



abclinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

For the sermon on June 14-15, 2008

Part One of a Three Part Sermon Series

"Above the Trees"

this week's coreverse

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see..

Hebrews 11.1 NIV

usingabclinks

Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Personal studies explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon. They are broken down into three or four days. Some days, you will simply read, meditate or think about a passage from scripture. Other days, you'll be asked to dig into a passage through reading, studying and answering questions.

Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study. This series of questions acts as a funnel to help your group discussion flow in a purposeful point.
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members for more information on ABC Small Groups or go to adabible.org>ministries>small groups.

See adabible.org for abclinks archives.



She was dressed in baggy jeans and a grubby t-shirt with a fanny pack cinched around her pudgy, middle-aged frame. She was a Festival dancer. Well, not "officially" but dancing at Festival is what she did. She was not at all a good dancer but you could just tell, she was loving every minute of it. She carried her Festival program in her mouth to free both hands to dance, sometimes waving the "Hang Loose" hand gesture and other times pointing to the sky as if to give God credit for her performance. She was intoxicated by the music or perhaps she was just intoxicated. At first, I couldn't tell. She moved in front of the stage awkwardly, mostly out of rhythm, but with incredible freedom and joy.

There she was at virtually every stage that we were at, dancing right in front of the band that was playing. My wife and I had wandered downtown to enjoy the local talent at the Grand Rapids Festival of the Arts. At first, this woman was a bit of a distraction, if not an irritation, to me as I attempted to listen to the talent on the stage. But, more and more she caught my eye and attention. She intrigued me and I couldn't figure out why. Initially, I felt pity for her, wondering what had happened to cause her to live shackled to mental illness. But the more I watched her, the more I felt a sense of envy. Of course, I didn't envy her plight in life, her homelessness or her illness but I did envy her joy. I envied her freedom to act on and act out the good that was happening around her and the joy that was happening in her. She was more free than I was. Her heart was more filled with joy than mine. So, I got up and danced with her... not really.

When I read our story for this week, I get the same feelings as when I watched the Festival dancer. Our character, Jonathan, does something that most would describe as nuts. But, you may find yourself being envious of Jonathan's courage, faith and fortitude. Jonathan was the son of Saul, the first king of Israel who was embroiled in a continuous war with their enemy Philistia. The Philistines were godless, ruthless, and dangerous to Israel. They also had a technological edge as they had the only blacksmiths. Israel would take their farming tools to Philistia for sharpening but the Philistines maintained a monopoly on blacksmiths to keep Israel from making weapons. Samuel wrote that "none of the people of Israel had a sword or spear, except for Saul and Jonathan." (1 Samuel 13.22). The Philistines were a superior foe. But, there was one huge difference; Israel had God.

In our story, Jonathan makes a maneuver that any military strategist would deem insane. He does it virtually alone with only his young armor-bearer and he does it independent of his father and his army. But, he steps out in full faith believing that, with God, everything is possible. This a radical story of faith. It sure appears that Jonathan is dancing dangerously but with incredible faith, freedom and joy. What if we were to live this way? What if our trust in God was so intoxicating that we'd have the courage to do extraordinary things. Let's dream for a while this week.

Author information

Phil Niekerk, senior small group pastor



ada bible church

8899 cascade road se; ada, mi 49301

616.868.7005

adabible.org



daily readings



dayone

Read 1 Samuel 13.6-22 - 14.1-14

As you read this story of Jonathan, King Saul's son, think about Jonathan's confidence in God. Does this seem radical to you? Do you crave or envy Jonathan's strength of faith?

Spend some time today writing in a journal or thinking about the concept of radical faith. What steps is God asking you to take in an area of life that feels risky or where you feel a lack of security or confidence? Spend some time in prayer asking God to give you courage like Jonathan.

daytwo

Read Hebrews 11

Write out a definition of "faith." Then as you read, see the people listed not as being bigger than life, but see them as ordinary people who God chose to do something powerful through. Author John Ortberg uses this phrase to describe Mabel, a blind woman in a convalescent home who impacted everyone in her path, "Here was an ordinary human being who received supernatural power to do extraordinary things." Do you believe this life is possible? *The Life You Always Wanted*, page 25.

daythree

Read Luke 18.18-30

Today's story is in sharp contrast to the heroes of faith like Jonathan and those listed in Hebrews 11. Jesus has a conversation with a rich man who asks how he can inherit eternal life. Jesus asks him to take a radical step of faith, obedience and sacrifice. The man goes away sad.

Are there things in your life that you hold so tightly that they impair your willingness and ability to trust God? Honestly examine this today.



small group discussion



leanin

What's the biggest adventure you have been on? Did it ever become dangerous? How? How did you react?

lookdown

Have someone read 1 Samuel 14.1-14. How would you describe Jonathan? Who is he? What type of person is he? Would you describe his plan as adventurous? ... insane? ... calculated? Tell why.

What is Jonathan's view of God? How does this play into his plan? What was the outcome?

lookout

Do you know someone who has taken radical steps of faith in their life? How do they make decisions? Describe their lives.

lookin

The author of Hebrews teaches us that faith is being confident of things that are unseen. If we have all the answers, then it's not faith. When have you taken a radical step of faith not knowing the outcome? How did God provide?

Are there any areas in your life in which you feel resistant to trusting God? Is God asking you to do something hard or adventurous?
