

Jump In! - Let's Build God's House!

1 Chronicles 28:20-21/29:14-20

There I was. Standing on the edge of a precipice. (IMAGE – toes on edge of rock?) Down below me, about 30 feet, was a swirl of blue green water that was supposed to be my landing spot. People were telling me to jump in. They were all around me telling me it would be OK. That I wouldn't die. "**C'mon** they said...**just go...just jump!**" But I couldn't seem to move. I was so high up! And the blue green water was so far down.

This happened years ago when we were in Kauai with friends, and they had brought our family to a non-touristy local swim hole that was bordered by tall craggy rocks and hemmed in by tropical vegetation all around us. If you've ever seen the scene from the classic movie South Pacific and remember the swim hole there ...it had that same look.

You know, as I think about it now, there was little to be afraid of. I had spent the first forty-five minutes watching Hawaiians fly off the top of this cliff, in cut offs and bikinis and cannonball into the water hole...hooting and hollering and coming up with big smiles on their faces. But they were Hawaiians – they knew where the rocks were.

But then, to my horror, one by one, each member of my family and friends stood where I was now standing and took the leap... the first time they jumped off they were wide eyed and stiff as a board...but then they began to jump off with delight...over and over they jumped into the pool below...

Yes. You guessed it. I was the last one to climb up to that rocky point...I did it because I sensed that the unspoken expectation in the air was that we all had to try it. I stood there motionless at the top of the rock wall, the words "C'mon Mom! Just go!" having no impact on my motor memory.

There I stood.

Someone once said that faith is spelled with four letters.

That's because **the word faith is spelled R-I-S-K**. I like that.

Yet even though there is Risk in our Christian walk, it is in some ways minimal, because God promises to be with us when we risk in faith. Plus we have stories in scripture and all around us, from people who know the Lord, telling us that he will be faithful in all things; that even if we do "fail" doing the best we can to follow the Lord... he will work that for good...The risk is simply the first leap to say "I am going to give this a try Lord. I am going to RISK for you, because I trust you."

So everyone push the pause button now...I am still standing on the precipice...

And I am going to come back to me standing there...but for right now...Just leave me there because I stood there for quite some time...with nothing happening...Just me staring, like a zombie, down at the water below...Hold that image...

Let's shift now to the Biblical text that Chris just read. This is the story of David. We didn't read all this but.. David has a thought one day as he was walking around his beautiful palace...place of residence. He says to himself, here I am living in luxury and I haven't even thought about the fact that,God, The God of Isreal, the God of my fathers, doesn't have a house to live in. I want to build God a house! I want to build God a temple where God can reside, and where we can worship him!

David was all excited, but then God said, "David...you can't build my temple. You have shed too much blood.

(David was warrior and God blessed him in battle, but it is interesting that this was apparently not God's highest way. Remember that, when you read the Old Testament because there is a lot of violence in there. And sometimes we wonder, is God a God of war and murderous acts...and here we see that although he helped David win victories for his people...war and bloodshed did not reflect God's best plan)

Then God tells David, "Your son Solomon will be a man of peace. He will build my house...the temple."

David could have been discouraged by this. He could have thrown up his hands and said, "My past is holding me back. I have a dream, and it can't be realized because of what I have done...mistakes I have made...stuff that happened back then."

But what I love about David is his pluck, his willingness to keep at it. We see this over and over in scripture...He says, that's OK God. I am not perfect. And I have shed a lot of blood. If I can't build the temple, and my son Solomon is the one to do that, then I will put everyone's gifts together, get everything ready NOW...so that the temple *can be built* when Solomon comes and reigns as King. I will gather all the resources I can to this end.

And he summons all the people and says, **Bring all that you have...the gifts and the gold, and the riches. Bring them here and we will use them to build God's house!**

And what happened? All the people came and brought whatever they could, willingly and eagerly, and there was great celebration.

People were excited to be a part of something so big and so wonderful! They were full of expectation and joy and they gave willingly from generous hearts. David tells Solomon then...

“Be strong and courageous to do this work!...God will not fail you or forsake you! ... every willing person skilled in any craft will help you in all the work!” (1 Chronicles 20-21 selected)

I am asking you WVPC to bring whatever gifts God has given you to help build up the church today. I am not talking just financial gifts, although those are always nice, and always needed. But I am talking more today about spiritual gifts.

What has God gifted you with that you can share with us that will help to build up the body of Christ, here in Cupertino?

The Bible tells us that each one of God’s children has been given unique gifts and abilities.

Maybe it’s the gift of caring, of prayer, of teaching, of healing, of administration or hospitality. Maybe it’s the gift of helps...there is actually a gifts of helps mentioned in scripture...

I don’t care who you are, or what your age is, or where you’ve been...everyone has something to contribute...

