

Banish Fear and Doubt, Graduation Sunday

Presented by Rev. Kristen Lowe on 6/10/2018
At Crossroads United Methodist Church
Waunakee, WI

Scripture:

2 Timothy 1:6-7

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

Deuteronomy 31:8

“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

Joshua 1:9

Be bold and be strong. Banish fear and doubt, for the lord your god is with you wherever you go.



You made it! It wasn't easy... was it? I am a graduate along with you today. My education involved seven years of trips back and forth to various schools including Delaware, OH. Driving 8 and a half hours one way was really hard. But as time went on, it got easier. I knew the landmarks and I learned better how to prepare for my trip. Sometimes there were navigational obstacles. I remember once in Chicago I got rerouted due to construction. Another time when I was in Indiana, an accident created a traffic back up and a significant delay. I had no choice. I had to navigate my way through this stuff.



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One thing that got me through these travels with very little anxiety is that I have a very good navigational device. In fact, the first time I arrived at the seminary, someone asked which route I took. I said, "I don't know! I turned where my navigational system told me to turn!" I have become completely dependent on it. Likewise, we have to navigate his life. Making it through twelve years of school or 16 years including college, you've undoubtedly run into some navigational challenges. And, as we can all testify, making it through life will include continuous encounters with detours, delays and challenges that we still have to meet.



But... we've got the best navigational device ever! It's ancient. It's accurate. It's full of wisdom. It is inspired by the living God, who created you! And... it's always accessible. It's our relationship with God – through scripture, through prayer and through our daily living practices. I'd like to just touch on the two biggest challenges that you will encounter, and offer a word of advice as to how to navigate them.



One of the greatest roadblocks in this life is fear. While not all fear is bad, we all know what it's like to be afraid. When fear immobilizes us and keeps us from moving forward, we are dominated by a "spirit of fear." This kind of fear paralyzes us. The Bible tells us a lot about how to navigate it when we come across it.

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2 Timothy 1:7

For the Spirit God gave us does not
make us timid, but gives us power,
love and self-discipline.

The Bible is full of “fear-nots.” But I like this verse because it was written to a young man, perhaps a little bit older than you. Timothy was a young pastor at the church of Ephesus, and the Apostle Paul was his mentor. Paul encouraged Timothy in the first letter to not let others intimidate him because of his young age. Timothy was afraid of being inadequate as a young pastor. In this second letter to Timothy, Paul reminds Timothy that his lack of confidence did not come from God’s Spirit. For God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control. And the culture he was working in was difficult at best. In fact, the scripture tells us that the people were angry... and some of them didn’t even know what they were angry about!

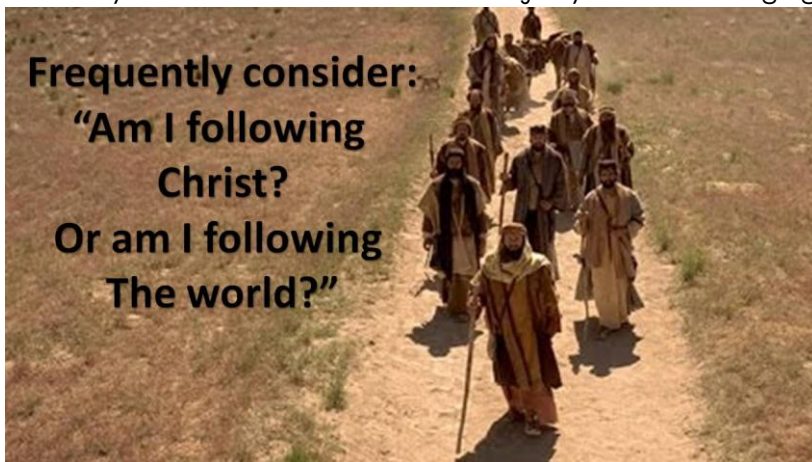


When we trusted Jesus as Savior the Holy Spirit of God took up residence in our life and provides the continuous comfort that we need to eliminate our fears. Seniors, living far away from home can be fearful at times. Going in for a job interview can be scary. But God has not given you a “spirit of fear.” It is God’s will to move you from fear to confidence. Saying “Yes” to Jesus Christ on a secular college campus is a courageous thing while facing the fear of being stereotyped. Saying, “Yes” to a godly lifestyle in a difficult job is a courageous thing while facing the fear of ridicule. Saying “No” to negative influences is a courageous thing.

