

# Pastor Chappell's Sermons

2014



Simon Peter Chappell

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## **Also By Simon Peter Chappell**

[Apostolic Baptism](#)

[Apostolic Marriage](#)

*To the Lord Jesus Christ, my lovely bride Shawna, my minions  
Emily, Kate and Peter and my congregation.*

*A special thank you to my Bible study mentor Karl Wickerath. I  
miss you greatly and I'll see you around the throne!*

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgments . . . . .</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Introduction . . . . .</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>State Of The Kingdom 2014 . . . . .</b>	<b>2</b>
Introduction . . . . .	2
Celebrating Successes . . . . .	3
Our Theme For The Year . . . . .	6
Making It Personal . . . . .	10
Conclusion . . . . .	12
<b>A Right Way And A Wrong Way . . . . .</b>	<b>13</b>
Illustration . . . . .	13
Saying Doesn't Make It So . . . . .	15
Don't Put God In Your Trophy Room . . . . .	20
Don't Put God Out Of Your Life . . . . .	24
Don't Treat God Your Way . . . . .	26
Conclusion . . . . .	28
<b>Decision At The Edge Of Heaven . . . . .</b>	<b>29</b>
Illustration . . . . .	29
Setting The Scene . . . . .	30
An Evil Report . . . . .	34
A Bad Decision . . . . .	37
Consequences . . . . .	40
Bringing It Home . . . . .	41

## CONTENTS

Conclusion . . . . .	44
<b>Engage Four Wheel Drive . . . . .</b>	<b>46</b>
Illustration . . . . .	46
The Sick Man With Four Good Friends . . . . .	48
They Made A Way To Get To Jesus . . . . .	50
Scribes And Pharisees Upset . . . . .	52
Jesus Was Impressed . . . . .	53
Others Were Equally Determined . . . . .	53
How Determined Are You? . . . . .	55
<b>Living On The Other Side Of The Shouting . . . . .</b>	<b>58</b>
Illustration . . . . .	58
Jotham . . . . .	61
A Good Example . . . . .	64
Continue Steadfastly . . . . .	65
Self-Responsibility . . . . .	66
Be Diligent . . . . .	68
Ways Of Being Diligent . . . . .	70
Conclusion . . . . .	73
<b>Be Very You . . . . .</b>	<b>75</b>
Be Yourself On The Outside . . . . .	76
Being Yourself On The Inside . . . . .	80
Being Young . . . . .	80
Having Good Habits . . . . .	82
Conclusion . . . . .	83
<b>Further Reading . . . . .</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>About The Author . . . . .</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Colophon . . . . .</b>	<b>86</b>

# Acknowledgments

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A special thank you to my Bible study mentor Karl Wickerath. I miss you and I'll see you around the throne!

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A special thank you to my presbyter, Rev. Ed Herman, for his valued friendship and encouragement of my writing projects.

All scriptures are from the King James Version (KJV) of the bible, unless otherwise specified.

# Introduction

“Ya hey der” as we like to say in some portions of the upper-Midwest of the United States.

This book has been an experiment for me. I wrote 40 sermons during the year of 2014, in addition to lessons that I taught during our mid-week services. While there are 52 weeks in a year, when you subtract services where we had guest speakers or services canceled because of bad weather during our Wisconsin winters, that comes to 40 sermons that I actually wrote and delivered in 2014.

Some preachers can step up to a pulpit armed with only an opening verse of scripture and a title and then deliver a full sermon. I am not one of these fortunate souls. I don't write my sermons out in full, but I have very detailed bullet-point notes that are just shy of a full written sermon. I do this because of my bad memory, so that I don't forget to speak to all of the elements that apply to my sermon topic. I thought that it might be interesting to gather these sermons together into a book. There is a lot of material that I write in the course of a year's sermons and that is reflected in this book containing over 130,000 words.

I hope that something in this book ministers to you. Each sermon has ministered to me. A hidden blessing of preaching is that you receive the message directly from the Lord first and it ministers to you personally. The rest of the process revolves around trying to pass that same blessing on to those to who you preach the message.



# State Of The Kingdom 2014

<sup>29</sup> For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

Exodus 32:29

## Introduction

- Delivering a state of the kingdom sermon has become a tradition around here.
- And as not all traditions are bad, I plan to stick with this one.
- Just remember that this is about our corner of the kingdom.
- Last year I spoke about preparing for growth through learning and training leaders withing the congregation.
- The year before that I spoke about vision, and that's vitally important.
- And we have a vision here, one of bringing the apostolic gospel message to all who will receive it in this area.
- The year before that, I spoke about the importance of working together.
- And that's not only still important, but more important than ever.
- When you combine the previous years directions, you get a vision and a direction from the pastor and a congregation that works alongside the pastor to get there.
- I stand by these previous teachings.
- This year's does not replace them, but continues to layer on top of them.

- And this will likely be the pattern each year as we continue to occupy until the Lord returns.
- A congregation, as each of individually do, grows and develops skills and sensitivity to the leading of the Spirit.

## **Celebrating Successes**

- The first thing we need to do is review the past year.
- We'll celebrate our successes and try to learn from our failures.

## **Growth**

- Numerically we pretty much netted out.
- We lost a family and gained a few.
- This is one of those times that you remind yourself that we aren't in this for the numbers.
- But those numbers do represent souls and we *are* in this for the souls.
- So, I can assure you that we feel joy for every soul that starts attending here and a double portion of sadness for every soul that leaves.
- You can't stop them.
- It's a free country and people have freewill, but it doesn't stop us caring about their wellbeing.

## **Revivals**

- Our now annual revival with Bro. and Sis. Ball took place on the Pentecost Sunday weekend.
- This was powerful ministry and we were all greatly blessed by his teaching and operating in the giftings of the Spirit.

## **Baptisms And Holy Ghost**

- A quiet year on the baptism front.
- That happens.
- We have spent alot of time concentrating on personal growth in the congregation.
- We had two baptisms.
- A wedding.
- Two baby dedications.
- And quite a few special speakers and events.
  - A ladies tea.
  - Bro. Kurz was here for a family seminar.
  - A Sunday School picnic.
  - A Sunday School outing to the Cave of the Mounds.
  - The Farmer's Appreciation parade and I've already mentioned our revival with Bro. Ball.
  - Bro. Lovicott.
  - Several youth outings.
- And several of us attending various district events, including:
  - A New Generation Leaders training meeting in Oconomowoc.
  - The prayer and men's conferences in the Dells.
  - The minister's wives retreat.
  - A Combined section two and three youth service in Oconomowoc.
  - A sectional unity service in Beloit.
- Quite a lot of activity last year.
- We will dial it back a little this year.
- We'll still be having the Balls come for Pentecost Sunday.
- And we have our first missionary booking for the year already secured for early May.
- And the sectional youth rally will be here again in November.

## **Personal Growth**

- Personal growth was the main item on the menu last year.
- We ran two Ministers In Training (MIT) classes for most of the year.
- Ten students have been diligently learning practical leadership under this program.
- We still have a number of lessons left for both groups, but they're doing well and we need to get them on the schedule for teaching!
- This desire for personal growth is a sign of an active relationship with the Lord.
- It doesn't mean that you're perfect, but it does mean that you're working on being the best you can be for the Lord.

## **Answered Prayers**

- Several answered prayers so far this year.
- Mostly healing, but also employment situations.
- It's all good.
- I love answered prayers of all varieties.

## **Fund-raising**

- Three primary fund-raisers this year.
- Our KwikTrip gas cards continue to sell well, but not so much within the congregation.
- We have friends who own their own business who buy \$1,000 worth of cards every other month.
- So, congregation, please consider buying more cards.
- The brat fry this summer did not go well at Walmart.
- Fortunately, we were able to get a spot downtown during the Maxwell Street Days and recouped some of our losses.

- This year we'll pass on Walmart and just do the downtown event.
- I'm not worried about making money on the downtown event, but it is a valuable opportunity for us to meet local people.
- And more importantly, it is an opportunity for local people to meet us.
- And then there's the peanut brittle.
- This fund-raiser is our most profitable, although it takes quite a bit of work for the kitchen crew.
- And once again, Sis. Marlene blew the rest of us out of the water.
- I sold as much as I could, but didn't even reach half of her total.

## **Finances**

- And just to end the review of the year on a downer, the giving levels have dropped over this last year.
- I'm sure we'll cover how much they've dropped at the upcoming annual business meeting.

## **Our Theme For The Year**

- Now onto the good stuff.

## **Consecration**

- Let's quickly remind ourselves of our opening verse.

<sup>29</sup> For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his

brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

**Exodus 32:29**

- I believe that the Lord would have us focus on consecration this year.
- This doesn't mean that we stop anything else we're working on.
- But our focus should be that we view everything through a lens of consecration.
- Consecration is the act of dedicating yourself to a sacred purpose.
- For the believer, that would be working to become more pleasing to the Lord in our relationship with him.
- I see four main areas where we can work on this.

**Closer To The Lord**

<sup>22</sup> And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.

**Exodus 19:22**

- The priests of the Old Testament were the ones who ministered to the Lord on behalf of the people.
- This role necessitated them being close to the Lord during their duties.
- To be able to be close to the Lord they had to sanctify themselves.
- Sanctification is the act of making something holy.
- This is very close to consecration.
- We dedicate ourselves to the sacred purpose of serving the Lord.

- And the more you want to consecrate yourself, the more we must become sanctified.
- We are called to become kings and priests, so we must aim to be as sanctified as any Old Testament priest ever was if we want to be close to the Lord.

### **More Aligned With His Word**

<sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

#### **Colossians 3:16**

- To consecrate ourselves, we must align ourselves with the word of the Lord.
- The word of the Lord is powerful.
- When we let that word dwell within us, it will teach us wisdom.
- And who wouldn't like a little more wisdom now and then?
- The word of the Lord will guide us and direct our lives.
- Our verse tells us that it will dwell in us richly.
- There is a blessing when we let the word live in us.
- David spoke of the power of the word of the Lord.

