

## Crazy Faith



Gary Wilkerson December 17, 2012

Do you sense God is about to unleash something tremendous in your life? Has he spoken to your heart, “I have prepared something special for you. You’re about to enter a walk with me you’ve never known before”? Maybe your life has already been greatly blessed by God. Now the Holy Spirit is saying his longstanding promise is about to come into full fruition—and that it will amaze you.

If this describes your life right now, I can tell you with the authority of Scripture: Get ready to examine your heart.

This next part is what I call experiencing “crazy faith.” Crazy faith is believing that no matter how good things are, the best is yet to come. It’s a faith that says, “As much as we dream and do big things for God’s kingdom, his vision is always greater.” What the Lord has done in the brief existence of the church I pastor has exceeded my wildest expectations. Not a week has gone by when someone hasn’t given his or her life to Jesus — and most weeks it’s multiple people. Whenever we distribute food to the poor, many of them ask, “Why are you doing this?” We answer, “It’s Jesus,” and they give their lives to him.

It’s all happening miraculously. In three years’ time our church has grown from three couples to nearly 1,500 people on Sundays. New believers are quickly maturing into faithful disciples, growing in their knowledge of God. They’re well on their way to our ultimate goal for them: to become radically devoted missionaries for Jesus, wherever he may lead them.

God isn’t just exceeding our expectations; he’s showing us what his expectations are, and it is amazing to see. There are still a quarter of a million people in our area alone who don’t know Christ, and last year the Lord stirred us to plant two new churches here, one in a troubled area of the city. I’m simply astonished by God’s great works.

Here is the craziest part of all: I believe greater things are yet to come. I’m convinced God will reveal himself even more powerfully — not just in salvations, in outreach, in help to the poor, in impact on the city, but in kabad. That’s the Hebrew word for “the weightiness of God, the thick presence.” Sounds incredible, doesn’t it? Of course it does. But now comes the hard part.

It is exactly at this point that God asks his people to examine their hearts.

God is behind every glorious work, and he will not share his glory. He won’t allow any obstacle to get in the way of the shining brilliance of his Son. Therefore, he needs clean vessels to do his work. So at the very peak moment when his blessings and power are flowing freely through his people, he tells them, “Pause now and put it all on hold. I want you to examine your heart.”

That’s the word I sensed God wanted me to preach when our church recently celebrated our third anniversary. You can imagine my hesitation. I pictured the whole congregation staring at me, puzzled and thinking, “Wait — you’re telling us we’re all great, but then you turn around and say we need to change.” It would be like the husband who takes his wife to dinner for their anniversary and says, “Honey, I was hoping to talk about the extra weight you’ve put on.”

That’s not exactly what it’s like when God asks us to examine ourselves. After all, we’re aware our righteousness

is as filthy rags, that we need his grace. But the fact is, just when we're poised on the brink of God's greatest work in our lives, he asks us to reflect on these questions: "Is there anything in my heart that's displeasing to the Lord?"

Have I neglected to do something he's asked of me? I want nothing in my life to hinder what God wants to do."

God is forever bringing his people to this point. Why? Before God can bring about his best, he has to do something deep in us. He wants to give us his victory, but he also wants our complete devotion to him.

The first six chapters of Joshua describe the glorious work God did among his people over a few years' time. Israel had just been freed after 400 years in bondage. They had emerged from 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. And after all this God had blessed them. Now they were at the border of Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey he had promised them years before. So they crossed over — and what happened? Immediately Joshua turned to the younger generation of men and separated them unto God. Scripture uses the word "circumcised" to describe their preparation, but the deeper meaning is, "They were made ready."

Why did Joshua do this? Now that they had crossed over, they faced the thick, impenetrable walls of Jericho. Taking this enemy would be impossible for the ragtag Israelites. Yet God was telling them, "I have blessed you these recent years. You have experienced my incredible riches. But your work is not yet finished."

