

2.4 THIS IS PERSONAL



"HOPE IS THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUE BY WHICH WE DESIRE THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND ETERNAL LIFE AS OUR HAPPINESS, PLACING OUR TRUST IN CHRIST'S PROMISES AND RELYING NOT ON OUR OWN STRENGTH, BUT ON THE HELP OF THE GRACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT."

(CCC 1817)

This discussion may seem very theoretical—but it isn't. This is deeply personal. What's holding *you* back? What's getting in the way of you becoming the-best-version-of-yourself? Disordered desires? Stinking thinking? Wrong friends? Bad habits? Drugs? Alcohol? Sex? An eating disorder?

Let me tell you a story to put all this in context.

Once upon a time there was a Native American Indian boy. It was the custom of his tribe to send the boys out into the wilderness around the time they were becoming young men. For thirty days they had to take care of themselves. They had to find their own food, defend themselves against wild animals, and find somewhere safe and sheltered each night to sleep. After the thirty days had past, all the men in the tribe would come searching for the boy and when they found him, he would be initiated into the tribe as an adult.

For several days everything was fine. The boy found plenty of food to eat and a place to sleep each night. But around the fifth and the sixth day food became scarce. On the seventh day the boy couldn't find any food at all, and this went on for almost a week. Finally, the boy woke up starving the morning of the thirteenth day. He hadn't eaten in almost a week.

That morning as he wandered in the wilderness, the boy noticed a mountain in the distance. He thought to himself, "Perhaps I will find food up on the mountain."

The boy walked in the direction of the mountain, and around the middle of the day he reached it and began to climb it. He soon discovered a path and followed it toward to the top, but still no food.

Late in the afternoon, just as the boy was stumbling upon the pinnacle of the mountain, starving and exhausted, a rattlesnake slithered across the path in front of him.

The boy froze.

The boy looked at the snake and the snake looked at the boy. Then the boy slowly began to back away from it. But just as he did, the snake said to the boy, "Boy, I am lost up here in the mountains and I cannot find my way down. But I know you know the way down. Please, will you lead me down the mountain?"

The boy replied, "No. I know what you are. You're a rattlesnake. At any moment you could strike out and hurt me, even kill me."

The rattlesnake said to the boy, "You look hungry, boy."

"Ahh," the boy groaned, "I'm starving. I haven't eaten in almost a week."

The snake said to the boy, "I know where we can find food. If you lead me down the mountain I will lead you to food."

The boy said, "No. You're a rattlesnake and you could hurt me."

The snake said to the boy, "If you lead me down the mountain, I promise I will lead you to food and I promise I will not hurt you."

The boy thought for a moment, and then he said to the snake, "Do you promise?"

"I do," replied the snake.

So the boy led the snake down the mountain, and when they got to the bottom the snake led the boy to food. The snake laid before the boy every type of food he could imagine, a banquet fit for a king. The boy ate and he drank, and he felt like a king.

Then the snake began to dance, and when the snake danced it was beautiful. So, the boy began to dance also. The boy danced and the snake danced, and they ate some more and drank some more, and then all of a sudden the snake struck out and bit the boy.

The boy fell to the ground screaming and crying. The snake slithered over to the boy. The boy looked at the snake, and the snake looked at the boy, and the boy screamed, "You promised! You promised you wouldn't hurt me."

The snake looked deep into the boy's eyes, smiled and laughed, and said, "You knew what I was when you picked me up."

What is it that sooner or later is going to turn on you and bite you?

And what are you going to do about it?

The rattlesnakes we encounter in life are always making promises they cannot keep. It is the very nature of these things to turn on us and strike us down.

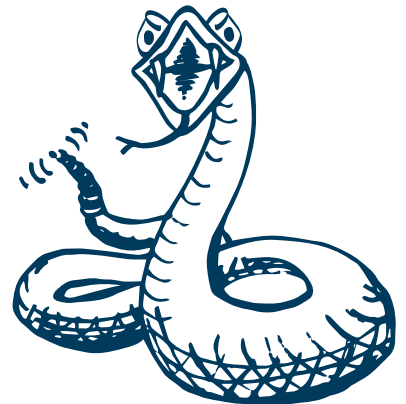
In a world filled with so much cynicism, the **SUPERNATURAL VIRTUES**

-Faith, Hope, and Love-

are often laughed at and dismissed as foolish and naive. Some people say that hope only sets you up for disappointment, and because of that hope is a bad thing.

Hope is a good thing,

maybe the best of things. Hope is one of those things that you can't buy, but that will be freely given to you if you ask. Hope is the one thing people cannot live without. Hope is a thing of beauty.



Life is a journey. Where is your journey taking you at the moment? Is it time to make a change? If it is, I hope you will have the **courage** to make the change.

Courage is a prerequisite for the life God has envisioned for you.

Everything in life requires courage. Whether it is playing football or coaching football; crossing the room to ask a woman on date, or rekindling a love that has grown old; whether it's your first day at college or your first day back at college after twenty years, life requires courage. It takes courage to say yes at the right times and it takes courage to say no at the right times. Your first day at work or starting a business, battling a potentially fatal disease, getting married, struggling to overcome an addiction, apologizing for something you have done, or coming humbly before God in prayer and asking: God, what do you think I should do? All require courage.

Life requires courage. Courage animates us and is therefore essential to the human experience.

The most dominant emotion in our society today is **fear**. We are afraid. Afraid of rejection and failure, afraid of certain parts of town, afraid of certain types of people, afraid of criticism, afraid of suffering, afraid of change, afraid to tell people how we really feel, afraid of losing the things we have worked hard to buy, afraid of what our friends will think . . . We are afraid of so many things. Often, we are afraid to be the-best-version-of-ourselves.

But before too long we are going to meet someone who will *banish our fears* and fill us with courage to *live an incredible life*.

Life requires



Discussion Questions

1. WHAT DID THE STORY ABOUT THE RATTLESNAKE MAKE YOU THINK?

2. WHAT DOES THE RATTLESNAKE REPRESENT FOR YOU? WHO OR WHAT IS HOLDING YOU BACK? WHAT IS IT THAT SOONER OR LATER IS GOING TO TURN ON YOU AND STRIKE YOU DOWN? HOW WOULD YOUR LIFE BE BETTER IF YOU COULD WALK AWAY FROM THAT RATTLESNAKE?

3. IF YOU HAD MORE COURAGE, WHAT GOOD THING WOULD YOU DO?



If you ask people **what the main message is in the Bible**, they might tell you

➡ IT'S *Love* ← OR {FORGIVENESS.}

BUT WHAT IS THE PHRASE THAT APPEARS MORE TIMES THAN ANY OTHER MESSAGE IN THE BIBLE?

DO NOT BE AFRAID. OVER AND OVER

throughout history, GOD'S MESSAGE TO HUMANITY HAS OVERWHELMINGLY BEEN *Do not be afraid.*

This phrase (or some variation of it) appears more than one thousand times in the Bible. → **WHY?** ←

BECAUSE GOD SENSES THAT WE ARE IN FACT AFRAID.

AFRAID TO TRUST HIM. **Afraid to love others.**

Afraid to love ourselves. Afraid to embrace and

celebrate **THE-BEST-VERSION-OF-OURSELVES.**

Afraid to ask the big questions and see where they might lead us. AFRAID.

GOD WANTS TO *liberate* YOU FROM THESE FEARS.