<sup>11</sup> Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

#### **Psalms 119:11**

- It is able to empower us against sin.
- Want less sin in your life?
- Read more word!

## More Dedicated To His Kingdom

<sup>23</sup> O love the LORD, all ye his saints: *for* the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

**Psalm 31:23**

- When we consecrate ourselves, the Lord preserves us.
- He is a rewarder of those who do that which is written in his word.
- His word is how we first come to know him.
- When his word is dear to us, then he knows that he is dear to us.
- And when he is dear to us, then his kingdom is dear to us.
- And when his kingdom is dear to us, the work required to maintain or grow it will not feel burdensome.
- We will desire to labor in the fields that are ripe unto harvest.

## Giving More Of Ourselves

<sup>1</sup> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

**Romans 12:1**

- There is absolutely nothing physical that we can give to the Lord that he does not already have.
- He created everything in the first place!
- And he owns the cattle on a thousand hills.
- But we can give him ourselves.
- Our love and service, because of freewill, are the only things that he does not already have.



- When we consecrate ourselves, we are effectively giving more of ourselves to the Lord.
- And as a Christian, this is our reasonable service.
- This is the least we should expect of ourselves.
- When Jesus died for our sins, he purchased us with the shedding of his blood.
- This means that he owns us, body and soul.
- Consecration is pretty much just us recognizing that.

## Making It Personal

- Now, these areas that I've spoken briefly about are all good.
- But at the end of the day, you are in the best position to make the decision of how you want to consecrate your life to the Lord.
- Ask yourself what is it you want from your relationship with God.
- And then ask yourself what you are willing to put into the relationship.

<sup>8</sup> Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.  
Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts,  
*ye* double minded.

### James 4:8

- When we draw close to the Lord, he draws close to us as well.
- The end result of this is that we are twice as close for each move we make towards him.
  - How cool is that?
- However you consecrate yourself, he will respond by drawing closer to you.
- Talking about this is great.

- And one of the dangers of preaching is that it is just talking.
- A sermon is a good sermon when someone does something.
- And that's not something that the preacher has any control over.
- So today, will you let this be just a bunch of hot air, or will you make a change in your life?
- And what will you change in your life?
- Many of us last year strove to read through our bibles in a year.
- And while not everyone managed to complete this goal, we all read alot more than we would have done otherwise.
- I have committed to doing that again this year.
  - I'm already over half way through March!
  - It helps that I started after Thanksgiving.
- I'll give one more example from my life.
- One of the things that I feel directed from the Lord is to write.
- Writing a number of different things, not just lessons and sermons.
  - Although during a year, I write quite a lot of those as well.
- So, to get me started, I have returned to blogging.
- This is the best way that I know to get plenty of writing practice.
- It's very visible and every entry is date stamped, so you need to work to have something to publish regularly or you'll see the gap and everyone will know that you slacked!
- I'm writing a few personal thoughts, but working towards writing mostly about the Lord and his word.
- Good writing takes time ... actually so does bad writing!
- This is motivating me to work on spending less time reading Facebook so that I can spend more time producing uplifting material.
  - My wife will be happy about that as well.

- There will be more to it than that, but that's where I'm at presently.
- Grand plans are wonderful, but remember that it's best to ease into them with a few gentle tasks first.

## **Conclusion**

- With all that I've spoken of today, will you consecrate your life to the Lord today?
- I know that the Lord was calling various members of this congregation to step forward into ministries during this past year.
- Consecration is an excellent first step towards that ministry path.
- And an excellent first step to consecration is prayer!

# A Right Way And A Wrong Way

<sup>12</sup>There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.

Proverbs 14:12

## Illustration

- Now, I realize that y'all are much more spiritual than I am.
- But my first thought for an illustration when the Lord gave me this message was of the Darwin Awards.
- The Darwin Awards are named after Charles Darwin, the naturalist that came up with the Theory Of Evolution.
- The awards celebrate incidents where people have removed themselves and their own brand of stupidity, from the gene pool.
- The awards are supposed to be tongue in cheek, but they are based on real accounts reported by news media.
- The main rule for being eligible for a Darwin Award is that you have to be unable to contribute to the furtherance of the human race.
  - Trying to phrase that nicely.
- Most of winners die during their event.
- The other major rule is that your demise has to be spectacular.
- No boring dead people allowed!
- And how do some of these people die you ask.
- Well, you'll need to check out the Internet for the details.
- But here are a few somewhat sanitized examples:

- The guy who used his loaded shotgun as a club, holding the end of the barrel.
  - The guy who thought it was a good idea to try planking on the rail of his upper-story hotel room balcony.
  - The guy who tried to steal electricity from a heavy duty supply line and did the final connections during a heavy rainstorm.
  - The guy who tried to steal steel cables from an old disused elevator shaft and forgot about the counterweight up above.
  - Or the snowmobiler who chased a rabbit at high speed into a culvert that was too small for his snowmobile ... and him.
  - Or the newspaper reporter who was working on a story about homeless people in the winter who set out to spend three days living among them in the winter. (And froze to death.)
  - The guy who worked on welding a gas tank full of gas.
  - The guy who drank gasoline thinking it was vodka and was so upset that he spilled it on his clothes and then smoked a cigarette to calm his nerves afterwards.
  - Or the guy who dug an eight foot hole at the beach to sit in for privacy and protection from the wind. (It collapsed on him.)
  - Or the guy who broke into Sea World one night and tried bare-back riding a killer whale.
- You would be correct if you assumed that these adventures did not work out well for any of the people described.
  - Unfortunately, you would be correct if you noticed that men are the primary recipients of the Darwin Award.
  - Ladies are far more sensible than us guys it would seem.
  - There are many things we can do in life.
  - And there are right ways to go about them and unwise ways to go about them.

- These fine fellows earned their Darwin Awards by bravely selecting the wrong way to do things.
- And a few of them did better than that, in selecting not only the wrong way, but also the wrong thing to do!
- These guys thought that what they were doing was a good idea at the time that they did it.

## **Saying Doesn't Make It So**

*Saying that the Lord is with you in battle doesn't make it so!*

- I hope that I've gotten my point across that saying something is a good idea does not actually make it so.
- Some people need to learn this lesson the hard way.
- As the Darwin Awards show us.
- And much as I would hope that isn't the case for people, the truth is that some people will only learn from the school of hard knocks.
- And the Old Testament shows us clearly that Israel was determined to graduate at the top of the class of the school of hard knocks.

<sup>1</sup>And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.

### **1 Samuel 4:1**

- To say that Israel and the Philistines had a bad relationship would be an understatement.
- We find them here in yet another armed conflict.
- It sounds like Israel started this one, but they were both itching for a good fight most of the time, so that is irrelevant for today.

<sup>2</sup>And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.

**1 Samuel 4:2**

- This battle didn't go so well for Israel.
- Naturally, even though they'd started it, they blamed the loss on the Lord.

<sup>3</sup>And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

**1 Samuel 4:3**

- And then some rocket scientist suggested that they take the ark of the covenant into battle with them.
- Have you ever seen someone who had a bad idea that didn't work out?
- What often happens?
- Yup, they try the same bad idea again only with more enthusiasm!
- Governments and corporate America seem to be particularly prone to this brand of foolishness.

<sup>4</sup>So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth *between* the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, *were* there with the ark of the covenant of God.

**1 Samuel 4:4**

- Sadly, it seems that none of the on-site leadership figured out that this might not have been the best plan.

<sup>5</sup>And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. <sup>6</sup>And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What *meaneth* the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

#### 1 Samuel 4:5-6

- So the ark arrives and Israel gets all excited.
- They are absolutely certain that this is going to solve their problem.
- Their enthusiasm was so loud, that the Philistines heard it and wondered about it.
- Likely they sent some spies over, because they came to know that the ark of the Lord was in the Israelite camp.

<sup>7</sup>And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. <sup>8</sup>Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these *are* the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

#### 1 Samuel 4:7-8

- And the Philistines are scared.
- They remind themselves of the awesome things that God has done through the Israelites.



<sup>9</sup>Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.

**1 Samuel 4:9**

- Someone though delivers some tough love and basically tells them to “man up”.
- The scriptures does not say who this motivational speaker is.
- But they seem to have done a good job.

<sup>10</sup>And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. <sup>11</sup>And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

**1 Samuel 4:10-11**

- Instead of killing 4,000 Israelites, this time they kill 30,000.
- And kill the high priests sons.
- And capture the ark of the covenant.
- Not bad for an army that figured it was well and truly defeated a short time ago.
- But what can we learn here?
- The facts are pretty straight-forward.
- Israel was beaten by the Philistines, blamed God, grabbed the ark and got beaten even worse the second time.
- I see at least two lessons we can learn here.
- First, don't blame God when something he didn't ask you to do goes badly.
- Second, don't double down on your own stupidity by dragging God into a situation that you shouldn't have been in.

- There is a right way and a wrong way to conduct warfare.
  - It also helps to have read Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, but that hadn't been written yet.
- And the right way for Israel was to inquire of the Lord before doing so.
- The Lord had promised to look after them.
- And that included blessing their military efforts when those military efforts were ones that he directed them towards.
- I see no indication in the scriptures that the Lord directed them to go to war with the Philistines at that time.
- And quite frankly, the Philistines were supposed to have been destroyed many years before, but Israel wimped out on the deal.
- So, because of their disobedience, they were still bothered by the Philistines on a regular basis.
- And they decided to go to war.
- Without checking in with the Lord.
- And it went badly.
- Because they'd left God out of it and assumed that his blessings were a permanent thing even when they were operating out of his will.
- It's likely that there was a good reason that the Lord had not told them to fight with the Philistines.
- If there was, Israel didn't know it because they hadn't asked.
- We know there was a prophet in the land, but no effort was made to seek the Lord's will on this matter
- And so they lost.
- And as bad as that was, they doubled down and blamed the Lord.
- Yes, that would be the same Lord that they had failed to communicate with before deciding to get into a fight.
- Irony alert!

