

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Positively Negative - Where's Norm?

August 31, 2020

This past weekend Lead Pastor Ben Snyder stepped into Week 4 of the series "Where's Norm?" As we apply this lesson to our daily lives, hopefully we will walk away with a deeper sense of what God wants to do in us and through us. For many of us, it would be good to focus on negativity – our own negativity, not the negativity of others.

Negativity truly can be contagious. I know for certain, I need no help with stinkin' thinkin'! I can go to that place all by myself, quickly, without any assistance, thank you very much.

But, seriously, it takes second place to how easily I can identify the folly of others – like the leaders of the Israelites in Numbers 13. Their negative attitude was off the charts! How clearly, they identified the obstacles before them after their 40-day exploration of the land of Canaan.

Numbers 13: 27-28

This was their report to Moses: "We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak!"

Numbers 13:30-31

But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!" But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!"

The spies all saw the same thing, but the report Caleb gave differed from the others. Caleb saw opportunities for the demonstration of God's power, as he looked through eyes of faith. The other spies saw obstacles.

It is as though Caleb knew the first “P” – purpose – taken from the four P’s referenced in William Bridges’ book “Transitions.” Caleb remembered the reason for the journey. He never lost sight of the purpose of the new beginning the Promised Land offered. His confidence in God allowed him to see past the obstacles. Similarly, when we look to God through eyes of faith, the obstacles before us diminish. If we fail to overcome our stinkin’ thinkin’ the obstacles overcome us! Or, as Pastor Ben shared, “Trash (Adjust) your attitude before your attitude adjusts trashes you.”

Questions:

What are the obstacles keeping you from seeing the purpose of transitioning into new beginnings? What keeps you stuck? Who are the people holding you back from taking steps into a new beginning? What voices in your head do you need to get rid of?

Next Steps:

Write down three major obstacles keeping you from stepping into new beginnings. Write down the names of people speaking negativity into your life. Identify activities stunting your spiritual growth.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for accepting me and loving me as I am. Make clear the changes most necessary for my spiritual health. Give me the wisdom, courage and strength to step away from relationships that affect me negatively. Give me the grace to speak kind words as I step away from unhealthy relationships with love. May your love and your peace penetrate my soul as I look for purpose in new beginnings awaiting my arrival. Thank you for guiding me into all truth. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Can You See “Norm” in this Picture? - Where’s Norm?

September 1, 2020

When my husband and I bought our house eleven years ago, every room was the same shade of pale green except for two rooms that shared the same shade of pale blue. It was neutral but BORING. As an artistic person who loves color, I knew that the house needed to be completely repainted with big and bold colors. When I told my husband what I envisioned for the house he was skeptical. Navy in the bedroom, eggplant in the kitchen, a green ceiling in the potential nursery, and deep orange in the basement seemed a little bold for him. He couldn’t picture how it would all fit together, but he trusted my “inner eye,” and we went for it. When our friends came to visit our new house, they all loved the bold colors and said it “feels like you.” Eleven years later we still love it. We could have moved in and lived with the anemic green, but we would have been missing out on an opportunity to make the house our own and create a home that fit our personality.

During the weekend message, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder talked about the “5 P’s” involved in preparing for transitions. Yesterday we explored having a purpose. The next step is painting a picture of what we would like things to look like when we arrive at the new normal. In our Scripture passage, we explored the people’s responses to the reports of the twelve spies Moses sent out to explore the Promised Land. Upon returning, the spies painted a vivid picture of the Promised Land to the assembly of people.

Numbers 13:27-28

²⁷ This was their report to Moses: “We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces.”²⁸ But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak!

After that account, the people wept and trembled in fear. They saw a glimpse of what could happen, and their fear overshadowed the potential for blessing. Even though they had just experienced the power of God miraculously delivering them from the hands of the mightiest nation in the world, Egypt, they doubted the ability of God to deliver on his promises. Perhaps they still did not

believe that the God of Abraham and Jacob was different from the gods of Egypt, or perhaps they felt as if they were tired of change and just wanted stability. Either way, they turned their backs on the blessings that God had promised them in Canaan.

We need to consider another part of this story. Twelve spies were sent out, and 10 brought back a negative account. However, two, Joshua and Caleb, urged the people to take what God had already planned to give them.

Numbers 14:30

But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!"

We need to be like Caleb and Joshua and envision how the place we are going is a good place to be, and even if the journey is sometimes difficult, it will be worth the effort when we arrive. We need to listen to those around us who paint a picture of what is possible. God wants to take us into a place that we will flourish. We need to look at the picture of what God is painting for us and step into our promised land.

Questions:

When you think about the potential for your "new normal," what do you envision?

What is holding you back from entering into the picture God is painting for you?

Next Steps:

Take some time this week to journal how you envision your next month, six months, and beyond.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for allowing me glimpses into the future you have prepared for me. Help me to embrace the uncertainty with confidence and trust that you will not abandon me. Help me to listen to those around me who have wisdom and to act in a way that is honoring to you. Thank you for never leaving me to wander alone. Amen.

