

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Don't Let This Get the Best of You -Where's Norm?

August 10, 2020

Do you ever get to a point when so much stress pours on you that you just laugh about it? This past Sunday, I was driving home on a rainy, dreary day, when suddenly, I had a car plow into the back of my truck. And two months ago, I had a spider bite that became so infected I wasn't sure if my right leg was going to make it. It's been a crazy year, and it's only August! I don't know how people do life without a belief in God.

Maybe it's just me, but I think 2020 has gone out of its way to be challenging. It has been one thing after another, and I never seem to be on solid ground. The one thing I can count on is that stress and anxiety are a constant. Is this the new normal?

I could easily fall into that trap. I could wish and pray for things to return to normal, but to be truthful, this isn't the first time that uncertainty has been a part of my life. I have faced challenges my entire life. We all have. And you know what? Here we stand. We're still here. We're still enduring and overcoming on a daily basis.

This week, as we take a spiritual journey together and grow in our faith, let's remember the one constant we can depend on: God. Yes, we all want some normalcy back in our lives, but let's be careful with what that means. Take a step back and examine what is motivating you—what's pushing and pulling you through life? And be honest, if everything went back to normal and life was great, would your need for God remain as critical as it is today?

Lead Pastor Ben Snyder said it this way: "Your guide determines where you go." Are you guided by the future, feelings, facts, fate, or faith? This week, it's important that we take a deeper look at ourselves and uncover where we are putting our faith. Who is your guide? Who and what do you trust when life feels crushing?

My friends, as we reflect and memorize [John 10:27-29](#), let us remember that God will provide. As Pastor Ben said, "A spiritual look back will provide a helpful view moving forward."

Our lives are a testament to that. We're here today. We have overcome before, and we will persevere again. God is the one constant we can consistently depend on, and he wants to guide us through our challenges today.

John 10:27-29

²⁷ "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, ²⁹ for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand."

Questions:

How do you react to stress? Why?

In what or whom do you put your faith when life gets difficult? Yourself, someone, something, or God? Who is your guide?

With God as your guide, how can you approach difficult situations differently?

Next Steps:

It's important to take a step back, take a deep breath, and approach situations with wisdom and spiritual maturity. It's easier said than done, but practice does make perfect. Today is the start to our church's 21 Days of Prayer. I invite you to participate in this season of prayer. The daily prayer focus will be included in the LivingItOut each day and additional resources can be found at cedarcreek.tv/21days or on the [CedarCreek App](#).

21 Days of Prayer: God to be Known (Day 1):

Dear God, give me eyes to see and ears to hear on a daily basis where you are calling me to share the great hope we have in you. May I not be ashamed of your gospel, but may I be bold in proclaiming to all creation the good news that you are the way, the truth, and the life.

This post was written by Mike Bilik, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

How Do I Find Norm? - Where's Norm?

August 11, 2020

During the weekend service, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder told us: “Your GUIDE determines WHERE you GO.” It is the “principle of the path,” as author and pastor Andy Stanley describes—direction, not intention, determines your destination. So who, or what, guides where you go? We’ve all talked to people who want to discuss their problems with us. But maybe they don’t have real problems as much as they have chosen to follow the wrong directional sign. They may be focusing on one of several things:

- **Future** — Am I basing my decisions on what I believe my future may hold? Who tells me about my future? Am I trusting speculation—well, yeah! Because who can predict the future?
- **Feelings** — Should I make decisions on how I feel at this moment about something? Maybe tomorrow I’ll feel differently! My feelings are fickle and often depend on the weather or what I’ve eaten!
- **Facts** — According to whom? How can I vet, or trust, any of the sources of information on which I depend to make decisions?
- **Fate** — Is it all “karma”? What goes around comes around? Sometimes it seems so!
- **Faith** — What does God have to say about all of this? Can I trust him?

What really is guiding you? Is that guide the one you really want, or need? Pastor and author Tim Keller tells us that we have a source in which we can have supreme confidence. “The Bible is a case book for life,” How so, you might ask? The Bible illustrates how God guided people through the disruptions of their lives. If we follow Moses, the Jewish boy who grew up in Pharaoh's household, as he leads the Hebrew nation out of Egypt to the Promised Land, we see how God guided them.

Exodus 13:20-22

²⁰ The Israelites left Succoth and camped at Etham on the edge of the wilderness. ²¹ The Lord went ahead of them. He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud, and he provided light at night with a pillar of fire. This allowed

them to travel by day or by night. ²² And the Lord did not remove the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire from its place in front of the people.

This was how he led the Israelites. But God promises us, of the new covenant, more than this. He has given us more than a pillar of cloud or fire. He has given us his Spirit, his Bible, and his family. When we invite God into our lives, his spirit dwells in our hearts because of Jesus' sacrifice. When we trust in God, his word becomes a living thing that guides our lives. He gives us his family, the church, to walk beside us, to love and encourage and worship with us. God promised to guide us every day, and he does it out of his love for us! The stories in the Bible remind us who God really is—he is a good and loving father who wants the best for his children!

