



“Diving Deep”
Pastor George Spencer
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CrossRoad Church UMC

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The Word: Luke 5:4 (NKJV)

“Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a catch.”

[INTRO: VIDEO]

If feeling like a loser brings back bad memories for you, welcome to my world. Every one of us has felt like a loser at some time in our life, usually starting when we're kids, like those kids in the video. But you only stay a loser if you don't know who you are, if you don't know what your purpose in life is, if you don't know what you're here on earth for.

You stop being a loser the moment you know for a fact that you belong to God. God is your Creator, your heavenly Father,
your Savior from sin and death, your constant Companion in life.
That will never change. Unless you decide differently.

You say, OK, George, but how can I know God's will?
How do I know that what God wants is going to be best for me?

Here's how:

God's will is always best, because God loves you perfectly.

God's purpose for you in life is to love and to be loved,
by God and God's people.

God loves you and me. That's why...

**God's desire for you and me is to love Him through Jesus,
so that you will be constantly loved and blessed.**

Not only can you grow to believe that, you can KNOW it,
because you will experience it. If you stick around here long enough,
you'll experience God loving you in worship, today and every Sunday,
in music and song, in the smiles and greetings of your brothers and sisters,
in the Bible readings, during the message, and yes, even in the doughnuts...

Unfortunately it takes some of us longer than others to discover who we really are. But that's why God sent Jesus to us, so that we could have
“a future and a hope,” so that we could know that God really is with us.

When you invite the one and only living God into your life,
and you invite Jesus to be your Savior from sin and death,
and you invite him to be the Lord of your life,
you have the opportunity to stop being and feeling like a loser.
But you don't just stop automatically.

You have to change how you see yourself, that you are not just the biological product of a man and a woman, but that you are a beloved and cherished child of God.

Remember, in God's eyes, you are a spiritual being having an earthly experience, not an earthly being having a spiritual experience.

And even better, you are His spiritual man or woman, boy or girl.

When you allow God to change your thinking, you will change your habits.

When you change your habits, you will change what you do.

When you change what you do, you allow God to change who you are.

When God changes who you are, you will become a new person in Jesus Christ. And when you are living with Jesus Christ every day, you will desire to do God's will.

Now, if you recall one of the recent messages I did, you'll remember that God's will shows itself in four different ways:

God's ideal will

God's permissive will

God's circumstantial will

God's ultimate will

In order to do God's will, you don't have to know what God's will is, you just have to trust God. God does not usually show us what He has in mind for us next, He asks us to trust Him.

Trusting someone is not easy, because people disappoint us and let us down, but when agape love and forgiveness and communication are the foundations of your relationship, then trust builds faith.

Trusting God is not easy either, UNTIL we understand how God works.

Get to know God and how God works, and then you can trust God's character, trust God's nature, trust God's love.

Two weekends ago, my family and I moved from a larger house to a smaller house. Moving is an intensely emotional experience for me, and if it hadn't been for some of our friends and neighbors here at church, we would still be packing and loading.

Near the end, there were a pile of boxes stacked along the inside wall of my garage. They contained the books and research papers for the graduate work on my dissertation, which never got accepted, because I wouldn't take God out of my paper. It was painful even to think about, and I left it all boxed and unopened for years.

In the last year, we had an infestation of rats in our garage. Nowhere else, just the garage. 26 rat traps later, they were gone.

When our friends were loading our garage stuff into the UHaul truck, they came across these boxes. Nothing else in the garage was touched by the rats, but guess what was? These boxes representing years of hard work were shredded – eaten through by the rats. I spent the next afternoon and evening by myself, going through those boxes, mourning the loss of that goal,

of that dream and yet when I was done dumping all of it into the trash, I felt suddenly free.

This is going to sound strange, but I thank God for those rats. Whether He sent them or He allowed them in, I thank God, because I was able to let go of the past, the hurt, the pain, and to literally, move on.

Letting go of the past is part of God's training. When Jesus tells his disciples to launch out into the deep, they've already been out there. But they didn't have Jesus with them then. Now they have Jesus guiding and directing them.