Everyone of you has a unique gift to give

And a unique God-given purpose.

The gifts God has given you are to help you fulfill that purpose.

And that purpose always, always – 100% always - has something to do with building up the body – the church of Jesus Christ.

And when everyone is bringing their gifts in to build up the church, to do what God has gifted them to do, there is celebration in the air.

Just like there was when everyone gathered their gifts to build the temple.

But what if someone handed you a gift, like this one, (I take out box) and you never opened it up?

Looks pretty, right? Kind of squarish with a big red bow. Nice to look at. Looks good on the shelf.

Many Christians never open up their gifts; by that I mean they never use the gifts that God has given them. The gifts that are inside of them. **WHY IS THAT?**

Sometimes its because Christians don't realize they have gifts. They think the box is empty...so they never think of opening it...can you imagine?

What if there was a diamond ring in this box worth thousands of dollars? I'd miss out.

Friends, God does not create empty boxes. When he created you he endowed you with gifts that are of great value! **No one is an empty box!** Sometimes we have to experiment a little bit, to find out, what the gifts are that God has given us. But don't think you don't have any. You have valuable gifts...gifts that are too valuable not to discover. **You are gifted and you are called to serve. Use your gifts to build up the body of Christ!**

Some Christians don't open the box because they are afraid they won't like what's inside. (what if the sweater is the wrong color)...translated...*what if God gave me something to do with my gifts that I don't want to do.* Believe me...although it is challenging sometimes at first, ultimately when you operate in your area of giftedness, you operate in your area of greatest joy. It doesn't mean its easy, but it does mean that it is completely and utterly fulfilling. Fear not! **You are gifted and you are called to serve. Use your gifts to build up the body of Christ!**

Sometimes, even when Christians take the risk to open their gifts (in other words, they know what their gifts are) they are scared to use them because they are afraid of failure.

Like someone I know who got a new bike for a birthday present. This was an adult who had never learned to ride one.

Yes this person unwrapped that bike...and yes it was wrapped up if you can believe it in tons of paper...but this person never got on the bike, because this person was scared to fall off.

And this person might have fallen, a few times, and even skinned a knee. But because they were so scared of falling, they never took the risk of learning how to use their gift effectively...which might have taken some trial and error...but because they didn't risk it, they missed out on the thrill of riding.

Friends, there's nothing more exciting than being a Christian. It's a thrill...Find that out! **You are gifted and called to serve. Take a risk! Use your gifts, to build up the body of Christ!**

Remember...**FAITH is spelled R-I-S-K**

Four things will happen when you use your gifts:

1. When you RISK using your gifts, you fulfill your purpose.

You were wired in a certain way, and the gifts you have, fit that wiring...and that wiring fits the purpose God has for you.

2. When you RISK using your gifts, you position yourself for a blessing. There's something so rewarding about operating in your area of giftedness, but also ***when we give generously from our hearts using our gifts, we come into alignment with God's heart.*** God is generous and gives us gifts all the time; when we are generous and give to others by using our gifts it puts us into alignment with who God is and it opens us up to being blessed in all kinds of ways.

3. When you RISK using your gifts, you partner with God.

Ultimately friends, God doesn't need us at all. I'm not intentionally trying to be insulting but to be quite frank God doesn't need you, or me, or the Pope or Oprah to accomplish his purposes down here. He can do whatever he wants. God does not need us, but he INVITES us to join Him. ***God doesn't NEED us but he WANTS us. We don't invite God into our lives; He invites us into His!***

That's pretty cool when you think about it, right? **You are invited, gifted, and called to join with God Almighty in his mission in this world to reach out and build his church – build up the body of Christ**

Well, push the play button everyone, and there I am, still standing on the precipice. (**IMAGE**) By now, everyone of those cheering voices have left my side. People are bored of me just standing there in my shorts and tank top staring at the water. It is almost time to go home. In the corner of my eye I see my friend folding up her chair.

I could go home in peace and forget this challenge, and stay safe. Or I could take the risk, and jump in. In a wild burst of frenzied resolve I leap from the rock. As I am hurtling through space I hear the astonished cry from someone, "She jumped!" I hit the water and the green blue sea closes over my head. Yes! I did it! And I am still alive! I kick to the surface...and shout out...hey... that was great. Can you guys wait while I do that again?

Don't miss the thrill, the excitement, the joy of taking the RISK of using your gifts to help build the church of Jesus Christ. **JUMP IN today.** Try something new! Sign up! Get involved... Be courageous...give God a chance and trust him as you leap...The water's fine!

Right now I'd like to ask a couple folks who have taken a RISK to use their gifts in new ways here at WVPC to come and share with you their experiences...Robbie Smith and Katie Hobbs...

(First Robbie, then Katie...share for about 2-3 minutes each)

