

Brentview Baptist Church

'Living Life Worth Imitating'

Stories of Impact



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Last week we kicked off our fall by talking about how I believe God is calling us as a church to what we have entitled 'A Year of Impact. That we are called as individuals and as a church to become involved in something bigger, something that will have an impact on our own families, on many we come in contact with and also people across the world. For if we believe with all our heart that once someone comes in contact with Jesus Christ it changes their life. Then it only make sense that as we let Him live His life in and through us that there should be a ripple affect that affects those around us. I believe that God wants us to be able to look back at the end of this year and see that we have been used by God to make a life changing impact in many people's lives. Like the images we saw last week of the foot prints the astronauts left on the moon, we will see that we have left an indelible imprint in and on the places where we have walked.

Last week we ended with this quote 'The reality is that it doesn't take millions of admirers to start a movement that can change a world, what is needed is a few people who have personally been transformed and committed to His cause and to put their lives into his service'. It is so easy to live our lives as admirers of Jesus, this year as transformed people, my goal and hopefully yours, is to put my life (our lives) into His service and watch world changes happen around us.

When I try to think of someone who has moved from being an admirer of God to someone who has made a large impact on those around him, my mind went to a man named Joshua, who is found in the Old Testament. There is the great story that happened within days of Joshua becoming Israel's leader when he felt led by God to lead the Israelites across the Jordon River into the Promised Land. Now picture this, it is early spring, the river is flooded, it is 100 yards across the river and there are tree branches floating by at an amazing speed. Right beside the stream, stand 4 priests with the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders about to step into the stream. You see, Joshua had been speaking to God, and God had said as soon as the priest place their feet into the Jordon River the water will stop flowing, and just like in the time of Moses you will be able to walk across on dry land. So with close to 800,000 people watching they gingerly placed their feet into the raging river, and looking back at Joshua, watch as he nods to them. As their feet touched the water, instantly the river stopped running just as Joshua had said.

They swallowed twice and then stood in the middle of the river as the rest of the nation walked around them. Ask yourself, why did the priests trust Joshua enough to lay their lives on the line like that? And why did Joshua have enough faith to follow the words that he felt God had given him, when it meant risking the lives of the priests, the Ark of the Covenant (their most precious national treasure) and make these the first words as the new leader of his nation?

It happened because, before he could be involved in the ‘something bigger than himself’ where something beyond his ability would happen, he had to have gone on some kind of personal spiritual journey first. So, this morning let’s look at what needs to happen in our own personal lives and corporate church life, which will help us be able to step out in personal ways into things that God may call us to be involved in this year.

I. Joshua’s Journey

The first time Joshua is mentioned in the scripture is when he is in charge of the army which is fighting an attacking band of Bedouins (*Exodus 17*). The next time he is mentioned in scripture is a place some of you bible scholars may have missed, when I discovered this just a couple weeks ago I found it very exciting.

Mt. Sinai (Open to things beyond his Experience)

Moses (I am sure he looked like Charles Hesston) and the Israelite people are camped at the base of Mt. Sinai. (*Exodus 24:12*) So God calls Moses up so he can give him the 10 Commandments. Now look at (*Exodus 24:13, 14*) who went with Moses up the Mountain? Look carefully at (*Exodus 24:13, 14*) and you will see that it says ‘Wait for us until we come back to you’. While others were told not to follow Moses, Joshua must have traveled up the mountain with Moses. (*Exodus 24:15-16*) Can you imagine the experience? All of a sudden as they walked up the mountain they began to enter this thick cloud, Moses motioned for Joshua to stop following him, then on the 7th day they hear the voice of God calling Moses into the cloud. Then look at (*Exodus 24:17-18*) It sounds like, from down below, as God came near the mountain the entire mountain looked like it was on fire and for the next 40 days Joshua sat in the middle of that experience. There on the Mountain Moses received the 10 Commandments personally from God. Now flip over to (*Exodus 32:15-17*) Do you see who was still with Moses on the way down the Mountain?

Can you imagine what that walk down the mountain must have been like? I remember when we picked our son Matt up from the Airport after playing soccer in Italy with his team or our son Mark up when he came back from his Stampede Marching Band tour in Germany, Sweden and France. They took one breath and didn’t stop talking about their experience until the Jet lag struck them 2 days later. Can you imagine what it must have been like as Moses walked out of the cloud after spending 40 days on the mountain with God sitting in the middle of his glory? Joshua was the first to see Moses’ glowing face and I’ll bet he heard things that blew his mind. Now, this is important, for since Sunday school days I have always assumed that only Moses climbed Mt. Sinai to receive the 10 commandments. So when I find in scripture that Joshua was also there I need to ask a simple question, why did God have Moses take Joshua up the mountain with him? There can only be one reason, it had to be because God knew in the future that there would be a call on Joshua’s life to be involved in something bigger. So Joshua would need a larger view of God than he had for this point in his life. And so God allowed him to see the cloud, hear the voice of God coming out of the cloud, stay on the fiery mountain and then hear from the mouth of Moses (a person he trusted) things about God that would stretch what he believed about Him and what he believed God could do.

