

A GOOD START DOESN'T GUARANTEE A HAPPY ENDING

The Passage

Hebrews 4:1-11/ Hebrews 3:7-14/ 2 Chronicles 26

A Clear & Present Danger

1 Corinthians 10:1-10/ 1 Corinthians 6:9-13

This is not an **EMPTY THREAT**.

How danger becomes disaster:

- (1) **STRUGGLING** with sin, becomes
- (2) **DEFENDING** my sin, which becomes
- (3) **SETTING UP CAMP** in my sin

What Causes Our Hearts to Harden & Our Faith to Fold?

(1) When we decide God's way **WON'T WORK**.

Psalm 73/ 1 Corinthians 15:19/ Genesis 16

(2) When we think God's way is **ILLOGICAL**.

Isaiah 55:8-9/ Proverbs 3:5-6/ Proverbs 14:12

(3) When we fear **MISSING OUT**.

Genesis 3/ 1 Samuel 8

(4) When we think our situation is "**DIFFERENT**."

2 Chronicles 26/ Leviticus 10:1-3

(5) When we suffer from **SPIRITUAL AMNESIA**.

Deuteronomy 6:10-12/ 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Growth Group Homework

For the week of February 4, 2018

QUICK REVIEW

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

MY STORY

1. This weekend we were reminded that a good start doesn't guarantee a happy ending. We've all had times when we started something off strong only to be tempted to quit when things got tough. What's something you were tempted to quit but are glad you didn't?

2. This weekend we heard there are five things that cause our hearts to harden and our faith to fold. Of the five, what would you say are the top two or three that people struggle with?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. For many of us it's easy to follow God when his way makes sense to us and aligns with our desires. Yet it can be just as easy to stop following God's way when it threatens our "freedom" to do what we want, believe what we want or live life our own way. This can cause us to veer off God's path and onto our own. The verses below highlight the dangers of following our own path, as well as the "freedom" of following God's. As you read these verses, how might they challenge the belief that following God means a loss of freedom?

Psalm 16:11 *New International Version (NIV)*

You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Psalm 19:7-9 *New International Version (NIV)*

The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
⁸ The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.
⁹ The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever.
The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

Proverbs 5:1-14 *New International Version (NIV)*

Warning Against Adultery

My son, pay attention to my wisdom,
 turn your ear to my words of insight,
² that you may maintain discretion
 and your lips may preserve knowledge.
³ For the lips of the adulterous woman drip honey,
 and her speech is smoother than oil;
⁴ but in the end she is bitter as gall,
 sharp as a double-edged sword.
⁵ Her feet go down to death;
 her steps lead straight to the grave.
⁶ She gives no thought to the way of life;
 her paths wander aimlessly, but she does not know it.
⁷ Now then, my sons, listen to me;
 do not turn aside from what I say.
⁸ Keep to a path far from her,
 do not go near the door of her house,
⁹ lest you lose your honor to others
 and your dignity to one who is cruel,
¹⁰ lest strangers feast on your wealth
 and your toil enrich the house of another.
¹¹ At the end of your life you will groan,
 when your flesh and body are spent.
¹² You will say, "How I hated discipline!
 How my heart spurned correction!
¹³ I would not obey my teachers
 or turn my ear to my instructors.
¹⁴ And I was soon in serious trouble
 in the assembly of God's people."

Romans 6:19-23 *New International Version (NIV)*

I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. ²⁰ When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹ What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If someone were to ask you why you believe following God brings more freedom, what two or three points would you make to support this belief based on these verses?

2. Many times fear plays a huge part in causing us to doubt God's plan. While it's not a sin to doubt, acting on that fear can have major consequences and often ensures we miss out on what God intended. In the book of Numbers, we see the story of 12 leaders who were told to spy on Canaan, a land God was giving to the Israelites. As you read through Numbers 13:1-3, 17-33 and 14:20-23, how do you see fear take root and alter the plan God had for his people?

Numbers 13:1-3 New International Version (NIV)

The Lord said to Moses,² "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders."

³ So at the Lord's command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites.

Numbers 13:17-33 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁷ When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, "Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. ¹⁸ See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. ¹⁹ What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? ²⁰ How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land." (It was the season for the first ripe grapes.)

²¹ So they went up and explored the land from the Desert of Zin as far as Rehob, toward Lebo Hamath. ²² They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, lived. (Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) ²³ When they reached the Valley of Eshkol,[a] they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. ²⁴ That place was called the Valley of Eshkol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there. ²⁵ At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land.

Report on the Exploration

²⁶ They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. ²⁸ But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan."

³⁰ Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." ³² And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. ³³ We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

Numbers 14:20-23 *New International Version (NIV)*

The Lord replied, “I have forgiven them, as you asked.²¹ Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth,²² not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times—²³ not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it.

Where have you seen fear or anxiety cause people to doubt God or compromise their beliefs similar to the Israelites?

Can you think of any fears that seemed like giants at the time but ended up being much smaller?

3. Regardless of whether we’ve gotten off to a good start or not, the truth is our story is still being written. There’s hope in having a God who believes in us and went to great lengths to provide a path towards redemption. As you think through the story of your life, what hope or reassurances are given in the verses below that could help you write your next few chapters?

Ephesians 2:1-7 *New International Version (NIV)*

Made Alive in Christ

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:13-14 *New International Version (NIV)*

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Galatians 4:4-7 *New International Version (NIV)*

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.⁶

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Isaiah 40:31 *New International Version (NIV)*

but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

What tools, gifts or strengths do you possess that could be key in writing the next chapters of your redemption story?

TAKING IT HOME

1. As you think back to the five things Larry mentioned that cause our hearts to harden and faith to fold, are there any you need prayer for?

2. Are there any other prayer requests you'd like to share with your group?

Praise/Prayer Requests:

⇒

⇒

⇒

⇒

HOW TO
ENJOY
READING
YOUR BIBLE

Check out this upcoming event! *How To Enjoy Reading Your Bible*: Do you feel like you "should" read, know and study the Bible more? What if the "should" could turn to "want?" Keith Ferrin, author of *How To Enjoy Reading Your Bible*, will share his relational approach to the Bible and helpful tips that you can start using today - tips that are equally practical whether you are a longtime Bible student or simply exploring what this life-changing book is all about.

Date/Time/Location: Friday, February 23, 6:30pm at the Vista Campus in The Edge

Cost: \$5/person. Childcare is available with pre-registration.

Register: Online at northcoastchurch.com/classes