

# Champs & Misfits

Daily Devotionals

*Believers*  
FELLOWSHIP

Part 2

CHAMPS & MISFIT 2



# Introduction and Purpose

The book of Hebrews is an encouragement and an exhortation to a group of Christians who were enduring intense persecution. After establishing the superiority of Jesus over the old systems of religion that existed, the author turns to point out the importance of faith in Jesus.

Hebrews 11:1 tells us, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” The importance of faith is demonstrated through a biblical hall-of-fame of the faithful. Following this list of well-known biblical names, the letter takes a stark turn in verse 13: “These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on earth.”

The life these strangers and exiles lived were radically different from the world around them, because of the faith they had in things to come. In this way, each of them were something of a misfit. However, we know that the hope in things to come is where we have our security. It’s when we persevere in this hope that we can be called “champions” as well as “misfits.”

Our congregation is blessed with countless champions and misfits, and in the next few weeks we’ll be reading through devotionals inspired by the video interviews shared on Sunday mornings. Each of our lives have the potential to beautifully strange, wild, and countercultural examples of a life lived in faith.

My hope for you in this series is that you can see how your life can be an encouragement and an exhortation to those around you. You are both a misfit and a champion.

Jeremiah Hinton  
Pastoral Resident

## Josh Loux's Story

11/20/2017 (Monday)

*Taking things slow*

Psalm 118:24 says, "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." Slowing down in a world of immediacy is almost a prophetic act of defiance. What can you say by just moving at a slower pace?

It bears witness to something beyond a future to be attained. This very day that you are walking into is a masterpiece of God's design. It is worth considering, savoring, and celebrating! All around you is a lovingly crafted flood of experiences. He has filled the everyday full to bursting with a myriad of beautiful moments.

It acknowledges that God is already near to us, we don't have to earn it. There is a sweet richness in the world around you, at this very moment. You don't have to travel to a far-off ancient place to experience the nearness of God, it is available in this place, and at this moment. In your room, at your table, and everywhere you go, the presence of God is with you.

It acknowledges that there is enough for everyone. We don't have to fight for scraps, we don't have to ensure we eat before others do. If God is truly God, (and we believe He is) it won't be our frenzied action that brings about provision. It will be the steady, enduring, and unshakable faithfulness of God. (Matthew 6:28)

Just for today, try to go slower than you normally would. Let the people pass you as you walk, take time to appreciate every bite you take, and be aware of the gifts that God has packed into the world around you.

Psalm 118:24

**11/21/2017 (Tuesday)**

***Sharing burdens***

Galatians 6:2 reads, “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

In the context of the chapter, Paul is instruction the Galatians to the importance of helping one another when they have transgressions that need to be restored. There were some Christians in Galatia who had fallen into sin somehow, and Paul is reminding the more mature Christians to work with them. The word used in 6:1 for “restore” is also used as a medical term for setting a fracture, and used again in Mark 1:19 for mending a net.

The idea is we get broken sometimes, and through the grace of Jesus we are able to tend to one another. To build each other up towards restoration. The body of Christ is filled with members who have, in one way or another, experienced a fracture. Abuse, sickness, disbelief, or abandonment. The ways that we can experience hurt are only exceeded by God’s provision for healing. It’s through the wounds of Christ that we have been healed, and as his disciples we in turn can bear with one another for the purposes of restoration.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “I would go to the deeps a hundred times to cheer a downcast spirit. It is good for me to have been afflicted, that I might know how to speak a word in season to one that is weary.” However you’ve been wounded, know that there are others who will bear with you.

Know that God is actively at work restoring you, often through the brothers and sisters He has surrounded you with. Where have you experienced a fracture in life?

Galatians 6:2

## **11/22/2017 (Wednesday) Contentment**

“Keeping Up with the Joneses” was a comic strip that was first published in 1913. It featured a family who struggled to match the lifestyle of their more affluent neighbors, the Joneses. Though the strip finished in the late 1930’s, the idea of coveting your neighbors lifestyle that it portrayed still rings true for us today.

