

Devotions for the Week of January 14, 2018

LARGE-PRINT

North East United Methodist Church

By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, January 14, 2018

**Read I Chronicles 28:20; Deuteronomy 31:6-8;
Psalm 27:1.**

As I traveled this past weekend to Ocean City, to the Peninsula-Delaware Youth Rally with the youth from North East UMC, and listened to the speakers and bands, I kept hearing the word “*Courage.*”

Over the past year I have found myself fighting fear. It has been a year of immense change and there is no end in sight as I enter a new year that will include my boys graduating high school and college, my oldest getting married, and Deb and I preparing for a new season of ministry at North East UMC. This was the first Youth Rally in over a decade that one of my boys was not with me. Not only am I scared of the changes with my family, my boys growing up, what the future holds, but I am constantly fighting fear when it comes to my writing. What if I don’t succeed? What if I can’t publish...no one wants to read what I write?

As one of the bands stated, “*What God calls you to is always on the other side of fear...Fear destroys more dreams than failure ever does.*” I know this to be true. Whenever I have experienced God in my life, experienced Him closely and intimately, I had to step through my fear, risk, trust, and step out of my comfort zone.

God says, “*Do not be afraid...Take Courage.*” I know going forward, into another year of great change, that I have

to take my sights off all that is around me, all that I worry about and am afraid at times to face, and look up. As one group sang, *“I found the courage when I left love there in the stars.”* Another singer lifted up the words, *“Everything I’ve been fighting against I’m going to lift it up...I won’t be afraid...I’ll call on your name and I’ll walk out in faith...I want to be fearless.”*

What are you afraid of? What about the future scares you? Have you shared your fears with God? Are you looking up and finding strength in the One who walks with you through the storms? Share with God tonight your fears and worries.

Monday, January 15, 2018

Read Joshua 1: 1-9.

The book of Joshua begins with Moses’ death and Joshua being named the newly appointed leader of God’s people. God tells Joshua to lead the people into the Promised Land, a land which others saw as filled with “giants” and were afraid to attack. God tells Joshua to be *“strong and courageous”* and reminds him that God *“will not leave you or forsake you.”*

Ambrose Redmoon said, *“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear.”* Edward Rickenbacker put it this way, *“Courage is doing what you’re afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you’re scared.”* I love John Wayne’s take on it, *“Courage is being scared to death...and saddling up anyway.”* But the best is Dorothy Bernard, *“Courage is fear that has said its prayers.”*

At times it is hard to be *“strong and courageous,”* especially in the midst of life with its many stresses, difficulties,

responsibilities. I often find myself overwhelmed thinking about the future, the “*to-do list*,” the family I’m responsible for, whether or not I’m living as the man of God I was created to be. Often, I want to give up, wish I could run away, do something else, go back to when my children were young, to when I had less responsibility, to when my mind perceives things as being simpler. I am often overwhelmed with the responsibility of being the “*man of the house*” and the “*provider*” for my family, let alone the “*pastor*” of a “*flock*” of hundreds.

Michael Catt, executive producer of the movie, “*Courageous*,” writes, “*We each have a choice: we can be average or exceptional. We can play at church, or we can be radical for Christ. We can base our lives on the world’s standards of success, or we can dig in the Bible and ask God to show us where He wants us to live and who He wants us to be.*”

I can allow the fear to overwhelm me...the thoughts of tomorrow to bury me...the stresses of today to weigh me down...I can escape from the responsibility of today by going to the woods and sitting in a tree stand, turning on the television and watching a movie, surfing the internet or immersing myself in my chores...anything to escape the worry and fear. I can quit...at anytime I can quit.

But God says, “*Be strong and courageous*”...“*I will not leave you or forsake you.*”

There are many times I let the fear get to me and I disappear before the television or go to sleep early to drown the thoughts running through my head, but I refuse to not get back up. I will not quit. As scared as I am at times, thinking of the responsibility before me...thinking of my children...my family...my finances...the future...I am only certain of one thing...I will not quit. I want to leave a legacy and serve the God

who has given me everything. I want to make a difference for Him because He has made such a difference in my life. I want to serve my God-given purpose...and that truth is more important than my fear. I “*choose*” to be “*exceptional*.”

Where is fear holding you back? What is God calling you to be “*courageous*”...to get back up and live into the role you were created to fulfill, for the glory of God? How is God calling you to be “*exceptional*,” not “*average*?” Be courageous, remembering that God has promised to “*not leave you or forsake you*.” Take time in prayer tonight and ask God for strength, for courage.

Tuesday, January 16, 2018

Read Joshua 7.