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

What's the PLAN, Stan? - Where's Norm?

September 2, 2020

Lead Pastor Ben Snyder unwrapped the William Bridges' 4Ps + 1 that we, as Christ-followers, need to successfully mourn and leave within the pre-change past. We need to move through grief and anger by commemorating the loss of the "old." And then embrace the "Neutral Zone" by waiting on God as he prepares us to move into our "new normal."

Ben explained that we get past our shock and grief by acknowledging the losses that change — good and bad — brings. We need to accept that we aren't going back to the "good old days." So the question becomes, "Where *do* we go from here?" We enter the Neutral Zone. That's where God took the Israelites in Numbers 13 and 14. After they left slavery in Egypt they refused to enter the Promised Land. This happened because, although they were ready to be free from slavery, they had yet to be free from their old normal of living as slaves in Egypt. So when the twelve scouts returned and ten gave a frightening account of what they saw, the people let fear be their motivator instead of faith in God. So he took them back into the wilderness for 40 years, instead of letting them move forward while motivationally ill-equipped to receive his gift. That was their Neutral Zone. There is no rushing through our time in the Neutral Zone. It is significant, because it's where we embrace and release our grief over losing the old normal. It is during this time that we begin to formulate a picture of what the new normal will require of us.

The Neutral Zone is the place to plan for the new normal. — We plan for and learn what God has in store for us when the New Normal begins. We start planning for what God has ordained for us to do and become there. For example, when my late husband was first diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease at 60 years old, I planned for two things: delay the decline and keep us together until the end. It was based on a promise from God that he goes before us as our own pillar of cloud and pillar of fire. I knew that I needed to keep my eyes on God and follow him through the myriad details, disappointments and losses that would be the basis for the future elements within the plan. The most important point is to completely trust in God. It is the basis for the waiting, the plan, and the path to and through the new normal. It requires faith in God's promises and his overarching control of all the things he allows in our lives, and that all those things, joyful or painful, are there to grow us in our relationship with him.

Questions:

Do you trust the power and perfection of God Almighty to lead you? If not, why not? Are you asking yourself, “Why me?” because things have changed in your life that you don’t like? Is that helping you?

Next Steps:

If you haven’t turned control of your life over to the tender loving care of our Savior Christ Jesus, do so.

If you have questions about salvation you need answered, let us know. You can fill out this [online connect card](#) and we will reach out to you soon.

Read [Numbers 13-14](#). If you would like to know more about the events of the 40 years the Israelites spent in the wilderness, continue reading to see how the Lord keeps his promise and whom he uses to lead his people into the Promised Land. Hint: It’s in Joshua, two books later. A lot happens in 40 years. By the way, if they had not rebelled, the 40-year journey would have only taken eleven days. Yikes.

Prayer:

Father God, the one true God, Creator of all that exists and lover of my soul, I’m sorry for ever doubting your sovereignty over all things, and I’m sorry for doubting your many words of promise to me. Promises that you go before me, behind me, and with me all the days of my life. Please forgive me for my fear and anxiety during a time of upheaval and uncertainty. You have already determined its role and my destiny. Thank you for your love and protection. Please help me to plan with you at the center of my plans, and help me to wait serenely for the time when you say “go.” In Jesus’ name I pray.

This post was written by Martha Smith, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Even still, God will - Where's Norm?

September 3, 2020

Psalm 27:13

*Yet I am confident I will see the Lord's goodness
while I am here in the land of the living*

When things do not feel normal, it is hard to move forward. It's easy to let ourselves make excuses. We may say things like: "But I am too young to do this.", "But I am not good enough for this.", "But what if I say the wrong thing?" or "But I am too afraid to do that." But... starts to become the mantra keeping us from God's goodness. Often, the problem is not what keeps you from moving forward in life; it's usually the excuses.

Over the last few days, we have covered the first three Ps of the 5 Ps of preparing for transition. We have looked at Purpose, Paint a picture, and Plan. Today, we are going to reflect on Part. As we step into something new we need to ask, "How am I involved in the bigger picture?" We all have a part in something bigger than ourselves and an opportunity to serve others in it.

This weekend, we read that the Israelites were being led by God into the Promise Land. A land that he had set aside for them. Similarly, God is leading us to new things in our lives. For me, this season, in a sense, has led me to a new Promise Land. I recently moved in with some roommates. Leading up to this move, my mind started to flood with excuses. I even asked myself, "What if my roommates don't like me and I get kicked out?" I almost allowed excuses to keep me from where God wanted me to be.

As we step into something new, we have a part to play in it. Every new beginning, we have is bigger than just ourselves and it involves others. It is important that we identify our part and ask God what he wants to do through us.

If I would have allowed my excuses to stop me from moving, I could have missed out on an opportunity to make a difference in other people's lives. Since I have moved, I have realized that I have an opportunity to introduce my new neighbor to Jesus. This amazing opportunity is one part in this new adventure I am on. It is one part of a bigger picture that God is painting.