How did the Israelites prepare for this battle? They didn't sharpen their swords and shine their armour. Instead, the preparation took place inside their hearts. God commanded them to circle the city singing songs, praying and waiting on him. Finally, he had them raise up trumpets and issue a single blast. In an instant, those mighty walls came tumbling down.

Joshua and his men then performed mighty exploits, defeating their enemies, inheriting greater lands and seeing victories as never before. In fact, Joshua did something even Moses didn't do: He defeated thirty-one kings. That was a tenfold increase over the kings Moses had defeated. I believe this is a picture of what the Lord wants to do in all our lives. He wants to bring a tenfold increase, to pour out his Spirit in amazing ways, and for us to believe he wants to do it all. In short, he wants us to possess a crazy faith.

Something happened amid this great victory that had to be dealt with.

In chapter 7, the Lord warned Israel not to take any spoils from the enemies they defeated. Why this prohibition? God wanted their eyes fixed on things above, not things "devoted to destruction" (material goods that would fade like the grass).

But one man, Achan, decided to take some things for himself. "When I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them" (Joshua 7:21). It wasn't much, really — just a pretty coat and a handful of silver and gold. Yet it's always just one little thing that God puts his finger on. Why? He knows that one thing can hinder the fulfillment of his whole destiny for us.

Do you have something you've been negligent about — one thing that could hold back God's best for you? For many of us, these will be reasonable things. It could be a desire to hold onto money for savings that the Lord wants us to give away. It could be clinging to a demanding career that takes us away from our family. Like Achan, we can hold onto something "insignificant" without considering what it does to our hearts.

Our God wants to do mighty things through us. He wants to express his love to the world through us. So if we're clinging to one thing that gets in the way of his accomplishing that — some willfulness, some refusal to trust him for everything — he points it out to us.

Yet sometimes God wants us to add something to our lives before he brings his best. This may involve something we haven't done. So he also wants us to ask, "Have I been slow to respond to something God has asked me to do?"

We find an example in Acts, when the disciples added a new member to replace Judas. While in the Upper Room, they drew lots and chose Matthias. It seemed like such a small thing; these same men had seen Jesus work wonders, opening blind eyes, casting out demons, even raising a man from the dead. They'd seen God's kingdom advanced on earth as never in history. And when Christ ascended to heaven, he gave them this incredible word:

“You’ll do even greater works, once I send you my Spirit. He will empower you. Greater things are yet to come!”

Indeed, these same disciples would go beyond Israel and the Middle East, into Europe and India and Africa, preaching the good news of Christ to the nations, all within their generation. What made it so important now to add another disciple? They did it for one simple reason: Peter sensed it was something God wanted them to do.

“In those days Peter stood up among the brothers...and said, ‘Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas...For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry...‘It is written in the Book of Psalms, ‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’; and ‘Let another take his office.’ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us...one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection” (Acts 1:15-17, 20-22).

There is a great lesson here for Christ’s church today. That is, never overlook a nagging issue of the heart, no matter how small. God puts his finger on these matters for a reason: to reveal our heart’s response to him.

As a pastor I’m disturbed when I see people in our church not facing the problems in their lives. When I ask some how they’re doing, they answer, “Glory to God, he’s blessing me.” But I know their teenager had just been arrested. Or there is a rift with their spouse. Or they’re horribly alienated from someone else in the congregation.

Yes, God has greater things in store for us. But we can’t enter into them until we deal with the issues of our hearts first. Your issue may be a small thing, but in God’s eyes, it’s the one important thing at this moment. Without addressing it, there is no future of walking in his best. God always wants everything in order before he opens the door to the next amazing stage of his work. And what the disciples saw happen in that very same hour was truly amazing: Three thousand people were converted.

What is the Lord putting his finger on in your life? Is it to take away one small thing? Or to add something you’ve neglected? Don’t delay in your response to the Spirit’s faithful voice. Dealing with one small thing can determine your whole future. Will you examine it? If so, you can know God’s best is ahead—and you have pleased the One who wants to bless you.

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