



SUMMER DAZE • NEW HOPE CHURCH

God in the Everyday Adventure

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I have absolutely no rhythm. I was thinking about it. And I just don't have, I did a wedding this weekend, and I had to leave right after the ceremony, and they were going to have a big, it was a really big crowd, and they were, all of them were. They're really having a great time, and someone said, 'You're leaving before the dancing?' They couldn't read my thought bubble, but... It was absolutely not. Yeah, so anyway, I'm here and... I may be rhythmically challenged. But that's okay. There's room for all of us. I was thinking about this idea of adventure. And so what I want to do is... I want to set the stage.

Um, and try to help. Try to draw something from the Old Testament. Um, My concern is for a lot of us is we take our Christian faith and we think of it as a matter of just like principles and doctrines, and we miss the fact that those are very important. You need to understand biblical principles. You need to know what the Bible says doctrinally and all that. It's primarily a relationship with God. And if we're not careful, we can... We can move away from, we can just hide behind principles and doctrines. Um and miss that they should be directing us to this. personal relationship with a God that is real and alive.

So I want to open up with a story. This is a historical account of what happened. When God was leading his people to land that he had promised them. It had already been their land. Abraham had had this generations before, but he wanted them to live in it. God's people had been slaves in Egypt for quite a while. While. There's a big story behind how all that happened and all, but God was still working even while they were in slavery. But it came a point where he was ready for them to leave. He's going to lead them out in a way that was going to catch the world's attention, and then they were going to move into Canaan, the land he had promised.

If you read through the first part of the Old Testament, you'll see how God raised up Moses as a leader. Moses had grown up in the Egyptian royal family. He knew everything that was going on there, but he was also Jewish, and God used him to come and rescue his people from slavery into this new life that he had formed. It's a fascinating story if you read it too. These slaves, or in a sense, taking on all of the Egyptian power and authority. And it's not because of them, but God just, in miraculous ways, led them out to the point where they were invited to leave.

And then, when Pharaoh changed his mind, he chased. It's just, it's really, really amazing. But that's not the part I'm getting into. They have left Egypt. They are now... rescued in a way that caught... Everyone's attention. The superpower of the world, Egypt, has been... rendered useless. And now these people that

have been slaves for generations are now looking out and they see this land God promised. And this is how it starts. It says, 'The Lord now said to Moses, Send out men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the Israelites. Send one leader from each of the twelve tribes, twelve ancestral tribes.

So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. They are. They've been rescued.' They now see what's happening. God's made this promise to them. He's already shown just how strong and powerful he is. He is good at his word. And so now Moses following up, he gets 12 men that are going to do a recon mission into this new land and come back and report. They're gone six weeks. Thank you. And they come back and make a report. And you're thinking. This ought to be great. And it was. It says, 'They came back and they gave this phenomenal report about this land God had promised them.

They've been slaves. They're free. Now they're going to go to this new place. And they come back and say, you wouldn't believe this place.' It's absolutely amazing. It's got, all the kind of soil that you need for growing crops, they've got ranch land, they've got mountains, they've got water, they've got everything, and they brought back evidence, they brought back some fruit. It would have made Whole Foods jealous to see what these people brought back. They said, 'This is, it's an amazing place. Couldn't be any better.' And you're thinking, 'All right, well, let's go.' And this is where the butts get us in trouble. These 12 go out, they come back, they make their report.

And this is what they say. Oh, it's amazing. And then they say, 'but.' The people living there are powerful and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there. It gets much worse. This is the recon team. And now they reported to Moses and the whole nation are hearing it. He goes, 'We can't go against them. They are stronger than we are.' So. They spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites. I'm reading this. This isn't on the screen, so don't look for it. You can look this up in Numbers 13 and 14. It said, 'The land we traveled and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there.'

Listen how it gets worse. It's bad, but then look how much worse it gets. They'll devour anyone that's there. All the people we saw were huge. So it's not only did they have a few giants, now everybody there is huge. Even their babies are born, and they're eight feet. They didn't say that part. I made that part up. Next to them, we felt like grasshoppers. And that's what they thought too. So here's what I'm saying. Fear does all kinds of things to us. These 12 words. These are like recon marines. But they come back scared to death. And what happens with fear is it... It exaggerates things.

