

Fear? Not!

Isn't that a great question! Why does doing the right thing have to be so hard? Over the course of the past 3 weeks I believe that is the ultimate question that we've wrestling with. Why does Chasing the Wild Goose have to be so hard. I think we all can identify with the guy in the story. We can be overcome/gripped with fear. Fear of saying what it is we really want to say. Fear of doing what we know we really ought to be doing. Instead of chasing the wild goose we get trapped in a cage of fear, failing to pursue God passionately and join the adventure that he has for us.

There's an old saying: nothing ventured, nothing gained. We live by this saying. Taking it a step further: nothing ventured, nothing lost. If I don't take risk, if I don't venture out into the wild unknown, then I'll be safe. We've played it safe for too long. We've lived by the decision of indecision. We've let our fears dictate our decisions.

The Bible uses the word fear 385 times. 62 times the bible says, "Fear Not." 26 times not be afraid. Fear will never change our circumstances. Fear only contaminates our faith. Fear will never conquer our enemy.

When it comes to fear, and chasing the wild goose, there is a story from the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel chapter 14. If you have your Bible with you today you can turn there. The goose chaser in this story is Jonathan. To fully understand this story and goose chase that Jonathan is on we need to know some of the background to the story. Here's a little review.

Israel demands a king and God promises to grant their request (1 Samuel 8). Through a sequence of events, God designates Saul as Israel's king (chapters 9 and 10). When some warring countries threaten part of Israel, Saul is overcome by the Spirit of God and slaughters a yoke of oxen, sending pieces throughout the land, and threatening to do the same to the oxen of anyone who refuses to defend their country. This results in 330,000 Israeli troops gathering for war and a great Israelite victory (chapter 11). Samuel cautions the Israelites about becoming too optimistic about their new king, reminding them that it is God, not men, who throughout Israel's history has delivered His people. If the Israelites rebel against God, failing to trust and obey Him, they, along with their king, will be handed over to their enemies. If Israel does fear God, then God will spare them and their king (chapter 12).

Now, in chapter 13, things quickly begin to sour for Israel, and for Saul, their king. An attack on a Philistine garrison greatly angers the Philistines and prompts a massive Philistine military build-up in Israel. As the chapter unfolds, things seem to go from bad to worse. Saul is forced to summon the Israelites to war after having recently sent them home. The volunteers are few and far between, and when the Israelites realize the size of the Philistine army, they begin to desert, hiding wherever they can. Saul takes charge,

sacrificing the burnt offerings and intent on offering the peace offerings. Samuel arrives just after the burnt offerings, rejecting Saul's weak excuses and rebuking him for his foolishness. Further, he announces to Saul that, because of his disobedience, his kingdom will not endure, because God has chosen a man to be king whose heart is in tune with His (13:1-14). Saul's army of 330,000 is reduced down to 600.

So here's where we catch up with Jonathan who is the son of Saul. This is great in the New Living Translation this section is title: Jonathan's Daring Plan. This is such a crazy story I want to read it to you. **1 Samuel 14: 1-15**

One day Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come on, let's go over to where the Philistines have their outpost." But Jonathan did not tell his father what he was doing. Meanwhile, Saul and his 600 men were camped on the outskirts of Gibeah, around the pomegranate trees at Migron.

No one realized that Jonathan had left the Israelite camp. To reach the Philistine outpost, Jonathan had to go down between two rocky cliffs that were called Bozez and Seneh. The cliff on the north was in front of Micmash, and the one on the south was in front of Geba. "Let's go across to the outpost of those pagans," Jonathan said to his armor bearer. "Perhaps the Lord will help us, for nothing can hinder the Lord. He can win a battle whether he has many warriors or only a few!"

"Do what you think is best," the armor bearer replied. "I'm with you completely, whatever you decide."

"All right then," Jonathan told him. "We will cross over and let them see us. If they say to us, 'Stay where you are or we'll kill you,' then we will stop and not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come on up and fight,' then we will go up. That will be the Lord's sign that he will help us defeat them."

When the Philistines saw them coming, they shouted, "Look! The Hebrews are crawling out of their holes!" Then the men from the outpost shouted to Jonathan, "Come on up here, and we'll teach you a lesson!"

"Come on, climb right behind me," Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "for the Lord will help us defeat them!"

So they climbed up using both hands and feet, and the Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armor bearer killed those who came behind them. They killed some twenty men in all, and their bodies were scattered over about half an acre.

Suddenly, panic broke out in the Philistine army, both in the camp and in the field, including even the outposts and raiding parties. And just then an earthquake struck, and everyone was terrified.

I think we need to look at this from two perspectives, offense and defense. Let's look at defense.

It says that, **“Saul and his 600 men were camped on the outskirts of Gibeah, around the pomegranate trees at Migron.” 1 Samuel 14:2 (NLT)**

Defense

What Saul doesn't do is as significant as what Jonathan did do. While Jonathan is climbing cliffs towards battle, Saul's army is off chasing the goose? NO!!! They are chillaxing under some trees eating fruit. Do you see the difference between them. Saul is the leader of Israel. Instead of kicking back, he should have been fighting back. Saul's sitting on the bench letting others do the work. We should be so surprised, later on in chapter 17, Saul's sitting around waiting for someone else to take down Goliath.

Saul is a defensive player. Always waiting around for someone else to lead. As the leader he wasn't playing to win, he was playing not to lose. I've cut Saul pretty hard. I think though that we can identify with him. I think that most of us can. We are more than glad to play where it's safe. When it comes to chasing the goose we've unintentionally fostered a subtle form of spiritual codependency.