We still fail to appreciate the good gifts God has given us. We still tend to define “enough” as “just a bit more”, still have a hard time savoring what we’ve received, and still try to keep up with the Joneses in our lives.

In Luke 12:15 as Jesus is responding to a question about the division of an inheritance, and he reminds them what life is about. “And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” The parable that follows warns against the stockpiling of things, and then follows an instruction on the importance of contentment. When we learn to stop looking at our neighbors possessions, at our neighbors accomplishments, our neighbors family, or our neighbors job, we can begin to truly enjoy what we’ve been given.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, “It is not how much we have, but how much we enjoy, that makes happiness.”

Consider today the good gifts that you have been given. Where have you been given something beautiful to enjoy?

Luke 12:15

**11/23/2017 (Thursday)      *God is with you***

The book of Joshua picks up where the book of Deuteronomy leaves off, with the death of Moses. The first chapter in Joshua should be read with an understanding of how deeply this event would have impacted the people of Israel. Moses had been their leader, their advocate, their law-bringer, and their intermediary with God. Joshua had worked closely with Moses for forty years, had been there when the glory of God caused Moses' face to glow, had seen Moses handle warfare, wandering, and rebellion.

In Joshua 1 as God commissions Joshua to succeed Moses, he makes a point of commanding Joshua not to be afraid, Joshua 1:9 reads, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua was stepping into the shoes of Moses, looking ahead the literal giants that he would have to battle, and remembering that the Israelites had rebelled in the past. Is it any wonder that he was a little concerned? What we see in God's commissioning is not a dismissal of these concerns, but a provision. God doesn't say, "Don't worry, buck up and it'll be fine." God says, "Don't worry, because I'll be there."

There's no false sense of Joshua's ability to handle the complicated realities of nation governance on his own, God commands Joshua not to worry because God has promised to be with him. For those that follow Him, Jesus has promised to similarly be with us.

Know today that you are able to meet whatever difficulties arise not because of your own strength, but because God has promised to be near to you.

Joshua 1:9

**11/24/2017 (Friday)**

***Patience in pain***

Romans 12:12 reads, "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. "The only real battle we have to fight is whether we'll trust God in the midst of the awful things we encounter, or whether we'll try to find a way out through some other means. It's always going to be that simple.

The reminder we get in chapter 12 of Romans is that in the midst of tribulations, we are called to remember God's mercy on us. We're able to do that because of the deep hope we have in Jesus, but that doesn't mean trusting in God is always easy, it can sometimes be incredibly difficult. It's in those difficulties that we have a clearer view of reality.

In his book *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, Tim Keller writes, "When pain and suffering come upon us, we finally see not only that we are not in control of our lives but that we never were."

We might only get to understand that when something truly difficult happens, but the reality we live in is that we don't have control. We can't stop the tribulations that rise against us from reaching us, and it would be the worst sort of lie to pretend we could. The good news is we don't have to try to be in control, God's already got it handled. Even in the face of darkness, death, pain and suffering, we know that the sin and death are not permanent.

The hope we have in Christ is that he is risen, and he is making all things new. Reflect today on the hope that is to come. Where can you rejoice in that hope?

Romans 12:12

**11/25/2017 (Saturday)      Give thanks**

As Paul wraps up his first letter to the Thessalonians he includes this in verse 5:18, “give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

That can seem like a hard order to follow when we are in the midst of life that isn’t going how we thought it would. As is often the case in scripture, it’s not meant to be another burden of something we ought to do, its meant to point us back towards the reality of the gospel.

