

POLISH August 4, 2022, Episode Notes

Faith-Filled Hope

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Perspective is everything.

Hebrews 11 & 12:

- Part of a long heritage of faith-filled, hopeful women and men.
- Given the gift of the Spirit whom Jesus said would empower us to: do the works he was doing, and to do even greater things than these (John 14:12).

Why are we seeing such languishing in God's kingdom leaders today?

2021 article in the New York Times by Adam Grant: There's a name for the blah you're feeling: it's called languishing (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/well/mind/covid-mental-health-languishing.html>).

Recent research from the Barna group:

In January 2021 29% of Christian pastors were considering leaving the ministry.

In October, that percentage had increased to 38% with projections of a continued incline.

“We've been here before” (global and historical church):

- Where there's been a shift between Christianity and the culture.
- Where there's been a surge of other ways people are trying to make sense of life with meaning and significance.
- And we've been here before where the aftermath is messy and complex and taking a toll on God's people--especially Christian leaders.

(Being a Resilient Pastor: Leading Your Church in a Rapidly Changing World, Pakiam).

“My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water” (Jer. 2:13).

Jesus, the Source of living water, has already positioned us to be living with faith-filled hope that will both strengthen and sustain us for whatever we're facing.

“To hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:23).

Digging Cisterns:

1) Cistern of Self

- Growing crisis of hope: we no longer need God; humanity now is God; we are our own hope for the future (Hope in Times of Fear, Keller).

- Beliefs that focus on Self where: feelings are the ultimate guide and happiness is the ultimate goal (Faithfully Different, Crain).

“As we have slowly and subtly attained more progress, we have lost something that undergirds all of it: meaning, cohesion and a different, deeper kind of happiness than the satiation of all our earthly needs. We are living in a time of profound anxiety and hopelessness evidenced through discontent, depression, drug abuse, despair, addiction and loneliness in the most advanced liberal societies.” (Andrew Sullivan)

Rather than digging a cistern of self, let’s connect, partner, collaborate and encourage one another as Christ’s ambassadors to live and lead with faith-filled hope.

2) Cistern of Worry, Angst and Fear

“In this world you will have trouble.” (John 16:33)

“Do not let your hearts be troubled—in me [Jesus] you can have peace. (John 14:25-27)

“Don’t worry.” (Matt. 6:25)

“Do not fear.” (throughout scripture)

What are you meditating on?

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Phil. 4:8).

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6-7)

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Cor. 10:4)

“Christians are often living more as an extension of the secular world today than as a distinct light to it. Our current cultural context is a God-honoring opportunity to be faithfully different: in the health of our own relationship with the Lord and in our ability to effectively be salt and light to others.” (Faithfully Different, Crain)

“Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’ Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.” (Phil. 2:14-16)

Rather than digging a cistern of worry, angst and fear--let's be a prayerful people, especially in times of trouble--shining stars; light and salt, bringing the hope of Jesus to a world that desperately needs him.

3) Cistern of Misaligned Expectations

Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life. (Prov. 13:12)

- Hope deferred or “unrelenting disappointment” (Peterson).
- We are constantly coming up against misaligned expectations as they relate to the already-but-not-yet:

“If we overstress the “already” to the exclusion of the “not yet” we will expect quick solutions to problems and we will become despairing by ongoing suffering and tragedy. But if we overstress the “not yet” to the exclusion of the “already” we can become too pessimistic about personal and social change.” (Hope in Times of Fear, Keller)

Rather than digging a cistern of misaligned expectations, let's get aligned with God's expansive heart in the already-and-not-yet--realistic and hopeful; never tiring of working for good and God's righteousness in our day-to-day living and leading. Enjoying each day as a gift from God, leaving the results with him.

“For those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)