Before that could happen there was something Joshua had to be willing to do, he had to be open to things beyond his Experience. Last week I was at a meeting and heard Mark Sardachuk, who was the chair of our Brentview Ministries Growth Fund campaign when we asked folks to consider giving to the Lord concerning our building project. While I hoped that maybe we could pave the parking lot, he had more faith than I did and thought maybe 1.8 million may be raised toward the new building. Do you know that to date 4.3 million has come in? Mark would tell you that have been a life and faith changing experience as we saw what we saw God move beyond what we thought was possible. Last week one of our young boys had a diagnosis of bone cancer, on Thursday we found out that it is an infection in the bone that is treatable.

His dad's response the other night was 'That is the closest I have come to seeing a miracle'. The first step in being willing to be involved in something larger than our own ability (if it is being willing to pray for something to change in a friends life, our life, our child's life or a mission overseas starts right here) is that we need to be open to let God do things beyond our experience. We have to again believe what we say we believe that the God of the bible who stopped flooding rivers, healed lepers and changed lives like Matthew the tax collector or Paul the Jewish extremist can still do miracles today. You and I have to wrestle with the skepticism that our society holds as a primary value and somehow reach the place where we again see the possibility that God can do miracles today like we believe he did in bible days. We need to be open to let God do things beyond our experience.

Tent of Meeting (Open to go deeper with God)

The next time we see Joshua is in an interesting place (*Exodus 33:7-11*) this is one of my favorite passages. For picture this, there was this tent pitched just outside the camp they called it 'The Tent of Meeting', and when you wanted to bring some request before the Lord you went out and knelt by the tent and in prayer left your prayer request there. But there were specific times when Moses would walk out to the tent and speak to God on behalf of the people. Now notice that when Moses walked toward the tent everyone would come and stand at the entrance of their tents and watch what was happening. Look at (*Exodus 33:11*) something amazing happened. When Moses entered the tent, this huge cloud of the Lord which stood in front of the camp would move toward the tent and stop just outside of it and then the Lord would speak to the Moses face to face, as man speaks with a friend.

Now we know that it wasn't a literal face to face talk but a conversation was happening between them that were real and probably audible. Now look at the last part of the verse 'but his young aid Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent'. So what has been happening is that Joshua, who was Moses' personal aid and body guard sat outside the tent listening to the conversation and when the cloud and Moses left the tent, Joshua still hung around (placing his back against the tent flap) because we wanted to stay as close to where God was and had been as possible. Here is the second crucial thing that is important if we want to be the people who can make those crucial small points of impact or be involved in things bigger than ourselves there has to be an openness to go deeper with God.

Two important comments: Do what is necessary so you can have face time with God

A. When was the last time you felt you really have had a time with God like the one which is described here? Where you 'spoke to God face to face as a friend speaks to a friend' often what keeps this from happening is that either I have something in my life that I know God isn't pleased about and honestly I don't want to change it. But from experience I know that when you don't do business with God your relationship with Him goes south and your heart grows cold. So can I encourage you to keep going to God and doing business with him for your soul's sake?

B. Secondly, I am not open to go deeper with God because I don't believe that God talks to people today so I don't try it. I guess what I need to say about speaking to God is, try it and you may like it.

We believe that Jesus died on the cross so we could have a personal relationship with him. If we believe that, then it only makes sense that we should expect He will want to listen and speak to us for that is how relationships work. So, can I suggest that 'kind of like on your first date' start talking to him and believe that in given time it will get to be something special. Don't make face to face conversations with God more 'weird' than it really is. When I read this passage, in my mind I visualized this booming voice coming out of the tent and I need to say that, I have never heard that kind of voice (actually I am not sure I want to). But I can tell you that at times I have had dreams that felt like God is all over them or last week as I worked on the sermon, in my mind and at times out loud I talked to God about what I should say and as I did the verses got exciting, ideas came my way, I felt He was there and as I look back on that time, I guess we had a conversation.

Talking to God begins with being open, needing and wanting to have a friend to friend relationship with God. So as you walk your dog, as you read the Word, as you go through your day, be open to speak out loud to him in your mind (or others may think your crazy). Then open up your heart enough to let him plant words, ideas and verses into your mind. Then if they feel like they have God on them, begin to listen to them, for in that way we will experience more of what the New Testament talks about 'and his sheep know his voice'. That kind of openness is crucial if we want to have God lead us in the small and big things of life.