For you and me, first we have to allow ourselves to be trained by God like an Olympic athlete. Then you have to train yourself to stop thinking of yourself AS a loser. You have to stop thinking LIKE a loser.

You have to start believing that what God says about you is true.

You have to constantly believe and trust, and trust and believe, what God says. Some of the things God says are these:

I created you.

You are unique and individual.

You are fearfully (that means reverently) and wonderfully made.

There is no one like you in all the world.

I have called you by name.

Your life is of more value than nations or governments.

Your life is so valuable to me, that I sent Jesus to save your life.

You are honored and precious in my sight and I love you.

I sent Jesus to you, not to condemn you, but to give you eternal life.

In the process of allowing God to train you,
**the first step is to humble yourself and pray,
asking God what you should do.**

This is NOT what the normal non-Christian person does.

Usually we just launch out into the deep...and end up over our heads,
and sinking fast.

Look at what one of the greatest leaders in the world did.

Moses was a prince of Egypt, the adopted son of the daughter of the Pharaoh himself. When Moses grows up, he discovers he's a Hebrew, a Jew and not an Egyptian. The Bible, in Exodus, chapter 2, tells us that one day, Moses sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, the Bible says, "one of his brothers."

So Moses looks this way and that, and when he sees there's no one around,
he kills the Egyptian and he hides the body in the sand.

Now, you could make a case for self-defense here, and certainly for protecting a helpless victim from death, but then, Moses goes and hides the body. Why?

The next day, two Hebrews are fighting with each other,

And Moses says to the aggressor: "Why are you hitting your friend?"

And the aggressor says: "Who made you a prince or a judge over us?

Are you going to kill me, like you killed the Egyptian?"

Uh-oh. Moses thinks nobody knows, but in the end, all secrets get told.

Moses gets scared, because this is Egypt 1200BC, and not 21st century America, and in Egypt, you're guilty until proven innocent.

Secondly, only Pharaoh has the decision of life and death, so Moses has usurped Pharaoh's power. In those times, people are always trying to kill the leader to take over themselves, so Pharaoh probably thinks Moses is starting his takeover coup.

When Pharaoh hears of the killing, he tries to have Moses killed.

So Moses does what any man, without God in his life, would do:

he runs as far away as he can get, as fast as he can.

You've seen the movie the Ten Commandments. Charlton Heston as Moses. He died back in April of this year, age 83. Married to his wife Lydia for 64 years. Not a perfect man, but a great Christian man. Made a great Moses. Rent the movie sometime and see him in action.

While he's running away, Moses rescues a damsel in distress.

Gets welcomed into the family. Marries the daughter Yvonne de Carlo. Learns how to herd sheep. Eventually takes over the family livestock business. And he lives happily ever after, right?

No, because God has other plans. Just when you think you've got your life right where you want it, God allows His will –ideal, permissive, circumstantial - to throw what you think is a glitch into your best-laid plans.

Why does God do that?

Because....'when God is in my life, my life is not all about me.'

'God has a greater plan for me in his Kingdom.'

God has a greater plan for Moses. Turns out that herding sheep is just training from God for herding people through the wilderness.

God needs a strong-willed shepherd to lead his people from slavery to freedom. If Moses had done it his way, in his time, the exodus from Egypt would have resulted in the slaughter of thousands, maybe millions, of people. But doing it God's way, in God's time, how many of the Hebrews died on the march through the Red Sea? Not one.

When we live our life our way, we make a mess of it. But if you and I will make a habit of talking to the Lord when we make any decision, whether it's 'Where should I buy lunch today?' or 'Should I sell my house now?,' God will show up and make it clear to you what you should do.

But then we say, What happens when God doesn't speak or make it clear? Stay tuned.

God loves a humble person. God hates a prideful person. Why?

Proverbs 16:18 says: *"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."*

With his prideful attitude, Moses is going to be the big savior of his people. And in his pride, what's the first thing he does?

He kills a man and hides the body.

Later on, when God has forgiven Moses, God comes to Moses and says: Moses, I want you to lead my people out of slavery. And what does Moses say: Who, me? Lord, I'm not worthy. Get my brother. He can do public speaking a lot better than I can do.