Questions:

On what or whom do you base your decisions? Is this a source in which you have confidence, or does it change day to day? How can you learn to trust God's guidance for the next step you need to take in your walk with him?

Next Steps:

Generally speaking, we don't base our decisions on faulty information but rather a lack of complete information. Ask the help of your [CedarCreek Group](#) or a trusted Christian friend to give you input on your decision-making process. Pray, pray, pray. Then listen!

21 Days of Prayer: Our Cities (Day 2):

Dear God, today, we lift up each city in Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan. We come to you—with one heart, one voice, and one prayer—to see COVID-19 halted, lives healed, hardships mitigated, people drawn to Christ, and your Spirit poured out in our communities. We humble ourselves, seek your face, and turn from our evil ways, believing that you will heal our lands. Lord, give us the wisdom necessary to unite us and lead us in the days ahead so our cities can be a light to our nation and a testament to you, our Savior. We pray this in Jesus' name—amen.

This post was written by Lauri White, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Normal According to God - Where's Norm?

August 12, 2020

When will we find Norm? That is the question on our minds. Right? When will my work life get back to normal? When will my children experience normalcy in this school year? When will I be able to sit with thousands of my fellow sports fans to watch my favorite football team again?

My answer to all these questions is, "I don't know." There is so much uncertainty, and moving forward is so difficult when we can't make sense of where we are today. That is why it is crucial for us to have a guide to show us the way.

This past weekend, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder shared that it is critical for us to make God our guide moving forward. After the Israelites left Egypt, they found themselves in the desert. God guided them forward with a pillar of cloud during the day for cover and a pillar of fire at night to provide light.

Exodus 13:21

²¹ The Lord went ahead of them. He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud, and he provided light at night with a pillar of fire. This allowed them to travel by day or by night.

The Israelites were also guided by promises given to them by God. Promises that Moses shared with them before they left Egypt.

Exodus 6:6-7a (NIV - emphasis added)

*⁶ "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the Lord, and **I will bring you out** from under the yoke of the Egyptians. **I will free you** from being slaves to them, and **I will redeem you** with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. **I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.**'"*

What's amazing about God's "I will" statements is that they are not only promises made long ago to the Israelites but also true for us today. Just as God led the Israelites on a journey, he has a journey for each of us as well.

This fantastic journey begins when **God brings us out** from a life that is enslaved to sin and void of knowing him. Our relationship with God is restored when we accept Jesus as our savior, but it doesn't stop there. God continues to invite us into a deeper relationship where we know and trust him more each day.

As we know God more, we see that **we are freed** from our shame and hurt. We no longer have to hide our past or mask our inadequacies from others because we have become a *new creation* in Christ.

He redeems us by restoring our purpose. God has placed each of us right where we are for a specific reason. He has given each of us a unique personality, passions, and abilities to use for his glory—to serve him as we serve others. Together these help us live out our purpose to glorify God and point others to him.

His final promise is a promise of fulfillment as **he takes us as his own**. He calls us his children and his church. We are his plan to reach the world, and as we live it out, we make an eternal difference.

This journey is the life that God has for each of us. Here at CedarCreek, we refer to it as the “adventurous life.” As you take steps on this journey and allow God to use you to make a difference, you will go to places you would have never imagined. The journey will lead to moments of accomplishment and excitement. It will not be free of difficulties, but it will lead you to a life full of meaning.

This journey, or *adventure*, is God's normal for our lives. He desires for each of us to experience “all the things”: peace, joy, freedom, purpose, fulfillment, and more. As you search for normal, remember to ask God for his version and not your own. Let God's promises guide you to the normal he desires for you.

John 10:10 (NIV)

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Questions:

How would you describe your normal?

Does it include peace, joy, freedom, purpose, and fulfillment—or anxiety, depression, bondage, aimlessness, and dissatisfaction?

Next Steps:

Reflect on God’s view of a normal life. Are you using it as a guide to move forward?

Write down your next steps in the areas of:

- Knowing God;
- Finding Freedom;
- Discovering Your Purpose; and
- Making a Difference.

Share your next steps with someone and ask them to join you on this adventure.

21 Days of Prayer: Our Leaders (Day 3):

Dear God, grant our leaders wisdom in this unprecedented time. (Name a few leaders specifically.) Help me to extend grace and confidence to the leaders you have placed over me. Guide and protect the leaders in our government, churches, communities, businesses, schools, and families as they make difficult decisions day in and day out. Thank you for allowing me to be an encouraging voice to the leaders above me. Amen.

This post was written by Ben Bockert, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.

Reaction or Response? - Where's Norm?

August 13, 2020

Where's Norm? I tend to be more like the girl in the video that kicked off this weekend's talk who says she didn't particularly get along with Norm. She doesn't miss him and is living the dream working from home, watching Netflix, and sitting by the pool. Similar to this woman, the pandemic has been more of a blessing to me than what most people have experienced.