- So, now feeling like the Lord owed them some help, they decided that taking the ark of the covenant into battle would be a good idea.
- The ark rarely went into battle.
- On a few occasions, the Lord had specifically asked them to take the ark into battle.
- The vast majority of the time, the ark stayed safely far behind the battle lines and they took the blessings of the Lord with them instead of the physical ark.
- Unsurprisingly, this did not work well for them.
- A further 30,000 men were slain in this second day of battle.
- The Lord was not interested in being dragged into a fight that he did not want.
- So he continued to withhold his blessing.
- The Lord did not specifically punish Israel, but sometimes when you are used to a steady flow of the blessings of the Lord, their lack can feel like punishment.

## Don't Put God In Your Trophy Room

*The Lord is not to be displayed where people can see him and think you're super spiritual!*

<sup>1</sup>And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.

**1 Samuel 5:1**

- So, the Philistines find themselves the winner of a battle and the new owners of the ark of the covenant.
- I suspect that they didn't really know what to do with the ark.

- I'm sure they knew how to celebrate winning a battle, but becoming the owners of the ark was a new thing for them.
- They knew what it was and they knew they had to do something with it.
- So they did the only thing that they could think of.

When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

**1 Samuel 5:2**

- They put the ark of the covenant in the temple of their god, Dagon.
- I'm sure this seemed like a good idea at the time.
- In the polytheistic day and age they lived in, they were used to having multiple gods and it didn't seem a problem to put the artifact of one in the temple of another.
- So they did, locked the doors and went home tired from a hard days warring.

<sup>3</sup>And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon *was* fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

**1 Samuel 5:3**

- It would seem that early prayer was a habit among these folks.
- Gotta commend that, even if it's to the wrong god.
- Upon arrival at the temple, it would seem that Dagon had started the early morning prayer sooner than them.
- Only he had selected the correct God to worship.
- This sight surprised the Philistines.

- There is no indication that they understood the significance of the scene.
- They picked Dagon back up, dusted him off and put him back in his place again.
- Did their prayer thing and locked up the temple again.
  - Just a side note here, but any god that needs help getting up off the floor and dusting themselves off isn't that god-like if you ask me!

<sup>4</sup>And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon *was* fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands *were* cut off upon the threshold; only *the stump of* Dagon was left to him.

#### 1 Samuel 5:4

- If the Philistines were surprised the previous day, I imagine they were really unprepared for the sight that awaited them the next morning.
- Dagon's head and hands were separated from his body.
- And his torso was face down before the ark of the covenant.
- The Philistines were getting an accelerated lesson in the right order of the universe.
- There is exactly one God and that is the Lord.
- Dagon is not even a real god as he can't even pick himself up off the floor and dust himself off.
  - The reality is that all other religions are fronts for the church of Satan.
  - Even if 99% of their members don't realize this.
- The Philistines made the mistake of thinking that when the Lord enters their lives, that they can put him on a shelf in their trophy room.
- And really, that's all their temple of Dagon was.

- Dagon isn't a real god, so he's just a small statue.
- A trophy to be put on a stand.
- And to be put back on the stand when he falls off.

<sup>5</sup>Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

#### **1 Samuel 5:5**

- They started realizing their mistake.
- The Lord is not a trophy to be collected.
- And not a statue to be placed on a stand.
- He is the living God and there is no other god beside him.
- And there needs to not be any other gods in your life either.

<sup>6</sup>But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, *even* Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

#### **1 Samuel 5:6**

- And there's the important matter of him being a righteous and holy God as well.
- Just so you know, the word "emerods" means hemorrhoids and the Hebrew word translated as "emerods" comes from a root word meaning "to burn".
- So we can see that the Philistines were receiving quite an amount of wrath from the Lord at this time.
- And it wasn't looking like it was going to ease up anytime soon.
  - I'll refrain from making any jokes about the situation being a pain in the fourth point of contact!

<sup>7</sup>And when the men of Ashdod saw that *it was* so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god. <sup>8</sup>They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about *thither*. <sup>9</sup>And it was *so*, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts.

#### 1 Samuel 5:7-9

- We have seriously unhappy Philistines here.
- Yet, much as it's fun to have a legitimate excuse to use the word hemorrhoids during a sermon, it's time to move to the next topic.

## Don't Put God Out Of Your Life

*When problems come, and they will, the answer is not to put God out of your life!*

<sup>1</sup>And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

#### 1 Samuel 6:1

- I think that it's safe to say that the Philistines were not enjoying their ownership of the ark of the covenant.
- And they were getting more and more keen to flush it from their lives.

<sup>2</sup>And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.

**1 Samuel 6:2**

- They took the advice of their priests, who were likely even more keen to be rid of it.
- It was determined to place the ark on a cart and send it back towards Israel.
- After all of the proof that the Lord was mightier than Dagon, the Philistines decided to eject the Lord from their lives.
- This makes no sense, but people are like that.
- In fact, they're still like that.
- They'll reject something better for something familiar.
- The presence of the Lord was changing their world.
- And people hate change that they didn't specifically request.

<sup>11</sup>And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods. <sup>12</sup>And the kine took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh, *and* went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside *to* the right hand or *to* the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Bethshemesh. <sup>13</sup>And *they of* Bethshemesh *were* reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see *it*.

**1 Samuel 6:11-13**

- Regardless of the fact that they would have been better off developing a relationship with the Lord and sending Dagon off on a cart, their plan worked.



## Don't Treat God Your Way

*There are specific ways to interact with the Lord and yours are most likely wrong!*

<sup>14</sup>And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite, and stood there, where *there was* a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD. <sup>15</sup>And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that *was* with it, wherein the jewels of gold *were*, and put *them* on the great stone: and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD. <sup>16</sup>And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen *it*, they returned to Ekron the same day.

### 1 Samuel 6:14-16

- Everyone was happy that the ark was returned to Israel.
- Israel because the ark is a sign of their covenant with the Lord.
- And the Philistines were no doubt looking forward to being able to sit down comfortably again.
- The local Levites were called to the location and they set about using the cattle and the wood of the cart to make an offering to the Lord.
- This is good and seems to have been well received by the Lord.
- Had everyone stopped there and had the ark been transported back to Jerusalem by the Levites, all would have been well.
- But naturally, this is not what happened, or it wouldn't be a good object lesson for us all today.

<sup>17</sup>And these *are* the golden emerods which the Philistines returned *for* a trespass offering unto the LORD; for

Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one; <sup>18</sup>And the golden mice, *according to* the number of all the cities of the Philistines *belonging to* the five lords, *both* of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great *stone of* Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD: *which stone remaineth* unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Bethshemite. <sup>19</sup>And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten *many* of the people with a great slaughter.

#### 1 Samuel 6:17-19

- The people of Bethshemesh could not leave well enough alone.
- There are clear guidelines for how the ark of the covenant is to be treated.
- These rules specify that only Levites are to handle the ark.
- And even they have very specific guidelines.
- So the folks at Bethshemesh should have known better than to touch it.
- But not only did they touch it, they peeked inside!
- Still, 53,070 men would never do that again!
- That's one way to learn the lesson that there are good ways to approach the Lord and that there are bad ways.
- And that you really don't want to try the bad ways.

<sup>20</sup>And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us? <sup>21</sup>And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, The Philistines

have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, *and* fetch it up to you.

**1 Samuel 6:20-21**

- After 53,070 men died, the people of Bethshemesh finally did what they should have done in the first place.
- They called for the priests to come and transport the ark.

## **Conclusion**

- We've looked at some wrong ways to do things, courtesy of the children of Israel.
- We've discussed the right ways of doing things.
- And I hope that we all understand that it makes a huge difference in our lives whether we do things the right way or the wrong way.

# Decision At The Edge Of Heaven

<sup>1</sup>And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.

Numbers 13:1-2

## Illustration

- In the course of human history there have been many deep and important questions asked by deep thinking philosophers.
- I believe that a good question is a sign of a deep and thoughtful intellect.
- And just what are some of these deep questions in mankind's history?
  - Romeo, Romeo wherefore art thou Romeo?
  - To be or not to be?
  - When shall we three meet again?
  - Who's on base?
  - Should I stay or should I go?
  - What were you thinking?
  - Who put the bop in the bop-sho-bop?
- And my all-time favorite:
  - Who let the dogs out?

- But for all of mankind's ability to ask the important questions, such as the ones I have shared with you, we seem to lack the ability to arrive at deep and meaningful answers.
- And nowhere do we find this problem more acutely than with the children of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament.
- Asking good questions and deriving good answers is important.
- Not in a trying to get an A on your homework kind of way.
- But in a trying to find a good path through life kind of way.
- Because life is a test bigger than any homework that any teacher will ever set you.
- And life grades only an A or an F.
- This makes it doubly important to do the best you can.

## Setting The Scene

- So, let's pick a good example from the many that the children of Israel present us with.
- Our story today finds them in a place called Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran.
  - The KJV calls this place Kadesh, while other translations call it Kadesh Barnea.
- They have arrived there after their two year journey from Egypt.
- The two years was not because they got lost, but because the Lord wanted to spend time with his new chosen people.
  - And there was the whole handing down of the Law and building the tabernacle thing in there as well.
- Kadesh Barnea was the Lord's chosen staging area for the children of Israel to prepare themselves for the entry to the Promised Land.
- Upon setting camp, the Lord called for Moses.

<sup>1</sup>And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.

