

Working out our faith

At start of new year - often look back - and think forward too

Some make resolutions - some refuse to - a fresh start is aim

In our faith lives - same principle is helpful - draw a line

Put past behind - look ahead positively - eyes on Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-2 - Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Eulogy to Someone Else

We are all saddened to learn this week of the death of one of our church's most valuable members, Someone Else. Someone's passing created a vacancy that will be difficult to fill. Else has been with us for many years, and for every one of those years, Someone did far more than a normal person's share of the work. Whenever leadership was mentioned, this wonderful person was looked to for inspiration as well as results: *"Someone Else can work with that group"*.

Whenever there was a job to do, a class to teach, or a meeting to attend, one name was on everyone's list - Someone Else. *"Let Someone Else do it"* was a common refrain heard throughout the church. It was common knowledge that Someone Else was among the largest givers in the church. Whenever there was a financial need, everyone just assumed Someone Else would make up the difference.

Someone Else was a wonderful person, sometimes appearing superhuman; but a person can only do so much. Were the truth known, everybody expected too much of Someone Else. Now Someone Else is gone! We wonder what we are going to do. Someone Else left a wonderful example to follow, but who is going to follow it? Who is going to do the things Someone Else did? Remember - we can't depend on Someone Else anymore!

Working out our faith - Luke 3:15-17 & 21-22

A new year - a new start - or - same old /same old - our choice

True every day - first day of rest of life - but start of year - special

Good to take stock - think about future - what do different

In life generally - but more important - in our life with God

In the Luke verses we read - see 2 examples for us - John and Jesus

John - raising people's hopes - looking to the future

He is honest about his role - knows part he must play

Jesus - at this stage - is setting scene - laying groundwork

Demonstrating how all need to start - obedience / faith

So - what does this mean for us - how should we respond

We are all called by God to discipleship - to faithfully follow Jesus

To commit to God - then to work out our faith in daily life

This is what I want us to explore today - practically

Disciple is a follower - sit at feet / walk same path - follow teaching

Can be disciple - philosophy / teaching / person - for us - Jesus

Learn from / live like - do as Jesus did - not easy but essential

Or is it - do you think is important / essential - or an optional extra

Can we be Christians without being disciples - is faith practical

Dallas Willard - *The Divine Conspiracy* - It is generally acknowledged today, that one can be a professing Christian, & a church member in good standing, without being a disciple.

In the Luke passages - John & Jesus show the way - to do God's will

Takes commitment / decision to obedience - we do discipleship

No just something we believe - a disciple can't be a spectator

To be a disciple - is to accept a call from Jesus - to live life radically

Not to just fit in with the world - to be more than just a believer

It is a call to work out our faith in everyday life - practically

So - what does this actually mean for us - in a practical / real way

Read - Eulogy to Someone Else - amusing - but sadly rather true

Challenge to us is simple - don't leave it to someone else

Matt 7:24-26 - Everyone who hears these words of mine & puts them into practice is like a wise man - but everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man - are you wise or foolish?

First - we must discern God's will for us - this is key / vital - specific

We all know the basics - love / faith / obedience / behaviour

It's the specifics we often lack - direct input for her and now

What does he want me to be doing now - not last year etc.

Discover this via prayer / bible / talking - takes time

Second - once discovered - ask where and how God's want you to do

Same whatever called to - Prayer / Service / Evangelism / Lead

Speak to Bernard / Elders / seek guidance / training / support

Third - get on with it - use gifts God has given you - make difference

This is when discipleship hits the road - take the next step

Stop being a spectator - be wise man / woman - as Jesus said

If feel nothing to offer **read list** - all fall down sometimes

Will face setbacks - is natural - just pick yourself up

For John the Baptist - was a practical / physical calling - not easy

Did what God called him to - faithfully - even to his death

For Jesus - he followed God's calling - humbled himself

Showed the way - via baptism - faithful - even to his death

To be a disciple takes faith - faith needs a change of heart - first step

Discipleship requires total commitment - accept God as Lord

This is the first step for everyone - path of discipleship is second

Are you up for that challenge - ready to serve your amazing God

Wherever the path may lead you - however hard - even to death

Disciples don't retire - just change their task - keep going

Do you feel like God couldn't possibly use you? Remember

- ~ Noah was a drunk
- ~ Abraham was too old
- ~ Isaac was a daydreamer
- ~ Jacob was a liar
- ~ Leah was ugly
- ~ Joseph was abused
- ~ Moses stuttered
- ~ Gideon was afraid
- ~ Samson had long hair and was a womanizer
- ~ Rahab was a prostitute
- ~ Jeremiah and Timothy were too young
- ~ David was an adulterer and a murderer
- ~ Elijah was suicidal
- ~ Isaiah preached naked
- ~ Jonah ran away from God
- ~ Naomi was a widow
- ~ Job went bankrupt
- ~ John the Baptist ate bugs
- ~ Peter denied Christ
- ~ The disciples fell asleep while praying
- ~ Martha worried about everything
- ~ The Samaritan woman was divorced (more than once)
- ~ Zacchaeus was too small
- ~ Paul was too religious
- ~ Timothy had an ulcer
- ~ Lazarus was dead!