The city of Jericho had been burned...Israel had won a decisive victory. God commanded that no one should take and keep the precious metals and ores of Jericho, but instead place them in the treasury of the Lord’s house. Unfortunately, one man, Achan, “*took some of what was set apart, and the Lord’s anger burned against the Israelites*.”

God judged the nation based on the sins of just one individual. He removed His hand of blessing because Achan acted in disobedience. There was sin in the camp. One failing grade is enough to bring down a GPA; one act of infidelity can break apart a family; one single sin of omission or commission can affect your life and the life of your family for generations.

Achan confessed his sin but Scripture does not state he repented of it. Are we allowing hidden sin in our lives? Do we really think it will not affect our families? Have we not only confessed our sin but repented? Turned around? Reprioritized?

Renewed our focus on God and family? Taken the focus off our self and the things of the world?

Remember yesterday's devotion. God calls us to be "*strong and courageous,*" and promises to never "*leave you or forsake you.*" God will give you the courage to value and prioritize what really matters, to get rid of things in your home and life that are weakening your spiritual lives, your family, your calling as a man or woman of God. Talk to Him. Ask Him for help.

Wednesday, January 17, 2018

Read Joshua 23.

Read Joshua's farewell address to the Israelites. Joshua's life and leadership left a powerful legacy and in these last words he reminds the people of God's faithfulness and warns the people of God's response to their unfaithfulness. Joshua tells the people to learn from those who have gone before them...to remember all God has done and commanded...to not forget.

Pray now for courage to boldly leave a legacy of faith for your family. Many people and their direction and impact in life will be influenced by your life. And that influence can be positive or negative. Consider the legacy you are leaving those around you...consider the legacy your life is already leaving by the things you say and do and the way you represent God in word and deed. Ask God to help you identify those things you are doing well and those areas in which you need to improve—for your sake and for the sake of future generations.

It's scary to think...frightening to think...that our lives can have such an impact on generations to come. It is scary. It is an incredible responsibility and doing it with success will take courage and faith.

Thursday, January 18, 2018

Read Joshua 24: 1-15.

“But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord,” Joshua tells the people. Michael Catt writes, *“There are no do-overs in this. You only get one chance to cross the Jordan, conquer Jericho, take the land, and be a godly man. Choose this day whom you will serve. That was the cry of Joshua’s heart in his last sermon. What will your farewell speech sound like? Will it be, ‘I’m sorry I wasn’t...I didn’t...I should have...I wish I had...’ Or will you be able to say, ‘I bowed my knees to God and surrendered to Him years ago. I’ve never regretted that decision. I led my family to serve God.’ By the way, you’ve been writing your farewell speech with every day of your life. Will you edit it today because its not the kind of speech you want to leave? Or can you say, ‘As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord’?”*

Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:7, *“For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.”* As Catt writes, *“Throughout the history of His people, God has proven Himself sufficient. He never fails. He’s there and He is able...the opportunity to make a difference is immeasurable. It all begins with you and your house. Samuel Rutherford said, ‘After I’ve given Him all I am, I must still say, ‘Lord Jesus, come and conquer me!’””*

Make the choice today. *“As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”* Allow Jesus to conquer you...to hold your life...to dispel the fear and work through you to help you live out

your purpose, leaving a legacy for generations to come. Ask God to help you write, each day, the next section of your farewell speech.

Friday, January 19, 2018

**Read I Corinthians 16:13; Isaiah 41:10-13;
Proverbs 3:5-6.**

Remember fear is a reaction, while courage is a decision. You and I must decide to be courageous, to lean on God for the strength to continue into the future, fulfilling the purpose God has for each of us. God has great things for us to accomplish.

Not only does this truth apply to you and I, but it applies to the church as a whole. North East UMC must push through its fear to experience God, His story in its life. We cannot be afraid to change, to create new ministries, to step out in faith, to stretch ourselves outside our comfort zones. We must have courage and believe in God's Word. Believe that if God says, "*Take Courage...I will not leave nor forsake you,*" that God will keep His Word. We will face nothing alone.

Pray for North East UMC, for our church, that God will lay it on the hearts of leadership and the congregation where He wants our church to step out in faith, where He wants our church to go next. Pray that God will give us the courage to listen, to risk, to change, to grow, and to follow Him into an unknown future.

Saturday, January 20, 2018

Take time with God today! Curl up in His lap and share your heart. And remember, invite someone to church tomorrow.

<p><i>To Contact or Set An Appointment With Pastor Drew...</i> Cell Phone: 302-841-2569 Email: drewmchristian@icloud.net</p>
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