### Numbers 13:1-2

- The Lord wanted the children of Israel to have a good understanding of the wonderful blessing that the Lord was delivering to them.
- The Promised Land was not described as running with milk and honey for no reason.
- There were cities already built, vineyards already planted, herds of animals already raised and grazed and likely even beehives already to be harvested.
- The Lord was truly providing a one stop shop for Israel.
- A massive gift, kind of a dinner *and* a movie!
- With the benefit of hindsight, it's easy to think that perhaps the Lord should not have tried to show Israel what they were about to receive.
- But the Lord was working on a very open communication style with them, so sharing what he was about to provide made sense.

<sup>3</sup>And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men *were* heads of the children of Israel. <sup>4</sup>And these *were* their names: of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur. <sup>5</sup>Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori. <sup>6</sup>Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. <sup>7</sup>Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph. <sup>8</sup>Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea the son of Nun. <sup>9</sup>Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu. <sup>10</sup>Of

the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi. <sup>11</sup>Of the tribe of Joseph, *namely*, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi. <sup>12</sup>Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli. <sup>13</sup>Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael. <sup>14</sup>Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi. <sup>15</sup>Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi. <sup>16</sup>These *are* the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua.

#### Numbers 13:3-16

- Moses assembled a team.
- Not an A-team or an elite special forces kind of team.
- More of a team of influential leaders from within the children of Israel.
- The goal was that they would witness the great abundance of the land and recount it to the people.
- And the people would believe them and be excited.
- From the perspective of being believed by the people, it must be said that Moses chose well.

<sup>17</sup>And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this *way* southward, and go up into the mountain: <sup>18</sup>And see the land, what it *is*; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they *be* strong or weak, few or many; <sup>19</sup>And what the land *is* that they dwell in, whether it *be* good or bad; and what cities *they be* that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; <sup>20</sup>And what the land *is*, whether it *be* fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time *was* the time of the firstripe grapes.

#### Numbers 13:17-20

- Moses gave the team some clear instructions.
- And some deliverables.
- They were to return with an estimate of the military capabilities of the current inhabitants.
- And examples of the fruit of the land.
  - Because as noted, it was the time for the first grape harvest.
  - I suspect that this timing was not an accident, given how the Lord wanted them to see the productivity of the land he was giving them.
- Nice clear instructions.
- And good information to have when you're heading into a land to capture it from the locals.

<sup>21</sup>So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath.

<sup>22</sup>And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, *were*. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) <sup>23</sup>And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and *they brought* of the pomegranates, and of the figs. <sup>24</sup>The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence. <sup>25</sup>And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

#### **Numbers 13:21-25**

- The spies went forth and did everything that Moses directed them to do.
- They brought grapes and pomegranates and figs.



- The cluster of grapes that they brought is described as being large enough that two men had to carry it attached to a staff between them.
  - Now that's some grapes!
- And forty days after they set off, they returned.

## An Evil Report

- They returned with everything that Moses had asked for.
- But they returned with one thing he had not expected.

<sup>26</sup>And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land. <sup>27</sup>And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. <sup>28</sup>Nevertheless the people *be* strong that dwell in the land, and the cities *are* walled, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. <sup>29</sup>The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

### Numbers 13:26-29

- They returned with an evil report.
  - That's not my description.
- This is a term that you'll hear in just a moment.
- While they conceded that the land did indeed run with milk and honey, they looked right past that and concentrated on the size of the inhabitants.

- And the size of their city walls.

<sup>30</sup>And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

#### **Numbers 13:30**

- Caleb was not keen to present this view of the land.
- He stepped forward and assured the people that they were well able to conquer the land.

<sup>31</sup>But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we. <sup>32</sup>And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, *is* a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it *are* men of a great stature. <sup>33</sup>And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

#### **Numbers 13:31-33**

- The ten other spies then repeated their report.
- And added more woe to it.
  - The land eats people. (Yes, they really said that!)
  - The people are giants.
  - We are like grasshoppers compared to them.
- Truly an evil report.
- The sad thing is that the report was wrong.
- No, not about the giants.
- The people of the land were physically large.

- They were wrong about the inhabitants seeing them as grasshoppers.
- The people of the land were fearful of them.
- But they only found this out forty years later when the spies that went to Jericho talked to Rahab.
- She shared that information with them.

<sup>9</sup>And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. <sup>10</sup>For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. <sup>11</sup>And as soon as we had heard *these things*, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he *is* God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

### Joshua 2:9-11

- The inhabitants of the Promised Land at that time were greatly fearful of the Lord and of all the powerful things he had done for Israel.
- The people may have been giants and lived in large walled cities, but they recognized the power of the Lord.
- And they recognized that he was bringing the children of Israel their direction.
- And they were afraid!
- A pity that the children of Israel didn't know that.
- But they did, or should have known, that the Lord is mighty and had powerfully kept every promise that he made them when he brought them out of Egyptian bondage.

## A Bad Decision

- So now the children of Israel are making a decision.
- Do they believe ten of the spies or two of them.
- The ten spies say it's all hopeless.
- The two spies say that with the Lord on their side, they are in good shape to take the land.

<sup>1</sup>And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup>And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! <sup>3</sup>And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? <sup>4</sup>And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

### Numbers 14:1-4

- The children of Israel started weeping and continued the whole night.
- And Joshua and Caleb, the two spies with a good report, rent their clothes.
- And they tried talking to the people.
- Assuring them that the land was good and that the Lord was with them.
- Their reward for this attempted encouragement was that the whole congregation prepared to stone them to death.
- The decision was made.
- The people wanted to go back.

- All of the powerful miracles of the Lord and they feared to enter a land specifically promised to them.
- That the Lord promised to give to them.
- Yeah, they didn't know that the Lord's reputation went before them.
- But they had personally seen the power of the Lord fall, literally, upon the Egyptians, the primary super-power in the known world!
- When people these days are trying to describe scenes of devastation, they tend to use terms like "of biblical proportions".
- This is because even in this day and age of nuclear weapons, the gold standard for devastation is the Lord's plagues upon Egypt, the destruction of the Egyptian army and the destruction of all of Israel's enemies leading to their arrival at the Promised Land.
- And Israel had personally seen this.
- No hearsay, they were there to see it with their own eyes!

<sup>5</sup>Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. <sup>6</sup>And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: <sup>7</sup>And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land. <sup>8</sup>If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. <sup>9</sup>Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not. <sup>10</sup>But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

**Numbers 14:5-10**

- The Lord was unimpressed with the choice.
- And appeared in the tabernacle calling for Moses.
- Under the best of circumstances I wouldn't want to be Moses, but even less so when the Lord is unhappy!

<sup>11</sup>And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? <sup>12</sup>I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

**Numbers 14:11-12**

- Yeah, the Lord was not pleased.
- The Lord wanted to nuke the lot of them and start again with Moses.
- Not the first or last time he wanted to do that.
- Fortunately, Moses had a pretty good helping of inner-pastor.

<sup>13</sup>And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) <sup>14</sup>And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: *for* they have heard that thou LORD *art* among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. <sup>15</sup>Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, <sup>16</sup>Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto

them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

<sup>17</sup>And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, <sup>18</sup>The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*.

<sup>19</sup>Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

### Numbers 14:13-19

- Moses pleaded to the Lord for the lives (and souls) of the children of Israel.
- And the Lord pardoned them.
- But just because they avoided an instant death penalty didn't mean that it was going well for them.
- You see, there are always consequences for decisions.
- Especially decisions that directly go against the will of the Lord.
- The Lord had decided some consequences for the children of Israel.
- And they weren't going to enjoy them.

## Consequences

<sup>20</sup>And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word: <sup>21</sup>But *as* truly *as* I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. <sup>22</sup>Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; <sup>23</sup>Surely they shall not see the land which I

sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: <sup>24</sup>But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it. <sup>25</sup>(Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) To morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

### **Numbers 14:20-25**

- All of the adults, every one aged twenty and above, except Joshua and Caleb were condemned to stay in the wilderness until they died.
- They were not going to be entering the Promised Land.
- But their children would.
- While I'm sure that being smitten from above by an angry God is bad, I suspect that being relegated to stay in the wilderness until you die is perhaps worse.
- Either way you're dead and not going into the Promised Land.
- One way is quick and *hopefully* painless.
- The other way means knowing that you've missed your one opportunity to enter into the Promised Land.
  - Your own little portion of heaven down here on earth.
- Walking around in the wilderness knowing that the only end to the journey is to die and be buried under some sand.
  - And you thought working in corporate America was bad?

## **Bringing It Home**

- So, on that sad and somber note, let's bring this up to date by thinking about our lives and the decisions we make.



- Not the little decisions, the big, irreversible ones.
- There's just something about a bad, irreversible decision.
- With the emphasis on both bad and irreversible.
- So my advice is to not make bad decisions.
- But how do we not make bad decisions?
- That does seem to be a good question, and I believe that I have a good answer for it.
- The problem is not just the bad decision that the children of Israel made while standing on the edge of heaven.
  - Heaven on earth, that is.
- The problem started when they made mistakes in the lead up to the actual decision.
- I see three primary mistakes that they made in the lead up to their bad decision.
- And these are all mistakes that we are quite capable of making today.
- So don't think that because you have the Internet and indoor plumbing, that you are immune from being equally as foolish.
- Any one of these mistakes can cause you to make a bad decision.
- But be especially careful when opportunities to make all three come along.

## **Ignoring the Miracles They'd Already Seen**

- They'd seen the power of God daily since the time of the ten plagues.
- That's not an idiom, they had literally seen the power of God.
- Every day he covered them with a cloud and at night he provided a pillar of fire.
- And every morning (except on the Sabbath) he provided their food in the form of Manna.
  - A literal daily bread.

- They had seen him take out the known-world's superpower with ease.
- They had seen him provide water in a desert for them and their animals.
- And they had seen him defeat enemies in the wilderness already.
- And yet, when they heard about some walled cities and larger than usual people, they went all knock-kneed.

