

Introduction:

1. Thesis:

God specializes in using ordinary people to do extraordinary things!

2. Restatement:

Our “limitations” are not prohibitors to God using our lives, but the very platform on which He chooses to display His grace.

3. Condition:

But something has to happen to ordinary people if God is going to use them to do extraordinary things. In fact, God’s primary agenda for each of our lives centers around this one simple, but profound thing happening in each of our lives.

This one thing is not dependent on...

- Our intelligence
- Our education
- Our giftedness
- Our background
- Our wealth
- Our personality

- This **one thing** is available to every believer of every age without partiality.
- This **one thing** is what separates religious people from those who revolutionize the world.
- This **one thing** can transform the most mundane and ordinary of our world into those who shape and make history.
- This **one thing** is what God commends and values most in His people.
- This **one thing** is what brings pleasure to the heart of God 100% of the time.
- This **one thing** is always rewarded by God.
- This **one thing** is the basis upon which God evaluates your life at any given moment, in any given circumstance, in any given situation.
- This **one thing** is what God is “seeking and developing” to grow in your life above all else.

What is this one thing?

The Answer: **FAITH!**

Hebrews 10:32-39 (NIV)

*³² Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering. ³³ Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. ³⁴ You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. ³⁵ So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. ³⁶ You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised. ³⁷ For, “In just a little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay.” ³⁸ And, “But my righteous One will live by **faith**. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.” ³⁹ But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have **faith** and are saved.*

Hebrews 11:1-8 (NIV)

¹ Now **faith** is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. ² This is what the ancients were commended for. ³ By **faith** we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. ⁴ By **faith** Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By **faith** he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by **faith** Abel still speaks, even though he is dead. ⁵ By **faith** Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶ And without **faith** it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. ⁷ By **faith** Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his **faith** he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with **faith**. ⁸ By **faith** Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

Seven tools to grow your faith:

1. **SCRIPTURE** - Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.
2. **FINANCES** - Give our first and best to God.
3. **PEOPLE** - More is caught than taught.
4. **3 x 5 CARDS** - The power of sanctified dreaming.
5. **JOURNALS** - Track God's workings in your life.
6. **PRAYER** - Ask God for a clear call in your life.
7. **DO IT** - Where there is no risk there is no faith.

Application:

- Persevere! Endure! Don't give up!
- Step out! Take a risk!
- Refuse to tolerate the status quo!
- Step in to His promises, rooted in His character!

Why?

- Because we are all just ordinary people whom God wants to use to do extraordinary things in our sphere of influence.
- You are the hope of the world! You are God's Church! There is NO limit to what God can and will do if you only... believe!

What's your next step of faith?

1. Where did God speak to you?
2. What dreams are on your heart?
3. Which of the seven tools do you need to get in your spiritual toolbox?
4. Who will go on this journey with you?

Introduction: Becoming the Samaritan

*⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in **Jerusalem**, and in all **Judea** and **Samaria**, and to the **ends of the earth**.*

Acts 1:8 (NIV)

“You don’t get to choose where you start. You start right where you are.”

There are two primary points that undergird racial indifference

Lack of understanding the **HISTORICAL** and **CONTEMPORARY** facts of America

- It’s not our **fault**, but it is our **problem**.

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” ²⁷ He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’[c]; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” ²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” ²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’” ³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Luke 10:25-37 (NIV)

What does it mean to become the Samaritan?

Answer: Becoming the Samaritan means coming close enough to realize what can't be understood from a distance.

- God is calling you and me to move beyond making judgements from a **DISTANCE** and to come into knowledge through **PROXIMITY**.
- God is calling us to come close enough to recognize in **OTHERS** what we recognize and know to be true about **OURSELVES**.
- God is calling us to move beyond our normal **EXCUSES**.

If we are to be who God wants us to be, we must take the risk of personal identification and make the sacrifice of privilege.

- It is the willingness to suffer discomfort on behalf of somebody else.
- Jesus calls us is to a calculus where our actions are not based on what we get out of it, it's what we give to it. It's not how it benefits us, it's how we benefit it.

Taking it another step

- The Samaritan makes provision for the man's long-term care.
- Jesus is calling you and me to be committed to the long-term; to be committed to lasting change; to want things not just to be well today.
- It is investing in long-term solutions

Jesus' challenge:

- He's challenging you to become the Samaritan.
- He's challenging you to enter into proximity.
- He's challenging you to take a risk.
- He's challenging you to inconvenience yourself.
- He's challenging you to be concerned about the long-term.

Jesus is not just saying, "I want you to become the Samaritan," but really Jesus is saying that He wants us to become Him.