The second step in diving deep is to trust and obey – just do it.

If your relationship with God is good, you've confessed your sin, you're free from the power of sin in your life, your heart is humble and you've prayed, asking what you should do, then go ahead and do it. If the Lord sees you're going in the wrong direction, he provides what our American forefathers called 'checks and balances.' The Lord will check you, He will nudge you to stop, and to go in another direction.

Proverbs 16: 9 says: *"The mind of a man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps."*

And then the Lord says to Moses and to you and me: *"I will be with you."*

Do you hear God's mercy in that?

Not only forgiveness for Moses' past, and forgiveness of your past, but then God says: *"I will be with you."*

You are not alone. It feels like it sometimes, but in fact, God IS with you. God is just a Bible away. God is just a prayer away. God wants you to become a Moses, maybe not with millions of people, but with your wife, your husband, your

family, your small group, your neighbor, the kids or youth here at church, your friend who doesn't know Jesus. Just do it. Just be a friend. You don't have to hit people over the head with Jesus every day. Just be who God created you to be. And God says to you: "I will be with you."

God, working through Moses, with his humble attitude, saves God's people and not one of them dies. God even takes care of the enemies, in a miraculous way that only God can do, that is still being talked about today, 3,000 years later, because God really is God.

And the rest, as they say, is history.

Humble yourself, pray, trust and obey, just do it. With words of kindness and in your godly actions. Being a real man means being strong in the Lord and being sure that the Lord is God, and that God gave you this as part of your mission on earth.

Now, during this second step, you WILL face obstacles and you WILL fail. It's built in.

Laura Wilkinson is a world class athlete. As a girl, she was forced to give up gymnastics, which she loved, because she got too tall! So she looked around for something else to do. Don't let a disappointment stop you from living your life. God provides new opportunities all the time.

Laura developed an interest in platform diving, and in 1995, she got so good, she joined the US National Team.

She is the only woman in history to win a gold medal in every major world competition in platform diving. On her MySpace page, under 'Books,' she says: "The best non-fiction book ever is the Bible – so many adventures and stories of grace, it never gets old...in fact, I'm renewed every time I read it."

Under 'Heroes,' she says:

"Jesus definitely takes the cake in this category. "

Here's how God can take circumstances – obstacles and failures - and work them for good, in Laura's life and in your life. Watch this:

[PART 1 OF THE LAURA WILKINSON VIDEO]

Did you hear what she said?

"If I hadn't broken my foot,

I can't tell you that I would have even made the Olympic team."

Just when you think your life is over, your dream is over, you're losing your house, you made bad money decisions, you're losing your marriage, your relationship, your job, you're dealing with illness or disease, God has a bigger dream for you, for your life, for your starring role in His kingdom.

If you're still the star

So, how do you deal with obstacles and failures?

Overcome obstacles and failures by going through the wilderness, depending on God.

Go through your problems with God leading you.

Luke tells us that when Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prays this prayer:

"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me.

Yet not my will but Yours be done."

Jesus didn't want to face the torture, the death on the Cross he knew was coming, but he went through it, because He was willing to do his Father's will, because He knew there was something better on the other side.

Moses kept going through the wilderness, depending on God to lead him, so he could lead others.

Laura Wilkinson kept going too. When she broke her foot, one of the things she did at the 2000 Olympics was to start her dive on her hands – something unprecedented at this level of competition. And she won! Four years later, at the 2004 Olympics, she failed to win, coming in fifth, but other divers used her technique to win.

Every obstacle that you face you can overcome with God's help, and it will be a blessing to others. Philippians 4:13 reminds us:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

That's Laura Wilkinson's favorite Bible verse.

Now that means you and I can do all (godly) things, (all the things in God's will) through Christ who will strengthen you and me.

God created us and built us, in body and soul, to overcome the unreal life you're living out there, to get to the real life God has in store for you in your heart and soul.

God can take obstacles and problems and failures and use them for your good, for you to become stronger in your faith and in your life.