### **Viewing Obstacles From Too Low**

- They viewed their obstacles from much too low a perspective.
- When the Lord is in the equation, it is helpful to remember that no wall around a city is too tall for him.
- And those people may be giants, but they look really small to our God.
  - He does use the earth as his footstool, so even a nine foot tall giant is going to seem pretty puny to the Lord.

### **Treating Fears As Reality**

- There are a few good uses for fear.
- Some fears can act as a motivation to do things.
- Other fears can get our adrenalin flowing so we can react faster if we find ourselves in a fight.
- Other than that, most fears are useless.
- Many fears are counter-productive.
- The fears of the children of Israel certainly were.
- They feared that the people already in the Promised Land looked down on them as if they were grasshoppers.
- And they feared that the cities were too well built and that the walls would be impossible to overcome.
- And both of these fears were unfounded.

- The exact opposite was true.
- We already heard that Rahab informed them that the people were in great fear of the power of the Lord on Israel's behalf.
- And when it came time to attack Jericho, the Lord caused the walls to sink down into the ground.
- The famed walls of Jericho were not a problem and the Lord had never thought that they would be nor intended them to be so.

## **Conclusion**

- I hope that you'll bear these points in mind when you are making big life decisions.
- I understand that not all decisions are as big as that of Israel while standing on the edge of heaven.
- But many decisions are big and many are irreversible.
- And at the very least, you want to not make mistakes as you approach such decisions.
- So let's recap.

## **Don't Do This!**

- Israel gets to the edge of heaven.
- They camp out and send twelve spies into the land to bring back reports on its awesomeness.
- They get reports.
- But they're of the evil instead of awesome variety.
- They believe the evil reports and decide to head back to Egyptian bondage.
- And why did they do this?
- Because they didn't trust God to do more of the miracles they'd already seen him do plenty of.

- They viewed the conquering of the Promised Land as if it was entirely their job with no thought to the promises of God.
- And finally, they treated their fears as if they were facts, when the truth was that everything was in their favor.
- My advice to you today is not to do that.

### **Do This!**

- Remember the miracles.
- View every challenge from the Lord's perspective.
- And most especially do not make big decisions based on fears and feelings!
- If you just follow these three simple guidelines, you'll make the best decisions you've ever made from now on!

# Engage Four Wheel Drive

<sup>1</sup>And again he entered into Capernaum after *some* days; and it was noised that he was in the house. <sup>2</sup>And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive *them*, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

Mark 2:1-2

## Illustration

- It is reported that it takes ten years to master any appreciable skill.
  - It also takes about twenty years to become an overnight success, but that's a different sermon.
- Some researchers say ten thousand hours instead of ten years.
- I suspect that they're both right.
- Because ten thousand hours across ten years breaks down to two and three quarter hours per day assuming that you never take a day off.
- Someone who practices something that much every day for ten years is a very determined person indeed.
- But those who wish to succeed at their chosen profession will gladly do this.
- There are many accounts of famous athletes who trained every day to get to their current high level of skills.
- The problem is that we see them as they are now, but we didn't see them before they started diligently applying themselves.

- Lots of examples I could use, but Michael Jordan is a good one.
- Did you know that Michael Jordan was not selected for his highschool basketball team the first time he applied?
- Many might have gotten offended or discouraged by this.
- Michael Jordan instead volunteered as the waterboy, just so he could still be around basketball.
- He also kept on practicing.
- This all paid off and the next year he was accepted onto the team.
- Or Steve Davis is a good example of perseverance.
- I realize that most of you will never have heard of him.
- He's an English Snooker player and has six world championship titles to his name.
  - Yes, I also realize that you didn't know that snooker has world championship matches.
- The story is told of his youth where he worked a job and would take his lunch break to visit the local snooker hall where his family had a membership.
- He would set up the table and play for a 147 break, which is the maximum score you can get in a single snooker match (or frame).
- And if he didn't get a 147, then we would not permit himself to eat his lunch that day.
- Talk about motivation!
- Under those rules I think I could get quite good at snooker!
- Nobody made him do that.
- It was his internal motivation to master his chosen craft.
- Or think about many of the world's most successful business people.
- Not just thinking about the rich ones, but the ones who have achieved great things from a humble start.
- They worked hard at their trade.

- Long hours are not unusual in the stories of the early days of successful people.
- Because the way to be successful in business is to delight your customers.
- And you delight them when you exceed their expectations.
- I think about my neighbor who owns the clothing store downtown, here in Dodgeville.
- Bill wall started that store over thirty years ago and many people told him that he'd never last.
- I can see their point, you've got to be crazy or good to operate a clothing store in Lands' End's home town.
- I've talked to him often enough that I'll vouch for the excellent condition of his sanity.
- And I've purchased every suit I have from him, so I can also vouch for the quality of his service and merchandise.
- He takes care of his customers.
- I think with every suit I've purchased, he's hand delivered it in the evening rather than have me have to wait to come to the store the next day.
- It's that kind of service that makes and keeps customers.
- Now, this service is not sponsored by Kozelka and Wall clothing, but Bill Wall deserves lifting up as an example of a successful business man.
- Not because he's a Wall Street tycoon, but because he's running a business that provides for his family by keeping customers happy.
- Not too different from the philosophy that made Lands' End great, back before they were sold to the Sears company.

## **The Sick Man With Four Good Friends**

- There's a good chance that most of you here have already heard this story often enough that you could teach it yourself.

- But I believe that it is worth reviewing.
- The lessons it contains are as vital for believers today as they were that day when it occurred.
- To start, we'll read the account of what happened first.

<sup>1</sup>And again he entered into Capernaum after *some* days; and it was noised that he was in the house. <sup>2</sup>And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive *them*, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. <sup>3</sup>And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. <sup>4</sup>And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken *it* up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. <sup>5</sup>When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

#### **Mark 2:1-5**

- Interestingly, Matthew's account is very short.
- Normally, if he mentioned an event, he covered it with more detail.

<sup>2</sup>And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

#### **Matthew 9:2**

- Luke's account is also a little brief.

<sup>18</sup>And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought *means* to bring him



in, and to lay *him* before him. <sup>19</sup>And when they could not find by what *way* they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with *his* couch into the midst before Jesus. <sup>20</sup>And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

### **Luke 5:18-20**

- So we have the account from the perspective of the three gospels that speak of it.

## **They Made A Way To Get To Jesus**

- The four men had obviously heard, as did many others in the area, that Jesus was in town.
- I suspect that it wasn't hard to figure out where exactly he was.
- Look for the large crowd and you'd know where Jesus was.
- Getting to him was a more difficult matter than locating him.
- The men wanted to bring their friend to Jesus for healing.
- Their friend is described as being sick of a palsy.
- Palsy is a general weakness, that could be caused by any number of different diseases or situations.
- While we do not know what form of palsy the friend had, it was serious enough to keep him bed bound.
- This meant that the four friends had to carry him.
- They are described as bringing him in a bed.
- This was likely something close to what we would call a stretcher now.
- A stretcher would not be hard for four men to carry, but it would have been very hard to navigate into a packed full house.

- Many people would have given up and said that they'd tried.
- Thankfully for their sick friend, these four men were more determined.
- Perhaps they were related or really close friends.
- Either way, they decided that a mere crush of bodies was not going to keep them from getting the miraculous healing that he needed.
- They reviewed the situation and noticed that they could gain access to the roof.
- And that from the roof they could lower him in.
- Many homes at the time had some kind of access to the roof from inside the building.
- The fact that they had to remove some tiles tells us that the existing access point was fairly small.
- I'm sure that portions of the roof being removed caught everyone's attention in the house below.
- And no doubt people crowded back to avoid anything falling on them and then to avoid having the bed lowered onto them.
- The four friends lowered the bed into the room, right into the presence of Jesus.
- Mission accomplished!
- Now they just needed to see what Jesus decided to do.
- Although with Jesus' history of healings, they had a pretty good idea and much faith that healing would be the result of their actions.
- And Jesus responded.
- He saw the faith of the four friends.
- And he was moved with compassion and told the sick friend that his sins were forgiven.
- Which no doubt surprised the sick man and his four friends.
- While forgiveness of sins is awesome, the sick friend was still laying in his bed.
- What was Jesus doing here?

## Scribes And Pharisees Upset

- I believe that Jesus was deliberately trying to get a reaction out of the Scribes and Pharisees present there that day.

<sup>21</sup>And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? <sup>22</sup>But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? <sup>23</sup>Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? <sup>24</sup>But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. <sup>25</sup>And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. <sup>26</sup>And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.

### Luke 5:21-26

- Jesus, whether deliberate or not, absolutely got the full attention of the Scribes and Pharisees.
- They perceived his act as blasphemy.
- That he was claiming to be equal to God.
- For none other than God can forgive sins.
- And Jesus perceived this.
- And with their attention now fully upon him, he healed the sick man.
- He instructed him to rise up, take his bed and return to his home.
- When he immediately did this, the assembled crowd was amazed!

- And a little fearful!

## **Jesus Was Impressed**

- Was this miracle impressive?
- When you consider all of the miracles of Jesus, was this more impressive than the others?
- And I think the honest answer is that this was not an impressive miracle.
  - Yes, all miracles are impressive, because they're outside of the usual bounds of the natural.
- But this miracle is memorable.
- And it's memorable because of the faith that led to it.
- The four men made a way, literally, to get their sick friend into the presence of Jesus.
- They looked at the situation with Jesus being in a house and the whole place inside and out being packed.
- And they engaged four wheel drive, as we would say today.
- They had a mission and they were going to complete it.
- That mission was to get their sick friend into the presence of Jesus.
- And having done that, Jesus saw their faith and did indeed heal their friend.
- Would he have healed him if they'd politely waited outside?
- We will never know that.
- But we don't need to know it, because the four men were determined to get their sick friend into the presence of Jesus and they made a way where none had previously been.