We can give thanks in all circumstances, without giving thanks for all circumstances. It’s not always possible for us to be truly, authentically thankful for the terrible things that may happen in life, but we can give thanks in the midst of those circumstances. This sort of gratitude isn’t gritting our teeth and pretending everything is wonderful, its the gratitude that sees the larger picture. If we can take our eyes off the immediate situation, which may or may not be filled with any number of temporary blessings or inconveniences, we can see where we are relative to eternity.

There are any number of distractions that will try to court our affections, and with our affections our gratitude. What Paul reminds us is that the very real ups and downs of life don’t detract from the reality of the gift of life in Christ. This call to giving thanks is a reminder of the unmatched goodness we’ve been given.

What circumstances are easy for you to give thanks in? Which are difficult?

1 Thessalonians 5:18



## Brent and Nancy Miller's Story

11/27/2017 (Monday)

*But God is my strength...*

Psalms 73:26 reads, "My flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

"But God" doesn't say that the events that happen are meaningless. It doesn't say that the struggles we're going through are insignificant. It's not a dismissal of reality, it doesn't imply that sadness, or pain, or evil doesn't exist, it says, "But, that's not the whole story."

Yes, our bodies might fail, we might have gradual, or traumatic failings in our bodies, but that's not the whole story. Yes, our heart may fail, we lose hope, we doubt, we falter and even fail, but that's not the whole story. The phrase, "But God" is an acknowledgement that even though all of these painful realities exist, God has something to say. God has acted on our behalf, God has stepped into the reality of pain, come alongside the failings of our bodies, seen and made provision for our failing hearts.

It may be a very long time before you're at a place where you feel like your flesh and your heart are failing, but for some it happens almost daily. Maybe you've already been there, or maybe you've been there often. God's word tells us that in that moment of emptiness, in the reality of our inability, and in the time of our most complete helplessness, that's not the whole story. God did not see fit to leave us alone, he came after us, rescued us, redeemed us, and is constantly with us.

What the Psalmist tells us in this verse is that despite the reality of our failing flesh and heart, God's strength does not fail. Reflect today on the phrase, "But God."

Psalm 73:26

**11/28/2017 (Tuesday)**

***Our portion***

When the 12 tribes of Israel inherited the promised land, each tribe was given a piece, or a portion of the land, except for the tribe of Levi. The Levites were assigned the role of priests, and none of their family were given land to own (Numbers 18:20), because God was to be their inheritance.

This idea of a priesthood dependent on the provision of God continues throughout the Old Testament and into the New Testament where we are called as believers to be a spiritual priesthood (1 Peter 2:5). As a priesthood of believers, we are oriented towards a very different kind of portion.

Lamentations 3:24 says, “The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.” So what does it mean that God is our inheritance? It means that what we’ve been given isn’t something as simple as land, or money, or power. We’ve been given a possession much greater than that. As the author of Lamentations reminds us, the Lord is our portion.

This means we don’t look to outside forces to protect us. We don’t stockpile resources as our safeguard. We have an inheritance that can’t be taken from us, no matter what happens. While we do experience the blessing of many of God’s good gifts, our portion is forever the Lord.

Our inheritance, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, is the Lord.

What are some of the things that you have seen presented as a good portion, or a good inheritance? How does the idea of God as your portion strike you?

Lamentations 3:24

## ***11/29/2017 (Wednesday) Comfort in affliction***

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 reads, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. "

God is both the Father of mercies, and the God of comfort. He is merciful beyond our expectation, and at this moment at work ministering to our needs. God is a Father who gives good gifts (Matthew 7:11), and wants us to draw near to him, and to give Him our worries (1 Peter 5:7).

Not only does God love us enough to comfort us, Paul tells us that He's at work in our lives both for our good and for the good of others. You and I aren't just the recipients of comfort; we've also been commissioned into the ministry of comforting others. One of the great things about God is that he isn't content to just fix things up to the way they were before. He makes things better. He is faithful to make something beautiful out of our suffering, if we let Him. When we allow God to minister to us in the midst of our sufferings, he equips us to be a blessing to others. One way of thinking about afflictions, whether physical, emotional, or otherwise, is to see them as detractors from our life, but there's another option.

