

*“Getting Unstuck So We Can Live Free!”**Pastor Randy Orndorff**Getting Unstuck From My Fear of Failing**June 24, 2018*

Key Texts: John 5:1-9

**I. Introduction: What Holds Me Back?**

What is it that holds you back from being who God made you to be? What keeps you in the same place you’ve been for the last 5, 10, 20, or 38 years? Let’s admit it, it is easy for us to get stuck in life. We’ll be talking about getting unstuck so we can live freely for God and do things in life that maybe we have only thought about or dreamed of.

God has given every one of us gifts. Gifts to use to bring others joy and us satisfaction. When we bless others, God turns that around and blesses us.

And yet, when we are offered an opportunity to get unstuck what do we do so often? Come up with a reason why we think that can’t really happen. “Jesus, you don’t know my past. You don’t know the pain, the hurt, the rejection, how I was made fun of or put down or told I’ll never amount to anything.”

**II. What is my Default?**

Interesting that the man by the pool defaults to this line of thinking. Jesus asked straight up, “Do you want to get well?”

He could have responded, “Yes, Lord! Can you really help me? I’m ready!” Instead, he hems and haws around it giving all the reasons why this hasn’t worked in the past and why it probably will not work now.

And then Jesus, you have to love Jesus, simply says, “Get up!” The writer adds an exclamation point. I, too, find when folks are giving reasons about this or that, something not being the way they want it or expect it, you just have to lovingly say something like, “Get up!” “Ease up!” “Look up!”

Jesus asks the man indirectly not to fear the past, present, or future. Instead, “Pick up your mat and walk.”

**III. A New Lease on Life**

This happens in a literal sense and the man, after lying there 38 years, suddenly gets a new lease on life. It is a miracle!! Do we believe miracles can still happen today? Are we praying for miracles? Who is willing to embrace Habakkuk 2:1? “I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts.”

Getting unstuck from anything that has us stuck means we are going to have to step out and try something new. And I’m sure that means we’ll need to pray about it and ask God to help us. And when Jesus says, “Get up! Take your mat and get going,” we’ll have to decide rather to stay where we are or to trust God and get up and move. It’s not so easy, though is it?

We feel stuck. We get stuck. I think of the Psalmist, David, who often expresses this saying, “He lifted me out of the miry clay, (the NIV says, slimy pit and mire), he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.” (Psalm 40) Daniel says, “iron does not mix with miry clay”. (Daniel 2:43)

And yet out of the clay God creates. I love the image in Isaiah 64:8, “But now, O Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay and You are the potter. And all of us are the work of Your hand.”

**IV. God Always Calls Us Forward**

God is always calling us forward, to grow, to leave the past behind, to leave the old behind. To be reformed, refashioned, renewed! God wants us to get unstuck from things that hold us back, or they keep us on our back, or on our mats and to step into a new future with new hope.

But how Lord? I can't see things getting any better. I can't see things changing. One thing that causes us to be in the miry clay and to stay stuck is fear. It's not the only thing, but it is definitely one because too often we fear what the future might hold if we get up and take our mats and walk.

Think about it, what day did Jesus do this on? A sabbath. He healed a man on the sabbath?!? And immediately the man had to start dealing with questions from religious leaders. "Where is the man who made you well?" (vs 11-13) "It is the sabbath and the law forbids you to carry your mat." (vs 10) Instead of rejoicing with this man who has been by the pool for 38 years, they'd prefer to keep him in the miry clay.

Their focus was on the legal system, not helping people get unstuck, but to stay stuck. God's vision and the reason he sent Jesus was to help us get unstuck from our sin, the status quo, and from our fears so that we can live freely. From the Old Testament to this very day, God's will is for His people to be set free. Set free from guilt and shame, set free from sin and a life focused on making excuses.

## **V. Overcoming My Fears**

I am so glad God set me free when I was younger. Growing up rather poor, I wanted to be like other kids. I often felt inferior, didn't have the right jeans or shoes, talked too much and acted out to be noticed, said and did things my teachers asked me not to do. And God and people loved me anyway. My grandmother and church choir director pushed me to sing. My great grandfather Robinson had a great voice and I suppose my grandmother thought maybe I got a song gene somewhere and that helped me begin to get unstuck from a rough childhood.

In 7<sup>th</sup> grade I faced one of my biggest fears when my English teacher, Mrs. Deavers, pushed me towards a forensic competition and I did one of those public speaking contests. I used 3X5 cards and spoke about Thomas Jefferson. I may have placed 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>, I don't remember. I do remember a teacher who saw something in me I didn't see and called that out of me. Get up! Take your mat and walk! I had more opportunities as I left that fear and anxiety of being up in front of people in choir, in drama and in FFA, Future Farmers of America. Look I never won any competitions, but I do appreciate the fact that in back to back years, guys at my high school won the National Public Speaker Competition which put me in good company with people who taught me well.