Discussion Questions

1. Bishop Alexander also said that, as Americans, we are sometimes okay being witnesses for Christ “to the remotest [parts] of the earth (Acts 1:8), but are less comfortable being witnesses with those near to us. Do you agree? If so, why is this?
2. Why was it important for the Samaritan to get close to the man?
3. Are there any “half dead” people you tend to avoid?
4. How can you intentionally get close to them, in order to be a witness for Christ?
5. Don’t overlook the obvious. Until we accept the invitation of eternal life with Jesus Christ and receive Him into our hearts, we are all “half dead”—alive on earth, but on our way to eternal damnation. Only with Christ do we receive the promise of eternal life, and only with Christ do we have someone who loves us enough to get close to those who are unclean with sin.

Considering this, pray for opportunities to get close to those who are “half dead.” Also, pray to be like Christ, who saw no divisive racial lines between Himself and the woman at the well.

Introduction:

“God, something about the way I’m living my life isn’t working.”

- The only way you can produce fruit that **LASTS** is if He is producing supernatural fruit **IN** you.
- Getting **BUSY** for God is not the goal.
- My relationship with Christ has to be the **NUMBER ONE** **PRIORITY**, if I’m going to bear much fruit.

What is fruit?

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control;

Galatians 5:22-23a (NASB)

- Fruit **GLORIFIES** God.
- Fruit is the thing that the tree was **DESIGNED** to produce.
- Reminder: **THE GOAL** for your life is fruit... so people see Christ in you.
- The disciples had **POWER**, **BOLDNESS**, and **WISDOM**.
- God wants to produce in you what you **DON'T HAVE** in yourself.
- The way it happens is **ABIDING**.

The Process:

No Fruit → Fruit → More Fruit → Much Fruit

The Goal:

- Glorify God. It all begins with your **RELATIONSHIP** with Him.

¹ I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

John 15:1-2 (NASB)

Discipline:

- God will lovingly bring **DISCIPLINE** into your life so you can begin to bear fruit.
- When there is no fruit, some are sick and some are even dying prematurely.

See 1 Corinthians 11

³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

John 15:3-5 (NASB)

- Pruning is God moving into your life and cutting away superficial priorities and anything you're **TRUSTING** in other than Him, that is decreasing the level of relationship and abiding in your heart and life.
- Discipline has to do with God dealing with the **SIN** in your life.
- Pruning has to do with God dealing with the **SELF** in your life.
- When God wants to produce more fruit, He will prune those He **LOVES**.

An “If – then” proposition:

If...

...your kids don't abide with you and they don't catch your **VALUES**...

...you don't have **TIME** to talk with your heavenly Father, building a relationship with Him...

...you don't have **TIME** to methodically, unhurriedly read through the scriptures, and let Him speak to you...

...you're married and you don't have **TIME** to talk about issues of the heart...

...then...

A lot of what you're doing is **not** the will of God, because the primary goal is to produce fruit.... but **apart** from Him, we can do nothing.

Does God's Word abide in you?

- It can't abide in you if you don't **HEAR** it, unless you **READ** it, **STUDY** it, **THINK ABOUT** it, and **PONDER** it.
- When I'm most tired, I shift from abiding to, "I'm going to make it happen – Oh God, I want **You** to help **me**...."
- God says: "I want **you** to abide in **Me**, and **then** I will show you...."

Why don't we hear God's voice when we get over committed?

- We're not **ABIDING**. When you're abiding, He will say, "This is the way..."
- God will prune about deep issues of the heart:
- Identity issues, priorities, significance, security.

What does it mean to abide?

- You must **COOPERATE**. Ask: Am I in a season of discipline?
 - The “Main Thing” is not what we do **FOR** Him.
 - The “Main Thing” is your **HEART** and your relationship with Jesus.
- How many of us honestly feel like Jesus is our friend?
God asks: “Could you refocus? I want a relationship with you.”
 - Secretly, we believe God is **MAD** at us.
 - The wrath of God was placed on **CHRIST** at the cross.
- A lot of our Christian energy is not about **HONORING** God, it's about helping us feel better about **OURSELVES**.
 - So Jesus said, “Guys, here's what I want... abide.”
 - *Be still and know that I am God.* Psalm 46:10 (NASB)

Discussion Questions

1. How do I do this? First things first. (For me, “No Bible – no breakfast.”)
2. Ask God: What do I need to abide?
3. Do I really believe that abiding in Christ is the most important thing I will ever do in any given 24 hours?
4. How do I live out that relationship every moment of the day?

⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. ⁹ Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

John 15:7-11 (NASB)