We are happy sitting in our chairs each week. I don't think God's ultimate dream for our lives is to live always playing it safe. I know there is some Saul in me. I want God to defeat the enemy while I sit under the pomegranate tree. We want God to do something for us, and hopefully that means there is very little that I need to do. We've got to take the initiative. We've got to climb down some cliffs and pick fights.

Offense

The alternative to playing defense is offense. Jonathan is that kind of guy. He goes on the attack. His daring plan has to be one of the worst strategies ever. He goes to them in the middle of the day, he gave up the high ground, and came up with a this sign, “If they say, Come up to us’, we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands.”

So he goes to pick a fight. Where did he get the guts? It's not possible to know exactly what he was thinking, but one verse gives us a clue. “Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf.”

Jonathan acted on a conviction that God would act on his behalf. He only needed to step out in faith. Most of us act out of fear, not faith, and that results in a lack of guts. Jonathan wasn't willing to sit under a tree and wait for whatever might happen next. His

actions created a tipping point. A tipping point is the critical point in a situation that leads to a new and irreversible development.

Jonathan's actions shifted the momentum. "So the Lord rescued Israel that day." He more than rescued them. He struck them into a panic, so much so that they fled.

Do Hard Things

We've put the will of God under a false assumption. We've sometimes think that the longer we follow God, chase after the wild Goose, the easier it should be. That is true in some cases. We want the path of least resistance. This year we started a Saturday night service. This wasn't our first choice really. We started praying, dreaming and planning for the future. It's natural to look for what would be easiest, add a third service to Sunday mornings. The reason that we chose Saturday over Sunday was that we believed the path of least resistance was the wrong route for us. Sometimes God calls us to something more difficult and dangerous.

Chasing a goose isn't easy. You might have to climb a cliff or pick a fight with the enemy. But you will discover this simple truth: the hard way is the best way.

I have personally discovered this for myself. If I had to think back over the 32 years of my life, there lots of memories that stick out. They days of kicking back and relaxing under the tree are not the ones that I most cherish. The greatest memories are the ones that have grown me the most, the ones that were the toughest, and brought the biggest victories.

One of my first jobs out of college brought the biggest victory and growth in my life. What it boiled down to was that I wasn't willing to become a puppet on a set of strings. I was being asked to conform to an image that I didn't believe lined up with who I was created to be. I ended up being fired. It took me 4 years to fully understand how that affected me. For many of those years I wished that I had never worked for that company. I finally came to the spot that I was glad that I did. Not for the sake of being fired but for what the experience has made me.

So how do we become people of Faith like Jonathan?

1. Pick Fights

I'll be around afterward if any one wants to go a couple of rounds. What I mean is that we need to take action. I think a lot of times we decide to pray, read the Bible, seek counsel, we wait, wait, and wait some more. I have found that most of the time in our gut we know what to do, but don't have the guts to do it. We are trying camouflage our disobedience with spiritual practices. Hear me on this I'm not saying those things are bad, I truly believe in them. But I also know that, eventually we have to suck it up and go get it.

Matthew 11:12, states, **the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing. (NLT)**

Passivity has no part of the kingdom of God. We are being called to advance the God's kingdom. We are to be faithful men and women who storm the gates.

I'm often inspired by the many stories I hear about the cause of Jesus advancing around the world. I recently heard about a group of missionaries who became known as the "one-way missionaries." They were called this because they packed all their belongings into coffins and purchased one-way tickets when they left. They left knowing that they were not going to return home.

A.W. Milne was one of those who felt called to a tribe of headhunters in New Hebrides, which is part of the Nation of Vanuatu. Many had gone before him and lost their lives. But that didn't stop him. He lived among the tribe for 35 years and never returned home. The tribe wrote this on his epitaph when he died. "When he came there was no light. When he left there was no darkness.

Some how we've come to the belief that we are all meant to live safe comfortable lives. The fact is that God wants to send us to places that are dangerous and difficult. It's in comfort that we tend to lean on our own abilities. It's in the Wild Goose Chase that we learn to learn to depend on God. Perhaps the Lord will act on our behalf.

2. Act on Impossibilities.

**"What is impossible from a human perspective is possible with God."
Luke 18:27 (NLT)**

From our perspective many things

**"My gracious favor is all you need. My power works best in your weakness."
2 Corinthians 12:9 (NLT)**

In our weakness God makes us strong. Over and over again throughout the Bible God places his people in impossible situations so that He can save them in such a way that His power can be shown strong. Where only he can be given the glory. Jonathan and his armor bearer trusted God enough to take on an impossible situation.

By now you may be thinking that I'm nuts. Which if you know me, you know to be true. Not everyone is called to be a Jonathan. But Jonathan didn't go it alone, he had his armor-bearer. The response of the armor bearer is awesome: "Go ahead; I am with you hear and soul. We can't go to where God wants us to go alone. God never meant for us to do life

alone. Accomplishing something together turns a goal into a co-mission. That's why we need to live on mission.

3. Live on Mission

to live for. Before Jesus left this world he gave us all the greatest mission

Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19 (NLT)

There is no greater mission than that. The moment that we place our trust in Jesus as our savior we are given this mission to attack. And the mission starts in the home. The Old Testament book of Deuteronomy gives us these words to live out.

And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (NLT)

What commands is he referring to?

And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.

Deuteronomy 6:5 (NLT)

None of this can be done unless it is happening in our own lives. The truth is we teach what we know, we reproduce what we are. What it all comes down to is loving God with all our heart, soul, and strength.

Let's pray!