

## **Get Up and Go...Is it Faith or Foolishness?**

**1 Samuel 3:1-10**

**Chapter 3 of Ortberg Book**

**Second Wednesday in Lent**

**Pastor Jason Bryan-Wegner**

Pastor John Ortberg tells a story in his book *If You Want to Walk on Water You've Got to Get Out of the Boat*. The story goes that a man meets St. Peter at the pearly gates of heaven. St. Peter asks the man, "So have you done anything of particular merit in your life?"

"Well, I can think of one thing," the man replies. "One time I came upon a gang of high-testosterone bikers who were harassing a young woman. I told them to leave her alone, but they wouldn't listen. So I approached the biggest baddest biker, I smacked him in the head, kicked over his bike, ripped out his nose ring, and threw it on the ground. Then I told him, "Leave her alone, or you'll have to answer to me!"

St. Peter was truly impressed. "When did this happen?" he asked.

The man said, "Just a couple of minutes ago."

Getting out of the boat requires courage and risk taking, but we also have to do some listening and discerning. Every time you are ready to jump out of the boat, you might want to ask yourself, "Is this faith or foolishness?"

There is often a fine line that is drawn between these two things. It's important to be able to discern when it is Jesus calling us to get out of the boat and when it's simply human impulse. You need to ask yourself, "Does this seem like an adventure the Lord is calling me to take?"

Samuel was a young boy. He was placed in the service of Eli in the temple. Samuel didn't know that God would plan to use him. He didn't know that God would call him to do anything special. In fact, even when God called him, he needed someone else to help him

understand that God really was calling. He didn't simply jump up and say to God, "Here I am. I'm ready to do anything!" Instead, he listened over and over until it was confirmed that God really had something to say to Samuel. Once Samuel had listened, he was then ready to get up and go on an adventure with God. "Here I am, speak Lord, for your servant is listening."

Ortberg talks about a study he came across where scientists have identified the thrill seeker gene. These are people who sky dive, BMX bike race, and BASE jump. These people are known as Type Ts – thrill seeker types. They tend to make rash decisions and live on impulse. Sure they take lots of risks, but they are not necessarily risks that God is calling them to do. On the other hand, the risks that Jesus calls us to take in walking on water involve moving beyond the area that make us the most comfortable, that give us all the control. Jesus calls us to trust that God has given us all we need to water walk. What God is looking for in us is Type W...water-walkers. And the good news is that we each carry this characteristic. God lives in us and through us. It's our job to tap into what God has given us so that we may partner with God in what God is doing in our lives and the world.

God gives us life and gives us the purpose of caring for all that he has made. You are one of God's wonderful pieces of work. God has gifted you to work for the good of the world. The world is a complex place, with complex issues and problems that none of us can tackle on our own. Each of you is called to use your unique God-given gifts, talents, longings and desires to help God make this complex, often screwed up world look a little more like the good world that God created in the beginning.

In the movie *The Blues Brothers* two hopeless and inept ex-convict, wanna-be musicians try raising money for an orphanage. When asked about what they were doing, they always responded, jokingly, "We're on a mission from God!" The thing is, that's exactly what your life is. It may seem like foolishness, but by faith, we can honestly say, "We're are on

a mission from God!” And if we’re going to do some water walking, we’ve got to take this mission seriously.

But how do we know what that mission, that calling is? This is where listening and discerning come in. A calling is found over time, through trial, error, failure and discovery. If you’re going to be serious about discovering your calling, you have to be honest about what your God-given gifts are. This means that you also have to accept the reality of your limitations. When you have the courage to face your limitations, you’re free to more fully discover your gifts.

When I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I wanted to be a basketball player so bad. But I should have known that this was not going to be my calling. I was 4 ft 10. I weighed 70 lbs soaking wet and I barely had enough muscle to get the ball to the hoop. I didn’t have the raw material to be a basketball player. My two years as a basketball player I scored 2 pts and had 1 rebound. As much as I loved basketball, I had to realize that it was not going to be a fruitful way to spend my time.

I turned my attention to the choir room and the theatre. Though I wasn’t the best in either of these arenas, I learned that I had something to contribute to the whole. I also discovered that I felt like I was living out of the truest form of myself in these places. I didn’t have to put on any façades or try to be something that I wasn’t.

That’s what discovering our calling is all about. It is finding the places in the world where your gifts contribute to something greater than yourself and at the same time you feel as though you’re living in the person that God has made you to be.

This doesn’t mean that God’s calling is always the easiest path in life. It actually rarely is. God calls us to do God-sized work. Our gifts and talents alone will not be enough to accomplish what God is asking. We will need to depend on God’s imagination, power, and resources to fulfill that calling. God’s call requires us to work *with* God, not just *for* God.

One of the ways to seek out God's calling is to do what Ortberg calls low-cost probes. These are experiments that allow us to test the water before we throw our whole selves overboard and forsake anything that we might have been doing in the past. Maybe a low-cost probe for you involves volunteering at a new community agency, or taking the time to shadow someone in a professional field you are interested in. Maybe you commit to a short-term mission trip or come to the small groups after worship for the next few weeks.

My friends, it is not when you discover that God has called you to get up and go that is important. It's that you keep on listening, you keep on trying, you keep on searching until you hear Jesus' voice, and can respond with Samuel, "Here am I, speak Lord, for your servant is listening." God will provide the rest and bring you on adventures that will fill your life with purpose, with meaning, with hope and joy. Amen.