



Christian Life Fellowship

Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



Balancing Life and Faith

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INTRODUCTION:

One of the things that I try to look for in my life and faith is balance. I do not want to be out of balance because of the way it impacts everything I do. Over the next 4 - 5 weeks I am going to be sharing with you a series called Life 360. We will be looking at faith, finance, friendship and freedom.

My goal is to talk about a balanced biblical life that will help us here while keeping an eternal perspective. Today we are going to consider finding balance in the area of faith.

WALKING BY FAITH

2 Cor. 5:7 - For we live by faith, not by sight.

What do you think of when I say we are to walk by faith not by sight? Is it walking on water, doing miracles, raising the dead? The challenge is not to go through life with our eyes closed, nor to have blind faith, but to realize that the steps we take have long-reaching effects. We can walk through life by sight or by faith. As we talk this morning, I trust you will take something from this sermon and be able to apply it to find balance in your life.

Walking by faith indicates that we are on a journey. A couple of weeks ago I participated in the crop walk with about 10 others from CLF and maybe 5-6 dozen people total. Together we were on a mission with the purpose of our walk to raise funds for food. The goal was accomplished. We completed the walk and raised the funds.

However, in our life journey, we are not always made aware of immediate purposes. Nevertheless,

as we walk by faith we learn to follow God's path for our lives, to live in obedience to what He speaks to us and to lead others to know His love and forgiveness personally.

Walking requires balance. Balance is something that we learn. It takes babies about one year to learn how to balance. We practice by standing up and taking steps. We do fall, but we learn how to get up and go on. Walking by faith also requires balance. As followers of Christ, we can become so dependent on sight that our faith and obedience to God's voice is drowned out. We cannot get so bogged down in the things we see that those things impact our responses to God's voice. At the same time, we must be aware of the world around us and how our faith journey is impacting people around us.

The walk of faith is an adventure. As with any adventure, we don't always know what is right around the corner or just over the crest of the next hill, but the thought of what we might encounter, the opportunities that will present themselves are more thrilling than just sitting still on the sand.

When we hear the call of God and follow His leading with obedience, we are walking by faith. Walking by faith is going into the unknown future under the guidance of God. When I read stories from the Bible about men and women such as Abraham and Sarah, David, and Daniel, it becomes very clear to me that these men and women acted confidently and in obedience to what God spoke to them.

Today I want to take as our example a man who needs no introduction. He was a caring father to his own family, but practiced hospitality to others. He was a successful and wealthy rancher, usually avoiding conflicts. Under direct pressure, he distorted the truth. His life was filled with faith, yet he was a man just like you and me. There were things he did to try and help God's plan that bungled the outcomes. The consequences of his actions are still impacting the world today. Yet God loved him despite all his shortcomings and he is known today as a man of faith. His name is Abraham.

The turmoil in the Middle East today, in Israel, Iran and Iraq is the result of the choice that Abraham made to have a child with Sarah's handmaiden. His name was Ishmael. Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born. God told Abraham that this son would be wild and wayward and grow up as a child of the desert. Ishmael had 12 sons who became the leaders of Arab tribes. **Genesis 16:12 - He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.**

The promises that God made to Abraham are found in Genesis 17. God made a covenant with Abraham and said, "This is what I will do."

- I will make you the father of many nations.
- I will make you very fruitful, and kings will come from you.
- I will give to you and your descendants forever the whole land of Canaan.

One has to keep in mind that when God spoke to Abraham this way, he was ninety-nine years old. In the book of Hebrews we read how Abraham responded to God's speaking to him. He obeyed and went out. Notice that he acted on God's word. It was a matter of trust.

FAITH AND HEARING

Hebrews 11:8-10 - 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. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Abraham looked at the journey he was taking as an adventure. He found the balance. The balance was between what God had said and what he saw. The balance was between doing what he wanted verses doing what God wanted. The balance was choosing to obey God or obey the circumstances. His obedience meant separation from the past and renunciation of all the customs he was familiar with. He traveled down an unknown path, through strange lands, with strange people, but he went out as God instructed him.