God knows where we've come from, where we are and where we are headed. Like Jesus, Mrs. Deavers saw what she saw and challenged me. What if I had said, "I can't do that. I'll probably fail at it. I'm not comfortable in front of people." Oh, I did say that and think all those things!

Mrs. Deavers said "Go to the library and start reading and take notes!" Get up and do something! You can get over those fears. I wonder where I'd be today if I had decided to sit at my desk and not do what she encouraged me to do?

Who in your life do you need to encourage? To look at them and ask, "Do you want to be well? Do you want to try something new? Do you want to use the gifts, the passions, the talents God has given you? Or do you want to stay on your mat, to sit in your comfortable chair, or think, God, it will never be any more than this.

## **VI. Overcoming Our Naysayers**

I think we serve a God who says, "Nothing is impossible for Me!" We do have to ask God to help us and trust God to take first steps. We have to get out of our isolation, which fear causes us to get into, and place

ourselves in a community of faith, a small group where people can care for, listen to, and support one another while studying God's word and growing in faith.

Because you see when we start getting unstuck from fear and our excuses and start picking up our mats we are going to be confronted with questions from others, from the enemy who wants to keep us stuck and our own internal struggles and stories we make up. But as our children learned at VBS, last week when we struggle Jesus will rescue us. If we do not have the prayerful support of other Christian brothers and sisters, we are likely to stay on our mats. And I wonder if the guy ever decided to toss his mat in the trash and get on with his life. There is plenty of scripture to support leaving the old behind and pressing on to what lies ahead.

## VII. Getting a Testimony

And we just don't press on for ourselves, we do it for God and God's glory. I like the idea Mark Batterson shares in Draw the Circle for each of us to get a testimony. We are going to hear some personal testimonies in the coming week. We think a testimony only centers around our conversion experience, who we were before we met Jesus, what happened when we met Jesus, and what life has been like since we met Jesus. I'd say the man on the mat had a powerful testimony after this encounter with Jesus. He and Jesus meet up a little later in the day and Jesus acknowledges the man is well. He also adds a bit more to the conversation, "Now go and sin no more". I have, we have, no idea what sin Jesus is referring to. Only to say it is not enough to be physically healed by Jesus, we also need spiritual healing, which means confessing our sins and asking forgiveness because at the end of the day that's where true freedom is experienced.

## VIII. Naming Our Fears

To get unstuck from fears that hold you back, think about a fear or fears you have. Begin to name and acknowledge that fear:

- What others think about you,
- Fear of loneliness,
- Fear of death,
- Fear of speaking the truth in love, (i.e. fear of conflict)
- Fear of trying to change an abusive relationship,
- Fear of a new job,
- Fear of terrorist activities.
- And of course there are many phobias, some that actually serve to help us think wisely, like it might help to respect heights when you are standing on the 300 foot cliff or rock ledge.

The Bible encourages us more often to fear not. Over and over in the Old Testament we hear, "Say to those with fearful hearts be strong, do not fear, your God will come and save you." (Is 35:4)

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid." (John 14:27)

How easy do you think it was for that man lying there 38 years to trust Jesus enough to get up? Not easy at all. But he did and he faced some nay-sayers and my guess is he finally dropped his mat and learned to live spiritually free. We don't know where life took him. We know life could not be the same after this encounter with Jesus.

## IX. How To Get a Testimony

Know how we get a testimony? We have to go through a test. Has anyone here gone through a test and God brought you through it? Then you have a testimony because the way you get a testimony is by going through a test. I wonder how many friends and family members and neighbors the man shared his testimony with?

We can learn all kinds of things about God, the Bible, the church, and theology, but don't just get an education, get a testimony. If we want to see our lives changed, our families transformed, our church growing spiritually, in mission and in reaching new people for Jesus, we need to be spending time with Jesus. And when we do, I think we'll start getting unstuck from fears that hold us back.

I John 4:8 says, "There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out fear."

Time with Jesus who is God's best expression of perfect love will help us overcome our biggest and smallest fears.

Right now, name your fear, and cast that fear on to Jesus and then get up, drop your mat, whatever your mat is, and walk forward. It will free you up to embrace and enjoy life, your relationships, your family, your church, and yourself in a whole new way. Don't let anyone or anything keep you from living the life God has in store for you.

## **X. Closing Prayer**

Let Us Pray:

God, thank you for giving us the image of the man stuck by the pool for 38 years. Maybe we've been stuck that long or longer, or maybe our time of being stuck is much shorter. It doesn't matter. Help us name our fear(s), talk about them when and where we need to, bring them to Jesus in prayer, and then be obedient to Jesus in taking next steps to get unstuck, to take up our proverbial mats and walk into a new hope, a new future, and a new life. And, in the process, to get a testimony as we go through the test towards a new day and newness in life.

Amen.