## **Others Were Equally Determined**

- While this is my primary scripture account to go with this thought, others have also shown tenacity in getting into the

presence of Jesus.

## **The Woman With The Issue Of Blood**

- We know the story of the woman with the issue of blood.
- Jesus was packed into a surrounding crowd.
- She was determined to even just touch the hem of Jesus' garment.
- The moment she did so, healing virtue passed from Jesus into her body and she was healed.

## **The Canaanite Woman**

- This woman had a demon possessed daughter at home.
- And she made her way to be with Jesus.
- But she wasn't a Jew and the disciples tried to get her to go.
- But Jesus let her talk to him.
- And was so impressed with her determination that he healed her daughter from afar at that moment.

## **Blind Bartimaeus**

- I've spoken about Bartimaeus before.
- And his tenacity is one of his more memorable qualities.
- Because when he heard that Jesus was passing by, he started calling out to him in a loud voice.
- And those around him tried to quieten him down.
- But he persisted, until Jesus called for him and healed him.
- So, while we know him as blind Bartimaeus, he spent the rest of his life seeing clearly from that day.

## Nicodemus

- As a Pharisee, it would have been career-ending for Nicodemus to be seen with Jesus.
- But he just knew that he had to spend some time with him.
- So he cranked up his inner ninja and made a stealth visit.
- And Jesus was so impressed that he explained some of the soon coming new dispensation principles with him.
- Interestingly, it was in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus that we first find Jesus using the term "born again".
- Nicodemus heard next dispensation principles before anyone else.
- That's a pretty good reward for his determination.

## How Determined Are You?

- We've seen some examples of determination today.
  - Both secular and scriptural.
  - But I'm concentrating on the scriptural.
- People who had realized that their best course of action was to get close to Jesus.
- And even when that was difficult, they found a way and followed through.
- Some days it feels like determination is a vanishing quality in society.
- Everything is organized to help people do the least necessary to get by.
- Some people just don't want anything they have to work for.
- They train themselves to settle for less than they could have.
- Yet with a little determination, most of us could have more.
- Not speaking particularly about money or stuff.
- Most of us have too much stuff.

- And very few people know how to wisely handle more money than they currently have.
- Today I'm talking about a relationship with the Lord and the spiritual blessing that go with it.
- The question today is how much do you want that relationship with the Lord?
- Because the answer to that question will determine how much you will be willing to do to get it.
- And how deep you'll be prepared to get in that relationship.
- How much do you want that which you can only receive through Jesus?
- Are you willing to engage four wheel drive to get to it?
- Do you want a relationship with the Lord or do you just want to be able to tell people that you met Jesus once?
- Do you want to be a tourist in the kingdom?
- Take a few pictures and tell people about how you were there once?
- Or do you want to live in the kingdom?
- The good news is that the more relationship you want with Jesus the more he wants with you.
- He lets you choose how deep and close your relationship with him will be.
- That's a natural consequence of the freewill that he gave you.
- The bad news is that if you want a shallow relationship with the Lord, you'll get it.
- If you decide that you want a long-distance, letter-writing, hardly ever actually getting together kind of relationship, then that's exactly what he'll allow you to have.
- If that's what you choose, he will put all of his amazing plans for you on the shelf and leave them there until you either step up or run out of time because he's decided that the hour is right for returning.
- I know that there are obstacles in life.

- We live in a world where Satan spreads sins like lust and envy around like candy.
- And the second law of Thermodynamics causes things to break and wear out.
- So I completely understand that life happens.
- But do you want to be the driver or the passenger in your own life?
- The passenger has no choice in destination or route or how the driver drives.
- Oh sure, they can offer suggestions, but they have no control.
- Is that the kind of life you want?
- Or do you want to be the driver?
- And pick the destination, and the route?
- Do you want to pick an interesting destination, tell your passengers to strap in, hang on and engage four wheel drive?
- Some of the most interesting places on this planet are not accessible by car.
- If you want to get there, you walk or get there using more suitable transport.
- Such as a four wheel drive Landrover!
- My invitation to you today is to choose the more exciting life.
- Choose to engage your four wheel drive and get closer to Jesus.



# Living On The Other Side Of The Shouting

<sup>6</sup>So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.

2 Chronicles 27:6

## Illustration

- Transitions are always interesting.
- And we generally encounter quite a few in our lives.
- That lovely baby turns two and for a year or so becomes a miniature Godzilla.
- Then everything calms down again until they become a teenager and then the resemblance to Godzilla returns for a few more years.
- Other transitions are equally interesting.
- The first girlfriend or boyfriend.
- Learning to drive.
- The first job.
- The first child.

## Sonic booms

- Another interesting transition is the transition in aircraft from sub-sonic to super-sonic speeds.
- That is when an aircraft travels faster than the speed of sound.

- Many attempts were made to fly faster than the speed of sound.
- Success came on October 14, 1947 in an experimental rocket plane called the Bell X-1, flown by test pilot Chuck Yeager.
- Nobody was really sure it could be done, even as they worked towards the goal.
- Part of the challenge is that there is a great deal of turbulence as a plane approaches the sound barrier.
- This is caused by the air literally piling up in front of the airplane as it attempts to fly through it.
- The air cannot get out of the way fast enough.
- Many people thought that if an airplane did go faster than sound, that it would break up immediately because of the turbulence.
- Hence the name “the sound barrier”.
- Thankfully, in a properly aerodynamic plane, it is possible to go faster than sound.
- But there is always that turbulence and then there is something called a sonic boom.
- Now, I have never flown on a supersonic aircraft, but I have heard plenty of sonic booms.
- Where my parents lived during my teens, was in the South-West of England, in the county of Cornwall.
- You may have heard of the place.
- At that time, British Airways flew a small fleet of Concorde jets.
- These were supersonic.
- In fact, their transatlantic cruising speed was Mach 2.
  - That’s twice the speed of sound!
- There was just one limit on them and that was that they were not allowed to fly faster than the speed of sound while over the land.

- So, they would leave London Heathrow airport and fly towards their destination of New York JFK airport at less than the speed of sound.
- And then when they cleared the coast of England, right at the edge of Cornwall, they could accelerate to faster than the speed of sound.
- This would create a sonic boom, or a sound wave from the turbulence that the plane had to push through to go supersonic.
- There were a couple of flights each day, but because sound travels better at night, every evening, my family would hear the sonic boom from the airplane even though it was over a hundred miles away.

## Salvation

- There is another transition that many of us here have gone through.
- That is the transition from unsaved to saved.
- We all go through this, but the difference in our lives is less for those who have grown up in the church.
- For those of us, and I'm in this category, that have grown up in the world, the transition is quite dramatic.
- Sometimes, it can feel bumpy.
- You go from living any way you feel like, to suddenly being close to the Lord.
- If you were living in enough sin, then that is quite jarring.
- Not saying it isn't good, because it is, but it's quite a change for a life to go through.
- From weighed down with sin to feeling lighter than air as your sins are washed away never to be seen again.
- It's quite a rush of new feelings and sensations and new places and new patterns of living and fellowship.

- It's quite like breaking the sound barrier for the first time.
- There's lots of turbulence, but once you've done it, life smooths out and you're left flying free and clear.

## Jotham

- Now, back to our opening scripture.

<sup>6</sup>So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.

**2 Chronicles 27:6**

- King Jotham is an interesting character.
- And I hope that I can show you today that he is a good example for us.
- Unfortunately, we don't know that much about him.
- Although, what we do know is enough for today's lesson.
- Let's see what the scriptures tell us.

<sup>1</sup>Jotham *was* twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok. <sup>2</sup>And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly.

**2 Chronicles 27:1-2**

- We see that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.
- Jotham was pleasing to the Lord.

- He is one of the few good kings that ruled Judah.
- His father, Uzziah was also a good king.
  - Although he was struck with leprosy by the Lord after he entered the temple and burned incense.
  - That was strictly a role for the priests and the Lord was greatly displeased with his action.
  - That's an interesting story in its own right, so we'll cover that another day.
- We see specifically recorded that he did not enter into the temple of the Lord.
- This doesn't mean that he did not worship the Lord, but that he obviously learned from his fathers mistake.
- Unfortunately, while he did right, the people continued with their corrupt living.
- While the people are almost guaranteed to follow an evil leader into evil, there is sadly no guarantee that they will follow a good leader into righteousness.
- But we must all strive to be good leaders.
- Else we *will* lead the people into corruption.

<sup>3</sup>He built the high gate of the house of the LORD, and on the wall of Ophel he built much. <sup>4</sup>Moreover he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers. <sup>5</sup>He fought also with the king of the Ammonites, and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year an hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second year, and the third.

## 2 Chronicles 27:3-5

- Jotham added to the house of the Lord.

- He also built more cities for the people of Judah.
- And he was greatly blessed by the Lord when he fought against the Ammonites.
- He defeated them and they were forced to pay tribute to Judah for three years.

<sup>6</sup>So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.

#### **2 Chronicles 27:6**

- This verse is interesting.
- Not because he became mighty, but because of the way that he did it.
- It seems that he didn't strive to become mighty.
- Sure, he led the army of Judah against their enemies, but as king, he's supposed to do that.
- The reason is given to us right in the same verse.
- He prepared his ways before the Lord.
- The Hebrew word translated as "prepared" is *kuwn* (pronounced koon).
- And it basically means to "to be firm, be stable, be established".
- Some of the other translations give more illustration to this word as well.
- The NLT tells us that "he was careful to live in obedience to the LORD his God".
- The NIV tells us "he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God."
- The ESV tells us "he ordered his ways before the LORD his God."
- There seems a clear pattern here.
- Not only does *kuwn* mean prepared, but it can also mean careful obedience, walking steadfastly and ordering our ways.