Lead Pastor Ben likened the pandemic to what the Hebrews faced as Moses led them out of Egypt. On one side, they had the Egyptians, and the Red Sea was on the other. They were trapped with nowhere to escape.

Exodus 14:10

As Pharaoh approached, the people of Israel looked up and panicked when they saw the Egyptians overtaking them. ...

Their response? They panicked!

Exodus 14:12

"Didn't we tell you this would happen while we were still in Egypt? We said, 'Leave us alone! Let us be slaves to the Egyptians. It's better to be a slave in Egypt than a corpse in the wilderness!'"

I know for me, sometimes it's more comfortable to be in a mess, complaining about it rather than getting up and doing the work to fix it. Self-help guru Tony Robbins said, *"Change happens when the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of change."*

When I start to feel overly stressed, I get mean. As Ben called it, being mean to those around me and being unable to stop myself is my "tell." That's how I can tell the situation is getting the best of me. What's your "tell"?

Ask yourself:

What is really bothering me?

Why am I feeling this way?

Are you a slave to opposition? Do you feel as if people want to tear you down at work or in your family? Are there obstacles that make you feel stuck? Is it COVID-19, the economy, your physical ability, the community? Are your assumptions disappointing? Are things not going the way you thought they would? Do you have fears? Are your dreams becoming nightmares?

Just stop. Be still. Pray.

Ask God to show you why this is getting the best of you? Put your focus on God. God wants you to have a life full of joy and triumph! It may require you to accept his sovereignty in all situations.

Exodus 14:13-14

¹³ But Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. ¹⁴ The Lord himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."

Questions:

Where do you see God at work? What or who guides you through the daily routines and decisions that you face? What steps have you taken to know God, find freedom, discover your purpose, and make a difference?

Next Steps:

Join GrowthTrack. Sign up to be part of a Group this semester. Take time to memorize [John 10:27-29](#).

21 Days of Prayer: Hospitals and Healthcare Workers (Day 4):

Lord Jesus, we are confident in the power of your name, so we ask you to give medical personnel the supernatural strength and wisdom needed in their battle against COVID. Protect them from physical sickness and guard their minds and hearts from fear and anxiety. Help them to see and trust you and to find peace in you. Today, we pray for their families as well. May they remain healthy and grow stronger in the days ahead. Please bless this special group of people and bless the work they are doing in our communities. Amen.

This post was written by Julie Estep, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

A Foolproof Design - Where's Norm?

August 14, 2020

Lead Pastor Ben Snyder closed out the weekend message by sharing the theme verses for the series, John 10:27-29.

John 10:27-29

²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, ²⁹ for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand.

Have you ever heard someone say, "You're all sheep," with a disrespectful tone? They're probably mocking you because they can't convince you to follow their way of thinking. The truth is, like sheep, we are simple, stubborn, independent, and without proper guidance, tend to run toward what everyone else is doing. Culture convinces us that "the way of the world" should guide our lives.

What kind of sheep are you? Do you blindly follow celebrities, athletes, all types of media, and politicians? Or, as Jesus teaches, are you his true sheep who only follows his voice?

God gave us Jesus, our Savior, whose life is the perfect blueprint to follow. We sometimes lose our way, but as Christians, we have to trust our one true guide. Jesus protects us and knows us. His design is foolproof. Those other designs are counterfeit.

John 10:11-15

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. ¹² A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. ¹³ The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep. ¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, ¹⁵ just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep.

Questions:

What or who guides your daily focus? Are you only following God for the

blessings you receive in your physical life? Or do you seek his voice when things get tough as well?

Next Steps:

Keep your focus on God's truth and promises by studying your Bible. Don't allow the new norm to isolate you from faithfully learning and growing in your dependence on Christ. Join a [CedarCreek Group](#) this coming semester to stay connected. Read the daily LivingItOut and reach out to the spiritual friends and leaders that God has placed in your life.

21 Days of Prayer: The Economy and Businesses (Day 5):

Heavenly Father, thank you for each business that makes up the economy of our community and region. You know the details of each one, and we pray they are firmly established in you. May their work be a reflection of your generous heart. We ask you to show them great favor. Give each business leader your wisdom through the challenges and opportunities placed before them, and may whatever they put their hand to have a legacy of eternal impact for your glory and the good of our community. Amen.

21 Days of Prayer: Our Schools (Day 6):

Dear God, you said to "let the children come to you," showing that you have a big heart for children. I pray for safety for the children, teachers, staff, and administrators as they embark upon a new school year. I pray for the district leaders as they make crucial decisions in this uncertain time, that you would grant them great wisdom. May your followers be salt and light in their schools, shining the hope that we have in you. Amen.

21 Days of Prayer: Our Churches (Day 7):

Dear God, today we pray for our churches. Guide us to be places of hope and healing to our communities. Help us meet the physical and spiritual needs in our cities. Use us to introduce people to Jesus and the amazing life of purpose he has for them. You alone are worthy of our honor and worship. Amen.

This post was written by Jaron Camp, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.