It's not that it wasn't an issue. But it went from 'there are a few giants there' to 'everyone's a giant.' And they looked at us, and they... We look like grasshoppers, and they felt the same way. If you're doing reconnaissance secretly, you didn't... Thank you. They're making it because they're nervous. They're afraid. And it gets even worse. They spread this report. Remember, God's... He led them out of slavery. We now have this new home we're going to, but... Bad report. And it said, then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. A whole nation is now in mourning. Their voices rose in such a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron.

They're hating their leaders because, look, I can't believe it. Moses led us, and look, he's leading us into disaster. If only we had died in Egypt or even here in the wilderness, they complained. Why is the Lord

taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder. Wouldn't it be better if we returned to Egypt? Then they plotted among themselves, let's choose a new leader and go back to Egypt. Do you know what happened? They've been slaves for generations. They're finally free. God's promised them this. They see obstacles, and now all they can do is whine and complain, and their fear is just ratcheting up.

Two of the 12, Caleb and Joshua, and by the way, if you read their stories, you'll find out. Because they mess up, the whole nation is going to wander for 40 years in the desert. Joshua and Caleb are the two that will remain. and be able to go into the new land. That's another story, and I won't get into that. But listen to what Joshua and Caleb said. They were part of the recon team. They said to all the people of Israel, the land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land. And if the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us.

They're not saying there are obstacles. They're there. They're not denying that at all. They're not being hopelessly optimistic. They say it's a rich land flowing with milk and honey. Do not rebel against the Lord and don't be afraid of the people in the land, even the giants. They are only helpless prey to us. They have no protection, but the Lord is with us. Don't be afraid of them. One of the things you pull out from this is this: whenever... It's me and Jesus, me and God. I'm in the minority. I'm in the majority. They think they're in the minority. Because of the giants, because everything's so bad.

If I'm following God, I now have his presence, his protection, his power with me. And I can withstand whatever comes my way. His people didn't see it, and so they did wander in the desert for 40 years. The life of genuine faith is not blind. It sees reality. Very. Clearly. There's no advantage to ignoring what's true and real, what's really going on. The recon team did this. They saw... the beauty of the land, but they also saw some difficulties and some huge challenges. Yes. But genuine faith doesn't just see the reality, it also sees who God really is too. They see that there's this God.

If God's called me to go somewhere, he will not send me there by myself. He will not make me face it alone. He's not going to not give me the resources to handle what I need to. He wants me to live this kind of life. Where as I move along, I really do see his presence involved with me. He wants me to live in such a way that there's this adventure. And as I walk with him, not only do I grow and develop, but others are going to see it too and be drawn to him. I'm using a definition of adventure. You can find all kinds of ones.

I'm just saying this. It's an exciting step that involves risk and the unknown. And it relies on the confidence of God in God and his promises. Thank you. I'm going to give some real-life examples in a few minutes, but I'm going to just explain a little bit of this because I think sometimes we... I think the church at large misses this. We think, oh, faith is just a matter of believing these right things or these doctrines, these principles and all this. But we don't think about what does it mean to really walk with God? in real life today. When I have to face things that are extremely difficult.

And in fact, when I do the math, I don't see how any, I don't see any way in the world it's going to work out. But then I have to remember who God is. Is there anything impossible for him? And the answer is no. Thank you. A life. Devoted to follow Jesus is an adventure. There are going to be things that you and I don't

understand, things that we don't know. We go with what we do, and we trust God moving forward. And we've been given work to do that is really, really important. Jesus said this, he goes, 'I'll tell you the truth: anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done.

And even greater works, because I'm going to go be with the Father.' Now, some people read this and they go, 'that means I ought to be able to do miracles. I ought to be able to raise people from the dead, or I ought to be able to turn a Happy Meal into a banquet for a thousand people.' I've heard people teach this before. Well, the greater works. If you really have faith, you're going to be able to do all this remarkable, spectacular kind of stuff. That is not what this means. The work Jesus came to do, he said it in his own words, was to seek and to save the lost.

There were things that he did along the way that showed who he was, that showed he was God, that showed he really was the Messiah. There were miraculous things he did, and I'm not saying that you and I at times can't do, but that's not what he meant. He wasn't wanting us to pursue doing miraculous things. You don't need to sign up for a seminar or some kind of class because someone's going to show you how. He has commissioned us to follow him and to do exactly what he did. My purpose and yours. Once I become a follower of Jesus, to do everything I can to help others understand who he is and hopefully persuade them to consider him too.

The greater works, you and I are continuing to do it. When Jesus left, he now commissioned us and gave us his Holy Spirit. You and I get to be his. Ambassadors in a watching world. In John 17, Jesus said this: 'I am praying, this is right before he was taken to the cross. I am praying not only for these disciples, the 12 that he had, but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.' He is wanting us to take on the work that he had. And living our lives so that others will see him, that we'll grow in our faith, that others will see it, and they'll be wanting the same thing.

They're wanting God's presence in their life. Thank you. If you want to know what your purpose is, if you're a follower of Jesus, that's it. Everything else is secondary to it. But living this out isn't simple. I'm going to use a bad example, which is me. Friday, I'm going to Baltimore to do a wedding. I have worked really hard all week. I got... Friday I got up early, I got up early. A lot of work done, even got a workout in. I get in the car. I'm going to drive to Baltimore because I've got a rehearsal to be at. Baltimore from our house is about 65 miles from our house.

I averaged 23 miles per hour getting to Baltimore. Some of you may think, well, of course, that's... It's great. I'm usually 21. That wasn't my plan. Thank you. To say that I was angry and frustrated would be making me sound better than I really am. I'm in the truck and I'm... Everyone on the road is a bozo. Everything is wrong, and I'm... There wasn't steam coming out of my ears, but it was close. I was impatient, frustrated. All this kind of stuff. And then the terrible thing happened. I started thinking. You know, my message this Sunday is about this adventure with God. Some of you might think, well, you know, ministers and people that teach and all that, it just comes normal for them to do the right thing.

It doesn't. I was so... I was. I was so mad. And then I was even madder because I think, why couldn't I have picked a different topic? Why do I have to do this? Because now... I've got to think about the application of it.

And so I'm driving along. I'm definitely not breaking any speed limits. Thank you. And I start thinking about how can I readjust my attitude to look at this as part of an adventure rather than an utterly frustrating waste of time. And I wrestled with it, and I think I was doing okay. I get to Baltimore. I'm going to be there in time.

I'm going to stay at this hotel. I'm going to be there in time to change clothes, get to the rehearsal. I get in there. Their computers are down. People have been there. You're supposed to check in by 3 o'clock. No one's checked in. The gal behind the desk is really nice, but she's got no computer. She says, 'I can't give you a room because I don't know anything. To help you with.' So I have to figure out how do I change clothes, and I did okay, and you don't need to know the specs, but I did change clothes. I got to where the rehearsal was.

We went through the rehearsal. Rehearsal went okay, and I'm thinking, 'Great.' Finally, I go back, check in. I go back. The computer's still down. Um, and so I asked Amy. Amy was the one behind the desk. I got to know Amy pretty well. But she had printed out a copy that she could prove that I actually had paid for a room. The computer didn't, they couldn't, anyway. Amy looks at it, and she finally gives me a special card. They have a special notebook in there. For their kind of the backup keys. And so I got one for 425. I'm like, 'I got my room.' This is great.

I'll go in there and I'll just, I'm on the adventure and I'm doing okay. I go in there, unlock the door, whip in there, and there's Larry. I was pretty sure of my reservation, no roommates. And it was just one king-size bed, and I'm not sharing with Larry. I don't, you know. Now, at this point, Amy knows I'm a pastor. I'm coming to do a wedding. Larry finds that out, and then I'm thinking, 'Oh, shoot.' They know I'm a minister. They know I'm a Christian. Now I've got to act like it. Larry and I go downstairs and talk to Amy and just explain to her that we weren't intending to be roommates.

And again, the computers are down. They figured it out. They did give me, finally, I got in room 402. And. That worked out. Part of this adventure that I hadn't planned on... was meeting Larry and Amy, later on I met Omar, that's a different story. Um, but. Somewhere in this, God is working. I don't know about Larry and Amy. I don't know what their impressions are or Christians or ministers, but I think that I handled it okay. That's, you see, I didn't sign up for it. But the moment I signed up to follow Jesus, that includes all issues in my life. The things I plan for and the things I don't, the things I like, the things I don't.

Am I going to be? In my case, his man on the scene. Am I going to embrace the adventure or am I going to whine and complain because things didn't go the way I thought they should? Am I going to display anger because I have rights or am I going to be willing to be patient because other people are struggling in ways that they could use someone to come along and encourage them? See, this is the way, this is the adventure that we're on. Many times we don't know what's getting ready to happen. We don't know why things happen. We just know this is where I am.

Am I going to walk through it with Jesus? Or am I going to? Bow wow. God is constantly nudging us to step out and trust him. And for a couple of key reasons. One is because he wants us to grow in our faith and our obedience. And we don't usually grow in comfortable areas. It takes a challenge. Jesus said this. He said to the crowd, 'If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily,

and follow me.' If you try to hang on to your life, you lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.

The cross for Jesus was a deliberate choice to give up his comfort and inconvenience and what he would personally like to do, what his father called him to do. We are the beneficiaries of it. Submission to God means that I put him first. We just did a whole month in our Bible reading plan of talking about this idea of submission. It means I'm going to tap out and let God... Have his way. I let go of things. And I trust him in the midst of it. The Israelites didn't do that. God said, 'This is your land. You go. I'll be with you.' And they said no.

'We're not going to do that. It's too risky. We don't see how it's going to play out, so we're not going to do it. We can do the same thing. We end up missing out on experiencing God's presence and his power because we underestimate what he can do in and through us, and we do the math, and it comes out. Not in our favor. And so we bail. And then God continues to nudge us. Are you going to trust me? Are you going to follow me? He wants us to grow. And he'll do whatever it takes for that to happen. The other thing he wants to do too in using these adventures in our life is to show others what this new life he offers is like.

We are God's show and tell. If we embrace the adventure, regardless of what we... understand about it, if we trust Him and move forward, we're going to see... All kind of things happen. We're going to see our faith grow, but we're going to see others intrigued by what he can do to a life that is surrendered to him. Colossians 1 says, 'So we tell others about Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all the wisdom God has given us. We want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ. That is why I work and struggle so hard, depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me.

God has designed us to live a life where we're going to know His strength and His power working through us, not sitting around just comfortable around the pool. He's got work for us to do, and he wants us to do it well. On this side of heaven, we have privileges and responsibility to... to grow in our faith, but also to show others what God can do. Matthew 5, 16, let your good deeds shine for all to see so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. The adventure he's called us to means living a life for him. And doing it deliberately and honestly. And seeing what he can do.

So what I'd like to do is give you some real-life examples that I've seen here at New Hope over the last couple of weeks. These are all very current. My hope is to prime the pump so, when you get the take-home sheet... You'll be able to think through, so what is God doing? Calling me to do right now? What adventure has he got for me? That I need to step into. So here's some real-life examples. These are people that... I'm not going to use many names because I don't have permission. But they're ones that inspire me to keep trusting God and moving forward. First is a very close friend that battles severe anxiety.

And over the last couple of weeks, there was an issue that came up and there was a family member that needed him out of state. And with trembling and tears. And if you've dealt with anxiety, anxiety is not just a little bit of discomfort. It can be all-encompassing. You just sense that things are horrible, they're going to get worse, and you're having to fight it emotionally, and this person did. And they, through tears and trembling,

went. They encouraged a family member. And when they came back, this is what they said: 'I have seen God work even in the midst of my weakness and my struggle.

And I've seen how he was able to use me to help somebody else. Did God eliminate the anxiety? Still a battle. But not one that was lost.' Sarah Arnold, some of you know Sarah. She's grown up here. She's led worship with us. She just graduated from JMU. had a chance to get an internship with a campus ministry called Crew. And that sounds great, but then she's going to have to move to a new city, make all new kind of friends, find another place to live, how to navigate that, and raise her own support. And she was willing to face that. An adventure to say the least.

And she's starting now, and I watch her move forward in that, and it is really inspiring. There's a group here of guys we call the Cancer Cowboys, a group of men that... have battled or are still battling cancer. Some have been healed. They're cancer-free now. Others have gone through all that kind of stuff, and it's not worked as well. And I watch them get together, and I hear them tell their stories. With each other. They're willing to. To enter in someone else's life even while theirs is they're struggling with it, but they're willing to step into it and offer hope and healing and help in any way they can.

It's pretty remarkable because when you're struggling, it's a lot easier to hide and to avoid. We've got several people in our church beyond this group that are dealing with cancer right now. Going through treatment. I watch him do it. And they carry. They're carrying grace with them. There's no guarantee how it's going to play out, but they just know, I'm walking with it, walking with Jesus through it. college student. Heading back to school in the fall. Having a church. Choosing between a more lucrative career or one that... much less lucrative, but one that... really does fit. Their skills, their heart, their passion, their interest. A way to make a difference?

But the battle is, aren't you supposed to take the job that gives you the most money? Doesn't that make life a lot more comfortable? Are you willing to take a chance? And trust that God's going to use your abilities and talents and all that to make a difference. And I'll trust him to take care of me. I've got a friend that's dealing with an issue at work. If they stand up for something they see that it doesn't seem right, it could risk their reputation, could risk their job. But stepping up for what is just and right. Without any guarantee of whether they'll keep the job or not.

Is the adventure God's put them on. I've got a high school friend that I was talking to. She's running with a crowd that have tended to gossip and spread rumors about her because she's been very successful in ways that others haven't. And they're kind of petty things they're doing. And it's really, it's... You know what it's like when you're in a gossip fest and when there's rumors about you. And talking with her, just... She's struggled with, do I quit? Do I retaliate? But I know I... Neither one of those is what God's called me to. So how do I embrace this adventure? How do I love those? that are not treating me well.

How can I represent him? in this environment that I really don't like and she's making some good choices. A young adult. admitting to having a habit. that's been ruling his life, but not wanting to even deal with it. Just, I don't want to, I don't want to, I don't want to pray about it. I don't want to think about it. but knowing I've got to. And looking at it and saying, I wonder what this habit is doing for me. What am I avoiding? What am I

using this to avoid in my life? What place does it have? And then being willing to pray about it, surrender it to God, believing God wants him to quit and doing it.

It's not easy, is it? In the last example, I've got some friends in a church, a church in South Carolina that just got... imploded and exploded. There were some issues taken by leaders that shouldn't have been done. There were some ways people weren't protected. And so they're all kind of lawsuits. What do you do? Well, you just bail. They could. But they've realized that even though there were things wrong that have happened and there's going to be justice that's going to have to play out, they still have friends there. They still have people there they care about, people that are hurting and struggling and people that are... Grieving.

And they've decided we're going to stay here. And we're going to do everything we can to try to bring hope, try to bring healing. You know, we want justice done, but we also want people to. Not be part of the wreckage. This adventure God calls us on, we usually think of adventures as, I'm going to go down to... You know, King's Dominion or someplace, you know, get on the roller coaster. That's an adventure. That's nothing like following Jesus. Because in the real world where you and I are. He wants us to grow in our faith, and he wants to show something good and real that would draw people to him.

This is what we get to do. Let's do it. Let's pray. God, you know us really well, and you know that, well, it's easy for us to look back at the Israelites and say they were... They let fear rule their lives. We are not any different. We can avoid things that are hard. We can make all kind of excuses, but you've called us to live this life trusting you. and following you without... without fear and without... focusing so much on what we're giving up, but more on what we're gaining by staying close to you and following with free hearts. Help us to. determine today, those of us that know you, that we're going to follow you full bore. And for anyone here that doesn't yet know you, I hope that they'll get a picture here. You've called us to this adventure life. That is really good, that is... It's nothing like a boring everyday life. It's one where you are there. You meet every one of our needs. And you will use our lives to show others the amazing and surpassing value of following Jesus Christ. In his name. Amen.