- This was the reason for Jotham's increase in mightiness.
- He drew closer to the Lord and the Lord blessed him in ways appropriate for a king of Judah.
- It's interesting, but I have often observed that the Lord blesses in ways that are individualized to their recipient.
- My bible mentor, Bro. Karl, would often make this observation and ever since then I have watched with interest when the Lord blesses people.
- And I believe that the Lord does indeed bless people with that which is most appropriate for them.
- In the case of a king, great mightiness is an appropriate blessing.

## **A Good Example**

- Now, please allow me to bring together our illustration today and the account of Jotham.
- There is a time of transition when we enter the kingdom.
- Everything is new and exciting.
- While we teach that we should not live by feelings, the new convert does.
- To use the southern expression, it's all shouting!
- And that's great.
- But eventually the shouting slows down and we have to continue to live for the Lord after the shouting.
- And that's where the example of Jotham comes in.
- Jotham did well and was pleasing to the lord because he prepared his ways before the Lord.
- Or, if you prefer, he walked steadfastly before the Lord.
- Jotham's walk with the Lord was careful and considered in approach.
- I'm sure there was lots of excitement when he was crowned as king.

- I'm sure that being king was very exciting as he settled into the role.
- But there comes a time, sooner rather than later, when you can't just float along on the excitement of being crowned.
- You actually have to do king things.
- And that's when Jotham's decision to walk steadfastly before the Lord showed itself as wisdom.
- It's the same for us.
- When the shouting stops and our walk with the Lord starts being a walk rather than dancing along rainbows, then we need to switch to Jotham mode.

## Continue Steadfastly

- The key is to continue steadfastly in our walk with the Lord.
- This was Jotham's successful strategy and also the strategy used by the early church.

<sup>42</sup>And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

**Acts 2:42**

- These four elements are vitally important to the church, both as a body and as individuals.
  - You could consider these to be three elements if you always combine the fellowship and the breaking of bread, as most of us do.
- The early church was diligent in pursuing correct doctrine, fellowship and prayer.
- I'm sure there were plenty of other activities that they did, but right from the start they concentrated on these core elements.



- And these are what kept the church grounded.
- And they are what will continue to keep the church grounded today and for as many tomorrows as the Lord chooses to wait until he returns.
- Paul liked to remind the churches of this advice as well.

<sup>58</sup>Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

**1 Corinthians 15:58**

- Here he was reminding the Corinthian church of this principle.
- They were still a very young church at the time of this epistle, so this advice was perfect for them.
- Yes, it's important to do stuff and reach out to others.
- But it's even more important to be solid in the Lord, otherwise anyone you reach will see your shallowness and likely leave.

## **Self-Responsibility**

- I've spoken before about how the world system is seeking to make personal responsibility a forgotten virtue.
- But the Lord has always seen it as a vital part of the believers life.
- Paul directed the church at Philipi to follow this principle.

<sup>12</sup>Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

**Philippians 2:12**

- Paul couldn't be with each church all of the time.
- And even as much as he loved the saints at Philippi, he could not be with them often.
- So he reminded them how to live ... the same way they did while he was with them!
- The Greek word translated "work" is *katergazomai*.
  - Pronounced "kat-er-gad-zom-ahee".
- And it means "to perform, accomplish, achieve" and "to work out i.e. to do that from which something results".
- This means that the Christian walk is a doing things actively.
- We are to accomplish something.
- If your role in the kingdom is to keep the dust from settling on your portion of your pew, then you need to find a new role.
- Not that we can just rush out and do stuff.
- That's not right either.
- We are to proceed orderly.
- The Lord is not the author of confusion after all.
- Peter helps us here.

<sup>10</sup>Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

## 2 Peter 1:10

- The Greek word behind "sure" here is *bebaios*.
  - Pronounced "beb-ah-yos".
- It means "stable, fast, firm".
  - That's fast as in "firmly fixed".
- Everything we do has to be stable, fast and firm.
- And as with everything in the spiritual world, and salvation is a spiritual thing, we get the best results when we do it under appropriate authority.

- Follow the teaching of the apostles and your pastor.
- Yes, you are responsible for actually doing the things necessary for salvation and any ministry that the Lord calls you to.
- But do them in a stable, fast and firm fashion.
- And that means doing them within the context of your church leadership's directives.

## Be Diligent

- The writer of Hebrews tells us to run the race with patience.
- Keeping our eyes on Jesus.

<sup>1</sup>Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

### Hebrews 12:1

- In other words, being diligent.
- Settle in for the long haul.
- We're in a marathon, not a sprint!
- The writer of Hebrews is telling us to be like Jotham and live diligently before the Lord.

<sup>12</sup>Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of

Christ Jesus. <sup>13</sup>Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, <sup>14</sup>I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

### **Philippians 3:12**

- Paul tells the Philippians that he's pressing towards the mark.
- He's striving for the desired end result.
- And Jesus tells us in Revelation what end result we should strive for.

<sup>10</sup>Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

### **Revelation 2:10**

- Being faithful unto death doesn't mean that we look for ways to die.
- But that we live our whole life ready for death, so that we have no regrets when we look back at it.
- Don't wait to be on your death bed to decide the things you should have done more or less of in your life.
- Go ahead and make that decision now.
- Start doing less of the things that don't matter.
  - If that includes Facebook, then just do less of it.
  - I prefer twitter these days anyway.
  - But Facebook still has the best funny pictures.
- And start doing more of the things you know you should be doing.
- If you think you should be reading your bible more, then don't sit around thinking that, use the time to actually do it.

## Ways Of Being Diligent

- And what are some other ways that we can be diligent in our walk with the Lord?

<sup>2</sup>Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

**Colossians 4:2**

- Prayer is always an excellent way to be connected with the Lord.
- To use an 80's reference, E.T. had to phone home, and it would be good for us to do the same.
- Prayer connects us to our father in heaven.
- And has other benefits as well.

<sup>20</sup>But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, <sup>21</sup>Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

**Jude 20-21**

- Yes, prayer, especially in the Spirit, will build you up, increase your faith and keep you in the love of God.
- That's a pretty awesome package deal if ever I've heard one.
- And we find that the apostles recognized this.
- They, like all leaders of a startup church, found themselves doing all manner of grunt work.
- Nothing wrong with that, I do my share around here, but as the church grows, this becomes an increasing large load and pulls the leadership away from their primary role.
- The apostles were helping with the church's charitable efforts, namely caring for the Grecian widows.

- They found that this was starting to get in the way of their leadership duties.
- This meant making a choice between doing a good thing or doing the thing only they could do.

<sup>4</sup>But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

#### **Acts 6:4**

- We see that they clearly had a good understanding of their role and chose to step back from the direct ministering to concentrate on their leadership responsibilities.
- Note that they did work with the congregation to appoint seven men to the caring ministry.
- They did not leave the ministry activity with no one to work it.
- After prayer, another important way to be connected to the Lord in a diligent manner is the pursuit of good doctrine.
- We have a number of scriptures that I could use to back this point, but the advice from Paul to Timothy seems to hit the right tone here.

<sup>16</sup>Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

#### **1 Timothy 4:16**

- Paul not only wants Timothy to take heed to doctrine, but to continue in it.
- Doctrine is not something that you study once, get a good understanding of, try to remember enough to ace the exam and then forget.
- Doctrine is how we live our lives and do what we do.

- Yes, I know there is a verse that says “the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life”
- That verse is comparing the Old and New Testaments.
  - 2 Corinthians 3:6
- When we continue in doctrine, both living it *and* studying it, then we will save ourselves and those who will allow us to teach them.
- But we have to continue in it.
- Doctrine is not a buffet where you can grab a little of what looks good.
- After prayer and doctrine, we move to faith and belief and diligently seeking the Lord.

<sup>6</sup>But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

#### **Hebrews 11:6**

- This is a great verse, but the word “seek” might have been better translated “require”.
- We are to diligently require the Lord in our lives.
- This verse is in an epistle, so it’s written to people who have already found the Lord.
- The seeking is more of a personally requiring him in our lives.
- A decision that our lives will include a relationship with Jesus.
- A decision to walk with the Lord.
- That’s diligently seeking him.
- One last point before I wrap up.
- The writer of Hebrews tells us that we should not fail to gather together.
- It would seem that there were some who claimed that they did not need to physically be in church.

- That they were free to skip services.
  - We still have people who claim that today.
- And technically they are free to not attend church.
- But they take that step at the strong risk of alienating themselves from the Lord and their brethren.

<sup>25</sup>Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

#### Hebrews 10:25

- Let me tell you that pastors don't just expect people to be in church because they're lonely and need to hang out.
- It's because each of us needs the fellowship of the saints and the presence of the Spirit of the Lord.
- We all need that touch of the Lord.
- Yes, we can have personal prayer time.
- And we can have personal devotional time.
- And those are good, but we also need collective fellowship time with each other and the Lord.
- This is part of that final element of **Acts 2:42**.
- It's the fellowship part and it's as important as right doctrine and prayer.

## Conclusion

- The Lord is pleased when we live diligently and steadfastly for him.
- This approach worked well for Jotham and the Lord blessed him mightily.
- I believe that I have shared plenty of reasons with you for us to do the same.



- We are to be steadfast in:
  - Apostolic doctrine.
  - Prayer.
  - Church attendance.
  - Taking personal responsibility for following through on our own salvation.
  - Living our life so that we arrive at our own finish line strong in the Lord.
- If we do these things, we will be pleasing to the Lord and our lives will go well.