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There was a test conducted by a university where 10 students were placed in a room. Three lines of varying length were drawn on a card. The students were told to raise their hands when the instructor pointed to the longest line. But 9 of the students had been instructed beforehand to raise their hands when the instructor pointed to the second longest line... The usual reaction of the student out of the loop was to put her hand up, look around, and realizing she was all alone, pull it back down. This happened more than 75% of the time. The researchers concluded that many would rather stand with the majority than risk being right and alone.



As you navigate life, you will have to face some of your fears squarely with a firm confidence in God. Never, ever, take your cues from the crowd. Remember to trust your navigational device.



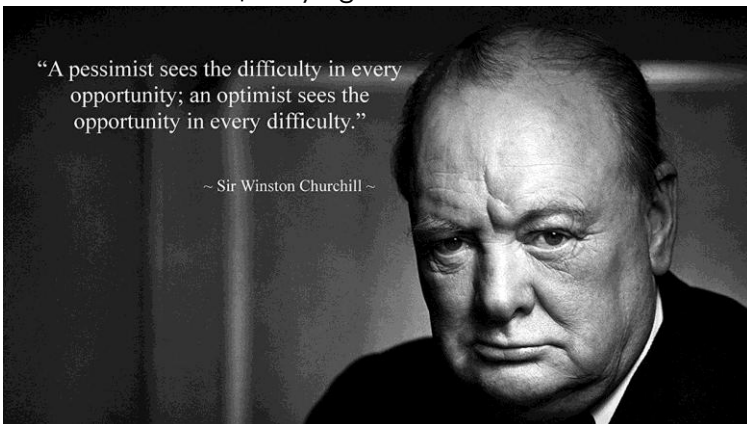
A second roadblock can be our failures. They threaten to stop us in our tracks. Philippians 3 is the story of Paul in prison; he's chained to a Roman guard, under what were probably poor conditions when he wrote... Brothers and sisters, I am single-minded: Forgetting the things that are behind [Which is a good thing because Paul made a

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bunch of mistakes, including persecuting Christians!] and reaching out for the things that are ahead, with this goal in mind, I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

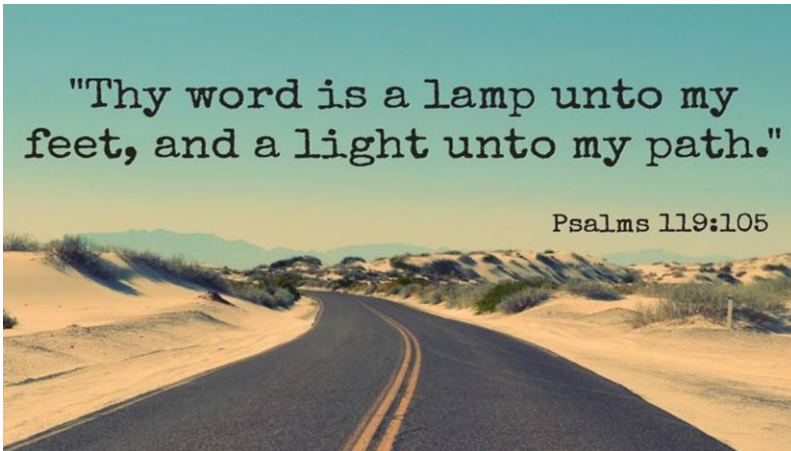


Paul refuses to allow failures to define him. He sees the roadblock, he acknowledges it and then he navigates past it. The secret? He put his past behind him and determined to have a positive mental attitude in life. Make no mistake... There will be failures. It's not a matter of "if" you fail, but "when." And when we fail, we must never allow failure to make us quit trying.



In the midst of World War II, Oxford University asked then Prime Minister Churchill to address its commencement exercises. Dressed in his finest suit, he arrived at the auditorium where the service was to be held with his usual props, a cigar, a cane and a top hat. As Churchill approached the podium, the crowd rose in appreciative applause. Standing there looking very dignified, he settled the crowd down and asked them to be seated. Standing confidently before this crowd of great admirers, he removed his cigar and placed his top hat on the podium. Then Churchill gazed at his waiting audience that included some of the most noted scholars in the world. With an authoritative tone in his voice he began with three words: "Never give up!" Several seconds passed without him saying another word. Finally, he repeated those same three words again, "Never give up!" There was a deafening silence as Churchill reached for his hat, steadied himself with his cane and left the platform. His commencement address was finished.

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My dear young people. Search the scriptures and let God's voice embolden you as you step into this next phase of life. Don't let fear and failure throw you off course. God has given you a spirit of courage... the more time you spend in relationship with God; the better you'll be able to navigate life with all its obstacles.