

August 4, 2002

Life's Little Challenges

Opening: “Personal background: My wife and I enjoyed a Our short vacation to Massachusetts , we enjoyed several historical sights one being “The first house” of the Adams family John and Abigail Adams ... Came away with some answers to questions you always wonder about but never ask ... example Expression sleep tight don't let the

Rope Beds had to be tightened The House had a dead room ... living room

Text Samuel 30:1-8

The writing on the classroom wall reads, “We are all faced with amazing opportunities, brilliantly disguised as impossible situations.”

The saying written in calligraphy hangs there every year with the hope that its message will reach one or two students who are facing one of life's little challenges that is threatening to destroy their teenage world.

Life offers, lets call them challenges, to us all. Our success or failure when dealing with them often depends on our perspective. **The way we view our problems or challenges can make the difference in whether we overcome them or are overcome by them.**

I. Facing Hard Times

Facing hard times in our lives is never easy. Being alive means facing hardship, it is simply part of this equation we call life.

We like to comfort our selves by believing that all will be well, that we have already faced our troubles in the past so they are behind us or that bad things happen to “other people”, not to us

Hard times do come to everyone, and they come in all shapes and sizes.

Sometimes they give you advanced warning:

- The nagging pain that won't go away and seems to be getting worse,
- The phone call from the doctor's office asking you to come in for a conference concerning recent tests
- Your company is “reorganizing”, down sizing and you don't fit in
- An old fear or feeling you thought was long gone, has resurfaced in the background of your mind, whispering its ugly threats to return and destroy you if you don't watch out!

Sometimes there is no advanced warning, such was the case for several of our families two weeks prior with the Fordhams, the Richters, The Butruchs

How do we as believers in a living God deal with the small and catastrophic challenges of life? **Where does God fit between our trouble and faith?**

II. David's Distress

Lets look at David's life for an example, as seen in chapter 30 of First Samuel, not yet king **David is on the run literally**, he is being hunted like an animal by the reigning King Saul.

If he is caught he will be executed and not just him but his family that is with him for protection and the troop of loyal men and families that follow with him.

He has committed no crime on the contrary he was the hero that saved the nation and the King from humiliation in the battle that featured the Philistine champion, the giant Goliath. His fame and moments of glory are just a historical footnote now.

Living daily on the edge of life and death he finally leaves the hills of Israel to live in a city called Ziklag in Palestine. With his army at his side he returns home to find the families, children and possessions of his men and him have been kidnapped, burned or stolen. This included all available food reserves so they faced starvation as well as absolute despair.

Read I Samuel 30

David, as is in the case of all leaders, was the fall guy, the one you point the finger at. In their distress his men spoke of stoning him.

David was faced with one of those challenges in life that come suddenly, compounding already difficult existing problems. What did he do? **David encouraged himself in the Lord!**

III. God's Plan - Our Dilemma

We face a dilemma, we want to leave a mark in this life before we die, to write a book, set a record, be recognized for some notable achievement; to make a contribution that will be remembered after this life is over. We don't want a head stone to be the only remembrance that we were ever here. I believe that desire is placed in our heart by the Holy Spirit ... because God has a greater plan for our lives ... He sees our true potential. But we don't want the problems that come along with the challenge, the opportunity for something better something great. We don't want the stigma of failure of having the finger pointed at us.

We don't want the fear of self-doubt that is always present whenever we are about to accept a new challenge especially those connected to an existing problem.

Our attitude and perspective ... our view of and relationship with God can get us past what is sometimes called "the wall". This is a mental, emotional place where we feel confusion, discouraged, loss of confidence, defeated and ready to give up. It happens in new jobs, promotions, accepting leadership roles, to first time parents, freshman in college etc.

John Adams, was one of our founding fathers and the second president of the U.S. in 1796

- A member of both the first and second Continental Congress
- A signer of the Declaration of Independence (thought to be the one who pushed Jefferson to write the document)
- Started the Library of Congress, and the Dept. of Navy, principal author of the Massachusetts State Constitution

He was as recognized for his deep faith in God ... known as honorable and honest
He penned these words ***“People and nations are forged out of the fire of adversity.”***
John Adams like David had a design for his life determined by God.

But consider the cost... the problem or challenge, which America was facing, was the American Revolution. *Scripture tells us to count(measure) the cost*
The outcome was uncertain, to step up and pledge your life meant that if the revolution should fail, he would be treated as any traitor, humiliated then executed. Note ... *no rebelling people had ever broken free from the grip of a Colonial Power such as England. But think how different life would be if John Adams and others had stepped up willing to make that sacrifice?* (Insert, page 23 John Adams, by David McCullough)

IV. Back to David

Question ... Did God love David? God sent his best prophet Samuel to the House of Jesse to anoint David the future King of Israel.
Why didn't God just move Saul out and David in for an immediate coronation?

You know the answer don't you? David wasn't ready!

Anointed king while still a Shepard boy perhaps age 18 or 19 David could not make the transition.

It wasn't until age 40 and after this experience in chapter 30 that David was finally ready... if he could face the threat of losing everything and his own life at the same time nothing that he would face as sovereign of the nation would shake him.

Developmental Steps

God allows problems ... challenges in our life to shape us to build character and gain experience that we need to fit the call he has for our lives.

See Romans 8:28 For we know some things work together for good ... no, all things!

We are facing challenges of different degrees:

starting a new job or career, beginning college, dealing with distressing physical problems, financial ruin, family violence, loneliness or sudden trauma ... let faith and trust in God be the bridge that shapes your perspective giving you the courage and strength to deal with and overcome the problems you are facing.

It turns out our greatest challenge may be your decision to follow Jesus Christ.

You will be tested; God will use the problems of life to build you into a powerful effective and inspiration to the generation around us.

There are so many areas of needs for which God is waiting for someone to step up and be effectively used to make a difference.

- If this church is like others, it needs Sunday school teachers for kids and adults, helpers or leaders for teens, leaders for programs prayer groups, and outreach.
- There are Organizations like Youth Guidance who need sponsors to match with children who desperately need a positive influence and direction in their life.
- There are programs to help adults learn to read, to save and clean up communities.

If God has been speaking to you through your problems or challenges but you have failed to move because you are afraid, understand, God has plans for you! Jeremiah 29:11

“We are all faced with amazing opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations.”