When God speaks, it is important to listen and to act in obedience. To find the balance we have to understand there is an entire realm beyond what we see. The things we see are temporal, while the things we don't see are eternal. We read in God's word that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

FAITH AND CHOICE

We have choices to obey or disobey. The first time God spoke to man and He gave instruction that was disregarded happened in the Garden of Eden. God spoke and Adam and Eve heard but they chose to disregard what God said and act out of what they saw, rather than what they heard. **Genesis 3:6 - When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.**

This has been the challenge since the beginning of time, to find balance between what God says and what we see. We all know that there are consequences to all actions we take. What we do sets into motion a series of events that continues long after we are gone. Unfortunately, when we are making a decision, most of us think only of the immediate

consequences. These are often misleading because they are short-lived.

Abraham had a choice to make. His decision was between setting out with his family and belongings for parts unknown or staying right where he was. He had to decide between the security of what he already had and the uncertainty of traveling under God's direction. All he had to go on was God's promise to guide and bless him. Abraham could hardly have been expected to understand how much of the future was resting on his decision to go or stay, but his obedience affected the history of the world. His decision to follow God set into motion the development of the nation that God would eventually use as his own when he visited earth Himself.

You and I probably don't know the long-term effects of most decisions we make, but shouldn't the fact that *there will be long-term results* cause us to think carefully and seek God's guidance as we make choices and take action today?

FAITH AND KNOWING

Abraham did not know what would meet him on his adventure.....and neither do we. As Abraham left the familiar, the comfortable, the secure, he encountered several problems along the way. He did not see the dissension there would be between himself and Lot, the days of conflict with Rehpaim and the Zuzim, the day of temptation, when the king of Sodom would offer to make him rich, the day of sorrow when he would be called to resign his beloved son into the hands of the Lord. All these days were hidden from his sight as he started on his journey. Yet at every turn, God was there to meet him. Abraham had to face whatever it was, make his sacrifice and hold fast to his faith.

God deals with us in the same way. He does not show us what it will cost us to obey him. He asks us

CONCLUSION:

So where are you in your journey of faith? Have you heard the call of God and are you following His word in obedience? How is God calling you to find the balance between this life and the life to come?

Faith is to believe what we do not see; and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe.Augustine.
Faith does not operate in the realm of the possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible.
Faith begins where man's power ends.George Muller.

only to give what He calls for from day to day. We have to guard ourselves to act on the seen things, the impossible, the obstacles, the comfortable, and the appealing things. There are eternal realms that we do not see, for which we are striving..

Abraham at first only had to bear witness to the true God among a people who were idolatrous. Then he was sent on a perilous journey towards Canaan. Then he had to take care of his flocks and herds in the wilderness and finally he had to deliver his kinsman, Lot, from the sword of the tyrant, Chedor-laomer.

Often the call means to leave, to give up or to move away. Obedience involves fellowship with God. There are times when the Divine call comes to us and we have to move. Other times the Divine call comes to us and we are to stay where we are but let go of something that is dear or near to us. You and I can get so caught up in the things we see, that we neglect the unseen, the city where we are headed as followers of Christ. Be careful that we don't lose our balance and walk by sight and not by faith.

Next Sunday is our Mission emphasis. We are praying and asking that every one do something for missions in terms of a faith promise. How can you know how deeply the faith promise God lays on your heart to give will impact people for eternity? How can you let go of something so secure as to trust God for something you can't yet see? How can you sacrifice something that will change the course of eternity for someone in another country or culture? I am calling you to prayer this week. It can start this afternoon at 4:00 PM with our all-church-prayer meeting. I am challenging you to seek God and obey what He calls you to do. If you listen to Him, He will speak to you. Your job will be to choose whether you will respond in trust or disregard His voice. God is trustworthy; are we? Can He give us resources that we cannot see, that we know nothing about?