What this passage tells us is that God ministers to us in the midst of our afflictions so that we may in turn minister to others. He turns pain into glory, and affliction into ministry.

Consider today how has God comforted you, and where you are still looking to him for comfort? Where are you uniquely equipped to minister to others?

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

**11/30/2017 (Thursday)      *Strength in weakness***

One of the realities of suffering is that in extreme affliction we come to the end of ourselves. The end of our strength, of our resources, or of our ability to just get it done. Affliction is the great, “You can’t” that’s all the more devastating because it’s often true. On our own there are things you and I can’t do, and discouragement and doubt often follow the realization that our own strength isn’t enough. You’ll never get a thank-you for pointing this out, but coming to the end of our own strength is often the turning point in letting God be God in our lives.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 reads, “Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

When affliction cuts through and says, “You can’t” there are a couple of options available to us. Denial will let us pretend we still can for a little while, but it’s a short term fix. Despair recognizes the truth of our inability, but then gives up hope that things can be different. But dependence moves the “can’t” of our weakness into the court of God’s strength.

Dependence is the reorientation towards God who can, towards God who is able, and towards God who loves us with an unfailing love (Psalm 52:8). It’s the shift from acting as our own “god”, to acknowledging that God is able. It’s often in the moments of greatest weakness that we’re able to acknowledge God at work.

Where have you experienced weakness? How did you respond to that reality?

2 Corinthians 12:8-10

**12/1/2017 (Friday)**

***Following the example***

Why do we volunteer at places that could never advance our career or make us connections? Why is it that we believe that the poor and the marginalized are worth extending love and care to? Why do Christians spend so much time serving others, instead of pursuing their own hobbies?

The answer is we're following the example of our master. For Christians, the economy of servant and master has been entirely rewritten. We have a savior who served, loved, and befriended us, despite the fact that he is literally our Lord.

In John 13:15-16 Jesus says, "For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him."

His example was serving, and not just in the flashy or pleasant places, but in the dirty, foot-washing types of service. The means of travel and conditions of roads meant that the washing of feet was a necessary step before sitting down to a meal, and one of the dirtiest tasks a servant could do. Jesus humbles himself to serve his own disciples, lowering himself down to wash the grime of the road with his hands. Jesus demonstrated to them in a visceral way that he was willing to get meet them where they were at.

Jesus' example to us is that our service might be humiliating, might be costly, might be inconvenient, and might be something "beneath our station." Jesus' washing of the disciple's feet wasn't the height of his skill set, but it was a need he was prepared to meet. As disciples of this master, we try to emulate his example.

Where have you been blessed by the service of others in your life? Where have you been called to something "beneath your station?"

John 13:15-16

**12/2/2017 (Saturday)**

***But God gave mercy***

Ephesians 2:4-7 starts off with a humbling reminder, “And you were dead in the transgressions and sins that you once walked.” There was a point in all of our lives where you and I were so far away from the abundant life of God that we were dead, dead, dead. Not only we were unable to work our way back to God, we weren't even alive to try.

If you've felt spiritually dead in the past, or are feeling it today, know that you are not an anomaly. That's not the end though. Even though that's a reality, even though it may feel like wading through deep water just to go through the day, despite all that, God has extended his grace and mercy to us. Even though we were dead in our trespasses, we have been made alive in Christ. This isn't pretending that we were never dead in sin, it's a sober acknowledgment that we were dead in sin, but God did not see fit to leave us there.

We failed, but God covered the offense. We were dead, but God raised made us alive together with Christ. The phrase, “But God” doesn't sugar coat reality, it recognizes both the depth and extent of our sin, and the eternally greater reality of God's mercy. Consider today the places where God has extended grace to you.

Where have you needed mercy? Where has God's grace brought you through?

Ephesians 2:4-7

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