The Blessing (Open to commit)

(Deuteronomy 31:14-16, 23) Here Joshua is called to meet Moses at the Tent of Meetings, only this time he is invited inside the tent (Joshua is inside the tent he has been leaning against). And this time, not only does Moses bless him but this time he hears the voice of God from inside the flaps of the tent. God says 'let me tell you what I want you to do, I am calling you to take my people into the Promised Land and give them a homeland'. That call was to Something Bigger than he could do without God's help. That call is backed by God's promise to give him the power to get the task done. Again God never calls us to anything that he won't equip us to do. But here is step 3 that allowed Joshua to respond to God's call in his life, Joshua was open to commit to it.

Just like when we feel a call on our lives we need to be willing to be committed to what God calls us to. I find this a very personal passage because a number of years ago when I was struggling with if I should leave Laurier and come to Brentview I wasn't exactly sure what to do. It 'just so happens' that I lost my voice, so I asked our Music Minister to preach and it 'just so happened' that during his sermon as he was talking about Joshua he said this line 'before Joshua could lead, Moses had to leave'. And the Lord whispered to me 'You have been at Laurier 23 years can you guess who Moses is'. The next week I slid into Brentview and Kathy and I both felt a call to this church. And by the way my former associate of 10 years (my Joshua) became their new Senior Pastor. But none of that would have happened if we hadn't been willing to commit to what God was calling us to do. So if you hear God whisper an idea or give you a dream, take it for a test run and see if it has God all over it. If it does, commit to it and it will be life changing for you and others around you.

Jordon River (Open to get involved)

If you turn to (*Joshua 3*) you will find the story of when the Israelites crossed the Jordon River during a flood, that we talked about this as we began this morning, and then in (*Joshua 6*) you will read the true story of how the City of Jericho was conquered with a blast of a trumpet because Joshua had decided to be open to things beyond his experience. He had an openness to go deeper with God, he was willing to be committed to what God called him to do and finally he was open to get involved. That means he made a decision, he made time, he made the effort and he stuck to it. The results were that he experienced being involved in things that were bigger than him which made eternal differences in the lives of others.

I believe that every generation needs to see what God is like for them. For while it was wonderful for Joshua to watch as Moses went into the cloud on Mt Sinai or to hear God speak to Moses in the Tent of Meeting it was even more profound to hear God speaking to him in the Tent of Meeting and watch as the words God had whispered to him came to pass as the Priests crossed the Jordon River and the Wall of Jericho fell done. Each of us in this place despite what we have seen God do in the past need, crave and can have the privilege of seeing God move in our generation if we are will to be open to listen and to follow in the NOW.

II. Lessons from the Journey

Moses (Lived a life worth imitating)

The Key to everything that Joshua did was the fact that he had walked and watched Moses walk with God and lead the Children of Israel. Moses, in almost every way led a life worth imitating. Do you remember what it said in (*Exodus 33:8*)? It says that whenever Moses went to the tent of meeting that all the people rose and stood at the entrance to their tent and watched Moses. They were watching him, they were watching when and how he met with God. Why? Because they knew that what happened in the tent, what happened between him and God would have an impact on their personal lives.

I think at times we forget that if you are a Christian someone is always watching you, your kids, your neighbor and your dog. I still remember watching Michelle when she was only 2 picked up the phone and began laughing in this high pitched way, I instantly knew where that came from. She had watched her dad on the phone. And the scary thing is that often our lives become that which others imitate, and can become the 'glass ceiling' they bump against as they are wondering how they should live life as a Christian. Mother Teresa wrote 'A Saint is someone who makes it easier for others to believe in God'. Moses lived a life which had a huge impact of Joshua and the result was that Joshua took Israel to places which Moses never could. When I read that, I need to ask myself 2 simple questions. Is the life I am living worth imitating? If it isn't I need to start living differently, and is the life I am living one worth passing on to others? In other words if I was to give my life to my son, daughter or to that person who doesn't know Jesus yet, would it be worth them having it? If it isn't, we need to ask what needs to change so it will be.

Joshua (Stay open for what God needs us to do)

A prayerful imagination is a powerful thing when linked to an excited Christ follower. When you have a man like Joshua who has seen the power of God at work, link it with a person who is open to hear and then do what God would call him to do. The result will be that people walk across ranging rivers and watch as armed cities fall down. God moments happen. I want to be that kind of person and I want to see that happening here so I will make sure that in my life the following is happening:

1. I need to be open to things beyond my Experience.
 2. I need to open to go deeper with God
 3. I need to be willing to be committed to what God calls us to
 4. I need to be open to get involved
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1. Will you consider giving 1 hour a week for this whole year to some type of service for Jesus? If we do that by the end of the year we will together have given over 10,000 hours of service in Jesus' name.
 2. Each month we will be looking at different ways to impact your world? Will you prayerfully ask God what part you need to play?
 3. Will you begin to form the habit of each day as you wake up asking "Jesus what do you want me to be involved in today to make a difference in your world?"