The third step is to give all you are to God, until God's plan becomes your plan

We usually want God's help with our plan. When Jesus shows up and says to his fishing buddies: *Launch out into the deep and let down your nets*, Jesus is showing them - and us - that when our plans fail, God has another plan, a better plan, and if we will get on board with His plan for our life, we will catch an abundant life, where we will be even more blessed than we already are.

Here's how that works in real life: Part 2. Watch this:

[PART 2 OF THE LAURA WILKINSON VIDEO]

If you have the faith of a grain of mustard seed,
you can dive deep into the life God calls you to,
and come out of the water a champion.

This does not mean we all have to be Olympic athletes to honor God.

It does mean that at whatever age or stage of life we are in, that we look for opportunities for God to work through us, that we see obstacles and failures as opportunities for God to grow us into His likeness, to grow us into the men and women God created us to be.

If you're still asking yourself: "What's wrong with my life?" it's because you're still the star of your own life, and God is not.

When God is the star of your show, your life will become a blessing to you.

So when obstacles and failures occur, you need to ask these questions:

Lord, what do you want me to learn this?

Lord, what do you want me to learn from the rats?

Lord, what do you want me to learn from my broken foot?

Lord, I lost my job. Do you want me to pursue this same job,
or do you want me to do something else?

Lord, show me what I should do.
Lord, lead me out into the deep.
Lord, how are you going to use this failure, this obstacle,
to make me into the godly person you desire for me to be?

All discipline seems like punishment at the time, but hard times, tough times are opportunities for God to mold you and shape you and form you and build you and strengthen you to be exactly who God created you to be, so you can be blessed for yourself, and allow God to bless other people through you.

Moses led the people of Israel to the promised land, and got to see God's mission – and his mission - accomplished. He did it, you can do it too.
You heard Laura Wilkinson say she dropped out of college to train and compete in the Olympics. What you did not hear her say is that Laura went back to school and she graduated from the University of Texas with her degree in public relations. She can do it, you can do it too.

And two weeks ago, on June 26, Laura Wilkinson qualified as a member of the 2008 U.S. Olympic diving team, taking first place in the trials.
So if you want a godly person to pray for and to cheer for at the Olympics next month, there she is. And there's more godly athletes too.

And for you and me, the Person who wants to see you and me really succeed in real life is the great and mighty God who created the universe, who knows you personally and who knows you by name, and calls to you, and walks with you, and speaks to you, whenever you invite Him into your heart and life.

I know this and you know this, because God sent Jesus Christ to die on the Cross, in our place, once for all time, to forgive us our sins against God. God allowed Jesus to be dead and buried in a tomb, so that we would know that our sins would be dead and buried. But on the third day, God raised Jesus from death to life, in this life, and God can raise you and me to new life, in this life, and not just in heaven to come.
And then, Jesus shows up, while they're fishing, while they're doing their daily jobs. Jesus appears to them and comes to be with them, and He reminds them that He will be with them, always.

And when we're living our daily life, doing our daily jobs, Jesus says:
"Launch out into the deep...I will be with you always."

Will you pray with me?

Lord, you are the one, true, heavenly God and earthly Savior. You know us better than we know ourselves.

When we experience tough times in life, remind us that we can experience You too, Your love, Your strength, Your guidance, Your voice speaking to us, through the words in our Bible, and through your Holy Spirit speaking to us when we pray to you.

Raise up godly men and women here in this church, to be godly pastors and godly leaders, to lead people out there who do not know You yet.

When we are discouraged, when despair overwhelms us, when life seems hopeless, lead us – personally - through the wilderness, so that we will grow strong in You, in our faith, with a renewed sense of purpose, a new mission, a new way of living.

Then, speak to us, tell us to launch out into the deep, trusting in you, and to let down our nets, using our talents and skills, overcoming every obstacle and every failure, diving

*deep by trusting in you to work all things for good, so that we can be free to honor You and to be blessed by You,
and to become the new person in Jesus Christ You created us to be.*

We pray this now by the power of Your Holy Spirit, and in the name above all names, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. God bless you.

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