**END**

# Be Very You

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

**Revelations 3:16**

- Does it amuse anyone else to view young people these days trying to be different ... all in exactly the same way?
- I've never been particularly worried about conforming, but even I did this when I was younger.
- I would wear black t-shirts and jeans, just like all of my other rock music enjoying buddies.
  - On the other hand, I was just about the only headbanger with short hair! :-)
- I think that I've been trendy exactly once, and that was by accident.
- I assure you that there's really not too much chance of it happening again.
- Why are people so afraid to be themselves?
- After all, we are all interesting.
- We all have different experiences, skills and backgrounds.
- Why do so many people try to be the same as everyone else?
- It's as if everyone was trying to be average.
- God doesn't like average, so why would we seek it by trying to blend in?
- It's conformity.
- If the Lord wanted us all to be the same, he would have made us that way.
- He made us all different and unique.
  - Some more unique than others!

- It is vitally important that we be ourselves.
- Now, some take this to mean that no one can tell you what to do.
- That's not true, because authority figures have always existed.
- And authority figures can tell you what to do.
- And government authority figures can even use force to ensure that you do what they want.
- The kind of being yourself that I am talking of is the being the best version of you that you can be.
- And while this sermon was originally written for a youth group, every word applies to all of us.
- Being the best version of yourself should never stop.
- And if you haven't started yet, then I hope that from today on, you'll strive to be the best version of yourself possible.
- So, let's talk about being ourselves.
- There are two ways to be yourself.
- There's being yourself on the outside, which is easy to talk about, but can be hard to start doing, because this is the easiest aspect of you for the world to see.
- Then there is also being yourself on the inside.
- This is the realm of character.
- Most advice says to start on the inside and work out.
- But I am converging on the opinion that we work on both at the same time.
- And meet in the middle!
- I'll start talking out the exterior first.

## **Be Yourself On The Outside**

- The bible contains guidance on how to dress and behave.
- Some have said that these guidelines are too restrictive.

- But if you think that the bible has a lot to say about how to dress, look and behave, have you considered all of the conformity pushed by the world?
- They call it advertising, marketing or fashion, but it's the same difference.
- The world doesn't want you to be yourself.
- The world wants you to dance to its tune and follow its dictates.
- As is often the case with the world, everything it calls for us to do is contrary to the wishes of the Lord.

## **Clothing**

- The scriptures call for us to wear modest clothing.
- The Lord doesn't tell us where to shop, or how much we have to spend.
- We just need to make sure our clothes are modest.
- This means that it covers all of your unmentionables.
- The world dictates labels, colors, lengths and styles.
- Fashion is beyond fickle.
- The world goes out of its way to encourage you to wear whatever it says is appropriate.
- And it likes to encourage you to show as much skin as possible (in the summer) as it can get you to go along with.
- The scripture teaches us that the thighs are considered part of your nakedness, so we need to keep them covered.
- Naturally, the world wants you to show them off.

## **Employee Dress Codes**

- While I'm speaking of clothes ...
- Three words: "Employee dress code".
- Read some of those and then tell me the bible is restrictive!

- Has anyone ever seen a UPS driver not wearing brown?
- Or a postal worker not wearing blue?
- How well do you think it would go if a UPS driver decided to wear red one day?
- God just wants you to be modest, some of these dress codes are far more restrictive than the scriptures.

## **Hair**

- The scriptures call for women to have long hair, but the world can't make up it's mind what you should do with your hair.
- They pick different lengths, colors, styles and accessories every season.
- The world seems to take the view that any length of hair for ladies is an option, unless it's long.
- But on guys, the world encourages them to grow their hair long.
- The scriptures teach us that men should have short hair.
- Again, the world teaches the reverse of the scriptures.

## **Makeup**

- The scriptures call for women to be "shamefaced" (that's not wearing makeup).
- The world spends huge amounts of money on advertisements in fashion magazines to insist that women absolutely need to wear makeup.
- Have you ever wondered why the world wants women to wear makeup?
- The cosmetic companies make their living telling women that they're ugly without their help.
- I'm certainly not against taking good care of your skin, we read that Esther did that as part of her preparations when trying to marry the king.

- But, the world knows that makeup acts like a mask and encourages poor sexual behavior.
- The scripture records makeup use by a number of evil women, but no makeup use by godly women.

## **Jewelry**

- The scriptures call for us to wear no jewelry.
  - I'm firmly in the wedding rings are not jewelry camp.
- Have you heard the number of advertisements for diamonds just in the Madison area and just on the radio?
- The message is that you're not aesthetically pleasing without their help.
- You can't be gorgeous unless you sparkle!
- The scriptures record that the children of Israel would wear increasing amounts of ornaments until they found they needed to get closer to the Lord.
- At that point they would take off all their ornaments, wash their clothes and seek the Lord.
- Jewelry and ornaments seem to be an inhibitor of a good connection with the Lord.

## **Body Piercing**

- Don't even get me started on the matter of body piercing.
- Ouch!
- If you've got it, they can pierce it.
- And now they've run out of bits to pierce that you can see, so they pierce bits you can't (or shouldn't) see.
- Double ouch!
- And as the world is keen on you piercing yourself, it should come as no surprise that the scriptures teach against it.

## **Tattoos**

- I grew up in a navy town, so I'd seen tattoos before, but mostly on salty old sea dogs.
- I'm not even sure that I remember ever seeing a tattoo on a woman before I came to this country.
- The world teaches that tattoos are cool and edgy.
- So cool and edgy, that there is a growing business of tattoo removal.
- Those tattoos may seem cool when you're young or drunk, but they are a real problem when you are older and trying to be professional.
- Again, it should not surprise you that the scriptures teach against tattoos.

## **Being Yourself On The Inside**

- Being yourself on the inside is easier to hide, but shows through when you do it right, so it feels as scary as being yourself on the outside.
- I'm going to cover two aspects of being yourself on the inside.
- The first is being young, but we less young folks can take this as being our own age.
- The second is building good habits into your life.

## **Being Young**

- It's OK to be Young!
- Really!
- The Lord even thinks so, as we find from Paul.

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

**1 Timothy 4:12**

- It's ironic that young people think that they need to be old to be respected, because old people just want to be young again.
- Enjoy the whole journey and don't worry about the individual stages.
- You've gotta start somewhere!

For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel *with* those seven; they *are* the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

**Zechariah 4:10 (KJV)**

Does anyone dare despise this day of small beginnings?

**(The Message)**

- Just remember, if you are young, that you don't actually know everything.
- So be humble and prepared to learn.
- We all arrive in this world naked, hungry and screaming.
  - And some say that it gets worse after that.

And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

**Job 1:21**



- Remember that life is a marathon, not a sprint
- If the Lord tarries and you avoid enough milk trucks, you won't be seeing Jesus for a while, so pace yourself and settle in for the long haul.
- Now is the time to build memories and not regrets.
- This is the time of your life that you'll look back on.
- So, make it interesting and worthwhile to remember.
- Don't do anything you'll regret.
- Regrets come from doing stuff you shouldn't or not doing things that you could have.
- The sensible (boring?) part of your life is longer than your youth, so take those missions trips and go to bible school.
- Take some (appropriate!) risks for Jesus.

## Having Good Habits

- Build Good Habits.
- Good habits will serve you well.
- Start tithing when you're young and you won't miss that 10%.
- And God will stretch the 90% further than you could ever imagine.
- Study the Scriptures
- It's easiest to learn things when you're young.
- Although science now has discovered that if you keep your brain active, then you can learn anything at any age.
- God made us in such a way that we are knowledge sponges when we're young.
- The wonderful thing about the word of God is that it never goes out of date.
- In my computer programming career everything changed so fast that I was constantly playing catch-up with new technology.

- Nothing stands still. Nothing!
- Anything you learn now about the word of God is going to serve you well for the rest of your life.
- God's word never changes and it will always mean what it means today no matter how long the Lord tarries.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

**Matthew 24:35 and Mark 13:31**

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

**Hebrews 13:8**

- Knowledge of God will be good for your whole life, because he never changes!
- Use the King James version of the bible ... but also learn to read Greek and Hebrew.
- Start with Greek.
- Really.
- You can actually recognize some of the letters in Greek, but Hebrew is hard for us westerners to get our brains wrapped around.

## Conclusion

- God wants the best for you and wants you to be very you.
- So, be yourself with all that you have within you.

## Further Reading

I'd like to list here a few of the books that I have found useful when preparing sermons. Not every book was consulted for every sermon, but each has been useful enough that I would like to recommend it for consideration to my readers.

Holy Bible (King James Version)

*The New Birth* by David K. Bernard. Pentecostal Publishing House.  
ISBN-13: 978-0912315775

*I AM* by David S. Norris, PhD. WAP Academic, Pentecostal Publishing House. ISBN-13:978-156722-730-7

# About The Author

Pastor Simon Peter Chappell is the pastor of New Life United Pentecostal Church in Dodgeville, Wisconsin, in the United States of America. Pastor Chappell moved to the United States from England in 1994 and has lived in Dodgeville since 1998. He has pastored the congregation there since 2007. He describes himself as a “recycled atheist” and gives the Lord all the glory for bringing him out of the hopelessness of unbelief.

Pastor Chappell is happily married and keeps busy raising three minions. He loves God, writing, guns, cats, bacon, good tea, photography, esoteric programming languages, martial arts and lots of other guy stuff.

Pastor Chappell’s personal blog may be found at <http://simonpeter.org/>, a mix of interesting projects may be found at <http://simonpeter.com/> and he tweets at <https://twitter.com/SimonPChappell>.

The church website is at <http://newlife-upc.org/> and the church tweets at [https://twitter.com/NewLife\\_\\_UPC](https://twitter.com/NewLife__UPC).

# Colophon

The cover image is a photograph by the author, taken in the ever beautiful Door County in the North East corner of Wisconsin. The subject matter is Eagle Bluff Lighthouse, one of eleven lighthouses that ring the shoreline of Door County. Lighthouses always speak to me of the Lord being a beacon for our lives and the provider of a light to our path.