Thank you, Jesus, for loving me so much. Amen.

What's Next?

November 2, 2018

Have you ever put your faith in someone you love, only to be disappointed because they “failed” you? If you are a human being and interact with other humans, your answer will be a resounding “Yes!” And they would say the same of you.

Thankfully, it is completely different for the children of God. God the father is faithful in all things. In Psalm 136: 1-26 we read a song that was sung by the army of Judah. Every line in this song starts with a way in which God had continuously proven his faithful love toward them and followed up by this refrain, “His faithful love endures forever.”

Psalm 136: 23-26

²³ He remembered us in our weakness.

His faithful love endures forever.

²⁴ He saved us from our enemies.

His faithful love endures forever.

²⁵ He gives food to every living thing.

His faithful love endures forever.

²⁶ Give thanks to the God of heaven.

His faithful love endures forever.

The words in this song are still true today. What God did for the army of Judah, he can and will do in the lives of those who trust him today. We can be confident that he is faithful. We can trust him with our hearts. We can trust him with everything.

As we close out the W/Heart series, take a moment and ask yourself where you stand with trusting God. We all have a next step to take in the area of trusting. Perhaps your next step is to begin trusting that he loves you and that he wants to have a relationship with you.

For others, you may be trusting God for your salvation, but when it comes to trusting him with other areas in your life, you have not opened your hand to him. Instead, you hold tightly to a relationship, to your desires, and to your money?

Ben shared with us this weekend that our capacity to receive depends upon our willingness to open our hands. Are you willing to open your hands? Are you ready to take steps in trusting him? Don't miss this and most importantly don't miss out on all that God wants to give you when you trust him.

Questions:

What can we take away from know that faithfulness is endless?

What are you holding in your hand? Relationship, Dreams, Money, Something else?

What is your next step in the area of trusting God?

Next Steps:

If you are ready to take a step in trusting God, mark this moment.

Tell a friend. Write it down in your journal. Do something that will help you to remember that you are going to trust God in that are from this day forward.

If you are ready to take a step in the area of giving and want to mark the moment. Turn in the card from last weekend's service or fill it out on the CedarCreek app.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank you for your immeasurable love and countless interventions over the years on my behalf. Thank you for everything from the breath in my lungs and the love of my family to every material thing I own. It all belongs to you, as do I, and you call me to hold it all with an open hand for you to use or take as you see fit. Please Lord, help me to accept the counsel and comfort of the Holy Spirit, so I will trust you with my life completely and eagerly obey you in all things. Please Lord, teach me to base everything I do on your Holy Word. In the name of my Savior, Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen