

Next Steps

by Chris Famisaran

Man feels like it's been forever since I've been up here. Thank you, Bill for preaching when I was gone a couple weeks ago. And then also how'd you like my father in law, Pastor Bob. Awesome. So being that he's retired, maybe around a little bit more often here and there. So well, I'm definitely gonna ask him to come back. Alright, let's begin. Father in heaven. Lord, we thank you again for another day of life Lord, It is Sabbath is a time of rest and refreshment. And also Lord, a time where we can gather together as a community of brothers and sisters. And as we open the word, Lord, speak to us in our hearts. And we ask that Lord will impart on us what you want us to learn. But not only that, Lord, we will practice it and share it with others in Jesus' name. Amen.

So, you know, in lieu of today, well, it's graduation Sabbath. I wanted to share a few thoughts that not only are applicable to our recent graduates, but just in general for life. I think there's one thing that is true is that life is constantly about being flexible and adapting. Many years ago, I don't think I told this story. But the first time, the first year that I decided that I was going to go full time into ministry, I think it was actually a junior by that point. I was in sitting in my I think I was the intro to ministry class with Dave Thomas, not the founder of Wendy's. But the dean, I think he was from South Africa, a really cool guy. But he made this comment, and it wasn't even I think this is maybe even before class, but he said, essentially, life, life is a never ending run. I just remembered... life can be a never ending run of added responsibilities.

You know, when you're first born, there's not much you have to worry about other than eating and sleeping. Amen. That sounds like a great life. But as you get older, you start to, you know, crawl and walk, you get to be mobile. And then you get older, maybe as you get older, your mom and dad impress upon you, hey, let's take some responsibility. Maybe you start to learn how to take the trash out. or learn how to do the dishes, maybe there's gonna be a few broken dishes along the way. By the time maybe you get to be a teenager, if you got a lawnmower in the garage, maybe you'll be taking on the responsibility of maintaining the yard, whatever, okay. And then you graduate from high school, maybe you'll go and get a job. Or maybe you'll want to go to college, and maybe colleges across the state or in a different state. And all of a sudden you realize, Oh, wait, I've got to pay rent, dorm fees, if you're living on campus. Maybe if you're off campus, you have to pay for the gas and water. All of a sudden these things start to add up. Maybe eventually, when you graduate or you have enough money for a down payment, you buy a house, but you realize, you know, let's say a house, let's stay here in Southern California. Let's just make up a number 600,000. Okay. And somewhere in Southern California, the house is not going to cost \$600,000 unless you pay cash, you get a 30 year mortgage, you're going to be paying interest. They don't you know, they don't tell you when you're a kid, you're also gonna have to pay property taxes for the rest of your life. Maybe you also live in an HOA,

all of these things require money, responsibility, and life gets more complicated and even more complicated at times. Life is about being flexible, growing, adapting, and handling maturing all of these different things.

So what are some steps that we can take as either new graduates or just in general and life? You know, sometimes when it seems like you have all of this pressure, it's easy to become scared and to be fearful. All right, maybe even while you're going to school and you're trying to juggle trying to be able to just pay for school trying to stay in school, because money is tight. And yet at the same time, too, you're studying for your chemistry test. You're studying for your music final. You're studying for your English paper from a teacher that just you think is unreasonable. Can I get an amen?

All right. And all of this can sometimes cause us to be fearful and scared. The truth of the matter is you got to confront your fears. Isaiah 41:10. Okay, let's go to Isaiah 41:10. Just as a reminder, we're not going to make it easy for you. When it comes to Scripture, we want you to be able to bring your Bibles and read, okay, get the habit and practice of opening your Bibles. If you don't have a Bible with you. Bring out your phone or your tablet. Look it up Isaiah 41:10.

All right, are we all there? I still hear a few pages flipping give another second. All right, Isaiah 41:10 says, so do not fear for I am with you. Do not be dismayed. For I am your God, I will strengthen you and help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand, what a beautiful promise, amen. For I am with you. Do not be dismayed. Now, that doesn't mean though, that I can just sit down and just wait for God to complete everything. For me, faith requires that we move with action. And sometimes, that means you may have to get a little uncomfortable trying something new that you've never tried before. In fact, even for one of our small group questions, you know, the group icebreaker I inserted is, what's something that you have done for the first time in the last three months? Okay. Life is about again, being flexible and adapting and trying new things. Sometimes that can be a little scared. Maybe you want to try to learn how to jump off a diving board. Okay. You name it. But the good thing is the promise here and Isaiah is that we don't have to be fearful. And do not be dismayed. The Lord is a strength, and also is there to help us. So confront your fears.

In fact, there's a psychologist Edward Welch, he talks about fear where sometimes even the fear of the event is often worse than the event itself. He says he came up with two examples. First one where a skier who's in search of a thrill pushes off drops 40 feet to the steep powdered slope below. He loses his balance on impact and begins to crean out of control. either to a stand of trees, or a field the boulders and whenever he hits, the impact will kill him, but he is surprisingly objective about it. He wonders if the crash will hurt, and he wonders about life after death. He also asks about the bill on his desk that perhaps maybe remains unpaid. And he he muses about all of this without any alarm. Somehow he avoids the trees, the rocks, and walks away unscathed. A 12 year old girl who was always scared of the water never learned to swim as beckoned by friends to cool off in a relatively shallow area of a bay. So she reluctantly she grabs a boogie board, and she ventures out and all as well until she loses her

grip on the boogie board. And she slips and she starts to fall to actually not fall, she drifts down to the water's bottom. And as she sinks beneath, she experiences a surprising calm. She's facing her worst fear, drowning, and yet she seems peaceful. When she looks up, she notices that there are two white pillars above her. They're the legs of her friend who doesn't even know that she's drowning. And the drowning girl she, with her hand, pulls on one leg and pulls herself to the surface. And yet, the hard part is the night before, anxiety about future event is usually worse than the event itself. So facing your fears.

Another thing is to be proactive. take the initiative. Don't wait. If there's a test that you've had been studying for, don't wait until the last second. Don't be a procrastinator. Study early and that way you don't have to worry about it. Even Proverbs 27 verses 23 and 24 It says, Be sure you know the condition of your flock, give careful attention to your herds for riches do not endure forever. And a crown is not secure. For all generations, we have to be proactive about things we have to think. And we have to know. And not wonder. So studying, reading, learning all of these things that you've been doing, you need to continue as well. And, and don't stop. Sometimes when we stop learning and our brain stops being challenged. We sometimes can slip into a pattern of... it doesn't matter. But let me let me tell you this. Let me ask you this. Those of you who are a little older, okay. How different is life even from 20 years ago? Let's go even further 40 years ago. Okay. You know, kids, when I was six or seven, I didn't have a tablet. You know what I had? I had Crayola crayons, the 64 color pack. Some of you will know what I'm talking about. Right? We didn't have video? Well, we did have video games. I take that back. I did have an NES. And Nintendo Entertainment System. The original, still legit. I remember playing Mario Brothers, Zelda, excite bike, all of these games would be considered. at best. Any kid today would say meh. Right? But yet, we've come so far, even I think even in the last 10 years, right? technology has improved so fast. And we're forced to grow and to adapt. Otherwise, it feels like we could get left behind. In life, whatever it is your job. Always have an option always have always have the thought of how can I learn? How can I grow so that I can be ready? So life again, is a learning process.

Now in life, do you know the perfect person that gets everything right every time? I don't, okay, we all at one point, are going to make a mistake. And yet, the thing is, we don't want to dwell on it, learn from it. Sure. Okay. realize, hey, that's not the way to do that. Let's try something new. Don't dwell on our failures, learn from them, don't dwell on the past. Now Philippians, three, verses 12 through 14, let's go to Philippians three, verses 12 through 14.

It says not that I have already obtained all this or have arrived, already arrived at my goal. But I press on, to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I don't consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. To understand the context of this passage, Paul, is writing from jail. Now, if you're in jail, is that a place where you would normally find people with joy? Generally not right? One of the one of the themes about Philippians is this aspect of

joy of have this confidence in the Lord, despite the circumstances around us. You know, being in jail doesn't sound very pleasing, or comfortable. But yet, Paul, even in the first chapter, you know, he says, Look, if even if I'm in here, and I'm able to be able to speak the gospel, and somebody hears and learns and accept it, amen. But he's experienced all of this hardship. And Paul, if especially if you read Acts, you know that his life... wasn't always the nicest guy. He literally tried to snuff out Christianity. And we see this journey of a guy who is trying to fight against God, all of a sudden, becomes converted, and his life is filled with joy, but there's many other hardships and along the way. Sometimes his attitude gets him in trouble. And sometimes he could be a consternation. And sometimes, probably it would be easy to admit that, you know, he realizes he is not a perfect person. But he learned from his mistakes. And the next thing that we're going to talk about is Paul, the beautiful thing about Paul's writings is he always look towards the future having vision.

And in life, you need to have vision and recognize that life is a marathon, you have to think long term. You know, those of you who run know that there's different types of races, you know, there's the 5k, which is roughly about just over three miles, there's a 10k, which is six miles, if you have a half marathon, which is 13 miles, and finally, a marathon which is 26.2 miles, anybody ever done a marathon? Not yet. Okay. I hope one day to do a marathon. I've walked a half marathon more than 13 miles, but I have not run it. And to me, that just seems like a lot of work right now. But it takes time you have to train for it, you have to prepare for it. You can't just all of a sudden, you know, go and run a marathon unless you're like a super specimen. And along the way, you may in your journey, you're going to have your challenges, especially if it's your first time. You know, if you don't know how to properly nutrition for a marathon, if you're not eating and drinking enough water or fluids or in taking enough food to burn calories, what's going to happen? You're going to bunk and you're going to feel like you're going to want to pass out you're going to want to throw up and you may have to end your race.

Now in Hebrews 12, verses one through three, Hebrews 12:1-3 says Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition for sinners so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. The author of Hebrews is talking about this race that we're all to be sorry, the perseverance of a race that we're running. There's a goal line in every race, right, you don't just run forever, there's a goal that we want to cross.

And in life, it's not just a simple, quick three mile run. It's a long term thing. Having the ability as well, when you run a when you run a marathon, you don't just go out running as fast as you can. Because you're going to burn up all of your energy, you have to pace yourself. And you have to remember to why you're doing this. Right? If you run for any long period of time, you're gonna ask yourself, why am I doing this? Maybe for some, they just they enjoy that, that

burning sensation in their heart, right? some point though, it starts to hurt. You have obstacles in your way. And yet, when we know the endpoint and see the vision of what we're trying to do to cross that line, it's much easier to accomplish a task when you know what you're running and striving for. And in life as well. We need to know what what are we ultimately striving for? spiritually, obviously, God to be with God, amen. But we also have, God gives us the ability to have our own personal dreams, goals and desires. So what is it you're dreaming in your life? What do you want to accomplish, whether it's professionally, personally, you know, in relationships.

In the 20th century, Ernest Shackleton, worldwide renowned Explorer, put up an ad. He said, men wanted for hazardous darkness and constant danger, safe return, doubtful. honor and recognition in case of success, and it was signed by him, Sir Ernest Shackleton. Now the inquiry Of course, brought 1000s upon 1000s of requests for Hey, I want to sign up. Now Shackleton, I believe it was he went and explored Antarctica, right. But when he went to Antarctica, he didn't just go for like a couple of weeks. You know how long he was there. months, even years, stuck on this big block of ice. At one point as well, his men were facing such hardship. Now, Shackleton was able to live the tale, but it was a harrowing process. Now, somebody wrote this, let me see where it was. Shackleton knew what he wanted. He, he had dreams. And he had vision. He knew what he wanted to do was to explore and know what Antarctica was, like. In any endeavor, that you want to accomplish something great, something big, you're gonna have to learn, you'll probably make mistakes along the way. In fact, any successful businessmen will admit that they had a time in their business where they were learning what not to do. Right? most successful business people will tell you have many lessons that they learned that they definitely would not want to repeat. Now, Warren Wiersbe in response to Shackleton, he came up with this idea. So if Jesus Christ had advertised for workers, the amounts announcement probably would have read like this. Men and women wanted for a disk difficult task of helping to build my Church, you will often be misunderstood. Even by those working with you, you will face constant attack from an invisible enemy, you will not you may not see the results of your labor. Gotta say an Amen to that. And your full reward will not come till after your work is completed, it may cost you your home, your ambitions, and maybe even your life. Does that sound appealing? To be honest, it doesn't really sound that appealing. But yet, Christ also calls us to be faithful, to share that good news. And sometimes even along the way, in this journey, again, in your walk with God, sometimes it can. It can be challenging, there's going to be hardship, there's going to be heartache, you may be misunderstood. But I think that's actually truthful of life. anything good that you're trying to accomplish, especially by the naysayers, the doubters, it's easy to talk. It's hard to actually complete the task. But when you have vision, and you know why you want to do this, what you want to accomplish, anything is possible. And when you align those dreams and goals with God, wow that can be amazing.

You know, in the previous chapter of Hebrews 12, in Hebrews 11, there is a list of people, some of them we've kind of studied before, but it's Hebrews 11 is sometimes referred to as the Hall of Faith. One of the individuals listed in Hebrews 11 is that of Abraham, those of you who know Abraham, and his story, God literally calls him to go out, cannot see God cannot shake God's hand, but he hears a voice calling him to go out. So he takes his wife and they leave his home country where he had known his hometown. If you ever had to leave your hometown, leave the comfort of where you grew up. At one point I said, Amen. When I went when I went away for college, it was actually good because it was something new. I went to Walla Walla, Washington, definitely not like Southern California. But it got me out of my comfort zone. And it was awesome. Maybe you've had to leave a country, maybe you've had to leave a different part of the state. And yet, much like Abraham used he didn't know where he was going. But he could not deny God's call. Now as you study Abraham, was Abraham a perfect man? No, he had a share of slip ups. Let's just say Abraham was incredibly faithful at times. Yeah, he was also human. He made a few mistakes along the way. But you look at the overall life of his of what Abraham accomplished, in spite of his mistakes, he was a faithful man.

You also could think of Moses, Moses, his incredible story of how his life was being threatened when he was born, and finally was saved by Pharaoh's daughter when he was in a basket. Now, as those of you who know his story he grew up. And unfortunately, an incident happens where he murders a man. And he flees for many years, all the while he's gone, he's learning how to take care of sheep, which would translate to taking care of who, the people of Israel. Now, one day, God calls Moses to go back to Egypt. And Moses is not having that he didn't want to do that. He didn't want to go back home. He didn't know what would happen to him because he'd been on the run. And what if the Gods people didn't accept him? Because he grown up in the palace, he was a learned man. He didn't grow up. Well, I mean, he Okay, take that back. He did grow up amongst for time with his people. But yet, for the most part, they considered him an Egyptian. And yet God was faithful. He said, No, he had a solution and answer to every concern that Moses had. And as, as he went back, there was some struggles. But yet, God provided a way out. And at times, however, as he was leading the people of Israel, sometimes he lost his temper. Sometimes he tried to do everything and wouldn't delegate. And but yeah, when you look at his life, you could see he was a faithful man.

Finally, David, faithful as well. Not a perfect guy. What I take from these three individuals is that in spite of their flaws, the beautiful thing is that God's still used them. Amen. So that gives me hope. I'm not a David, I'm not a Moses. But yet, God can use anybody.

And finally, the last thing that I want to share, especially if you're younger. So back in the day, when I was a kid, everyone older than me, I, anyone basically, 40 and above would tell me, do not take life for granted. It's gonna fly by so quick, right? You ever hear that growing up? Oh, now that I'm 40 and over the hill, I am in denial still. I see what they were talking about. In fact, a couple of weeks ago, when Bill preached, I was away. a dear friend of mine had asked me to officiate his wedding. And it was so awesome to be able to just sit down with his family to catch

up, they were able to meet Leisa. And we were able to hang out with a couple other friends. It was the first time in a long time, basically, since last year, that we were able to just kind of get away and be able to experience hanging out with other people we hadn't seen in so long. And that weekend, and on the way back, I was reflecting, man, what a great, awesome experience. And then I started thinking about, you know, over the last 15-16 years that I've been working as a pastor, I mean, a pastor can be time consuming. And I had asked myself, have I.... Where am I at in my bucket list of experiences that I wrote down? When I was 16. I have to admit, I haven't completed most of them. Now, whether I complete them or not, some of them when you're 16. You know, you think you're so idealistic. Probably not realistic. What I took away from that car ride back as I was thinking about it was that what am I doing to create experiences? You know, my father in law mentioned last week, there's only one thing or two things really one thing that you can take to heaven. What's that? your friends and your family? Right, and your integrity. The house that you have and the car that you have, while those are nice things? Are they going to last forever? No. I love my Honda Pilot, but it's not gonna last forever. Lord, I hope and pray it lasts at least another year. Whatever car I get next, you know, it's a night it's gonna be a car, but experiences, being able to officiate my best friend's wedding, and the conversations that we had around the table, those I can cherish and look back. And, and be able to think of good times and, and especially as you get older, and you perhaps you'll choose to have children. Have those experiences with your family. Live as you want your kids to live. Be an example to the kids as you would want them to grow up and enjoy the ride. Enjoy the ride.

So, real quickly. let's just review. Number one. confront your fears. Don't be afraid. Be proactive. And don't dwell on your mistakes, learn from them. And remember that life is a marathon. And finally, work hard. create experiences or memories create memories, as well. Memories last lifetime. It is my hope and prayer as well to never stop learning and growing especially when it comes to relationship with God. I've read the Bible many times. But even today, even in Bible studies, I see things that I had never realized before or I perhaps had even forgotten. You have a whole lifetime to learn and discover who God is. take that time to be able to get to know and understand not only a God, but a loving gracious God. Father in heaven Lord, we thank you again for this opportunity to gather together. So may you bless us leading guide us. Help us in all that we do to be faithful people for you. In Jesus name, amen.