Each of us is put on this planet, in this season, for a purpose. You and I have a purpose and we play a part in God's bigger picture. As we recognize our part, it is important that we lay aside our excuses. Instead, we need to trust that God has created us special, and he has equipped us with everything we need to live out the part he has given us.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Questions:

What excuses have you been making?

What part do you play in the bigger picture God has for you to make a difference in someone's life?

What keeps you from being confident in God's purpose?

Next Steps:

Write down any problems you are focusing on.

Learn more about your purpose and the part you play in God's plan by attending [GrowthTrack](#).

Step into opportunities around you by joining a [Group](#) or Join others at a [2nd Saturday Serve](#). On the second Saturday of each month, we come together to demonstrate God's love in practical ways by serving others and to continue the mission of our annual Serve Day throughout the year.

Prayer:

God, it is so easy to get caught up in all the excuses. I pray that they will fall away so I can see you more clearly. Please open my eyes to the part that I play in the bigger picture and show me who is in need and those whom I can share the love of Jesus with to make a difference in their lives. Thank you, even as I make excuses not to act, that you keep your promises. I am on this planet in this season for a purpose. Despite all the problems going on, you have given me a purpose. Show me what I can do to carry this forward. In Jesus' name, amen!

This post was written by Rebecca Roberts, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut.

Life's Choices - Where's Norm?

September 4, 2020

Have you ever been afraid of an interview, a big test, a game, or speaking in front of a group of people? If so, you can remember the words of Joshua, "*the Lord is with us: fear them not*" (Numbers 14:9).

In week 4 of our "Where's Norm series", Lead Pastor Ben Snyder spoke of the 5 P's: Purpose, Picture, Plan, Part, and People. The Israelites were checking out the Promised Land, ready to enter, but not really prepared. Today we look at the fifth and final P for preparing for a new beginning in order to support the bottom line of "it's not about being ready, but being prepared".

When Israel was still in the wilderness, Moses sent one spy from each of the twelve tribes of Israel into Canaan. After 40 days, ten of the spies reported that it was impossible to enter the Promised Land because the people who lived there were huge and stronger than the children of Israel. Even though all twelve men traveled throughout the same land and saw the same things they reported two very different observations.

Ten of the spies saw many scary things and doubted God. "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." They said they saw giants "and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight ..." Their lack of faith spread like an infection through the Israelites, who forgot all the miracles they had seen and doubted the nature of God.

Numbers 13:31-33

But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!" 32 So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: "The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. 33 We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought, too!"

The last two spies, Joshua and Caleb, told the children of Israel not to complain or to be afraid of the strength of humans. Instead, they should trust God and believed that God was with them, that nothing could stop them from

conquering the residents and entering the land God promised them since the time of Abraham.

Numbers 13:30

But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it!"

Despite Joshua and Caleb's confidence and trust in God, the Israelites still did not believe.

The path is a lot quicker when we trust God right from the start. If the Israelites would have listened to Joshua and Caleb, they would have entered the Promised Land much quicker, instead, God sent them back to the wilderness for forty years, for their disobedience and insistence on their way over God's. Unfortunately, as a result of their disbelief, the entire generation that disobeyed the Lord was never allowed to enter the Promised Land. It was only after the entire generation died that the children, now adults themselves, were allowed to be led into the Promised Land by Joshua.

Like the Israelites, we too have people sharing contradicting perspectives about our future ahead. Some people in our lives are spreading seeds of doubt. These seeds can be dangerous and keep us from the new thing that God wants to do in our lives. There are others who are encouraging. They cheer us on and embolden us to move forward. Their voices are necessary for us to experience God's best. The people we need most in our lives, though, are those that point us to God. They remind us that God is worthy of our trust and that his plan is perfect for us. They are like Joshua and Caleb. When we have people like them in our lives, we can prepare for the new beginning that God has for us, no matter the challenges ahead.

Questions:

How's your level of trust today?

Do you have people in your life that point out God's goodness and encourage you to trust him?

Next Steps:

Joshua and Caleb trusted in God, but the Israelites struggled to trust God, just as we do sometimes. If you're more like the ten spies than Joshua and Caleb, you may feel like a "grasshopper" facing a giant in your life. All you need to do is trust, it's as simple as that. Enter your promised land, walk with God wherever He takes you and watch God bless you!

Write down the names of the people who help you trust God's plan. Give them a call this weekend and let them know how much you appreciate them. If you are struggling to add names to your list, ask God to bring people into your life that can fill this void. Consider getting more involved at church. Join a [Group](#) or [DreamTeam](#) where you can connect with others and develop relationships.

Prayer:

Abba Father, I confess that I sometimes trust in myself instead of trusting in you. Help me to surrender my ways of thinking to your ways and thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit to be our counselor. I thank you for each person you have put in my life, and I especially thank you for the ones that point me to you. I pray that I can be a Joshua and a Caleb that trusts you and helps others do the same. In Jesus' name, amen.