

Do Hard Things
Types of Hard Things (Pt1)
Wk 3

What sorts of things come to mind when you think or hear of "Hard Things", or "Doing Hard Things"?

We're on our third week now working through and going through this study on doing hard things, the first week we talked about elephants. Elephants are taught to believe a lie. When they are real young they are tied up with a shackle and a post. No matter how hard they pulled they can't break the shackle and it only digs deeper into them, which of course inflicts pain on the animal. Over time, as they get older they give up. By the time they are full grown elephants they don't need the shackle only a piece of twine because in their mind the shackle still holds them back. We talked about how that is like us a lot of times, we're taught to believe that our teenage years are for kicking back, trying things out, and doing whatever we feel like with little to no consequence. That way of thinking is a lie though, when we look back at history we see that the years which we deem the "teens" didn't even exist until the early 20th century and that God's been using teenagers since the beginning of time to accomplish great things for his kingdom, but we're too busy believing this shackle is wrapped around us and our teen years so we either don't do anything or the things we do are of little value, as a result we miss out on being a part of what God's doing.

Last week we talked about complacency and the phrase "do your best". We said that many times we hear that we live as if "doing our best" is "doing our best compared to..." the standard grade, or our peers, etc. When really our best should be according to what God says and knows of us. Our best is just that, OUR best, YOUR personal best. Anything short of our best, any sort of settling leads us to complacency. Complacency tells us things like;

- everyone already thinks your great, why would you want to risk that?
- You're ok where you are at, why try to improve anything
- you're better than most people, why try something difficult, what if you fail?
- There are plenty of celebrities out there who haven't done anything hard and they've made it big

Scripture even says that complacency actually kills (Prov. 1:32). Lastly we looked at some solutions for battling complacency, things like... (Summarize what's below)

1. Do what's hard for you...
We all know we have strengths and weaknesses; there are things that just come easy to us and other things that we really struggle with. We're all human. What we do most of the time is use those things that come naturally to us as an excuse not to work on and through the things that are more difficult. (Examples p94-95)

Because most people don't have the same strength they'll look at yours and think you're working hard, when in your gut you know you're not it just came naturally. Look for the things that are tough for you, things which God call's you to. Maybe for you it's to love your enemies, obeying your parents, or just getting up in the morning. Work on those things, despite who see's or doesn't see it. Do as unto the Lord for he is the one who rewards, but not typically the way the world does.

2. Be known for what you do, more than what you don't
We've all meant people with really high and positive standards, some of us even fall into that category. People look at us and say how good of person we are or what a "strong believer" we are, we don't smoke, drink, sleep around, do drugs, whatever.... (Ill. p96-98) Those things are all good and even to a certain extent great, but are they really enough. Those biblical characters that I mentioned earlier, we see little record of the things that they stayed away from, the things they didn't do, but we see much more in scripture about what they did do.

Psalm 1:1-2 tells us two things;

Ps 1:1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. Ps 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Scripture first tells us what not to do, walk in the counsel of the wicked. We hear things like this all the time, but far too often we don't see what we need to do. According to verse 2, the man who is blessed does not only stay away from the wicked, but he delights and meditates on scriptures. You see the standard which we even in church set is below God's, the "do not's" are not enough, what are we doing and why?

3. Pursue Excellence, not excuses...

There are things that we're great at, but is that an excuse to not live up to a higher standard? (Ill. p99-100). As mentioned earlier there's far too many of us who don't work as hard, or don't live up to our full potential because people or a cultural standard (grades, making the team) has already deemed us to have arrived. As a result we never explore the true extent of our potential. We fall into this trap most of the time because we compare ourselves (or other people in our lives compare us) to those in our surroundings. The kicker is you're not like everyone else in your surroundings. You're you, "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for *you* to do" (Eph. 2:10) His standard is not for us to be the godliest Christian in a youth group filled with half-heartedness but for us to be holy. Not to be the teacher's pet, but to be a servant of all (Mk 9:35).

Now that we have an understanding of the lie that so many of us choose to believe and the complacency that we so often fall into, this week and next we're going to look at two different types of hard things we can choose to do.

What sorts of things come to mind when you think of hard things? (Get Response) The first type of hard thing we're going to look at is the type that is too big for one person to do. The type you need a team for. We actually do a lot with teams already, but too often we don't look at like that. The Easter Musical we did at our church is a team effort, upwards is a team effort, even we who work as youth leaders we work as a team. But what about you, what types of teams are you apart of? (Get response) Some of us are on sport teams, dance teams, even if we only perform or present by ourselves there's a whole team of people that make the presentation work, behind the scenes. The question is if we're a part of a team do we see the need for the team, and the greater question what's the purpose.

When we look at the first question, "do we need the team", the answer is yes. God created us to work together, scripture says...

2Ti 2:22 Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

This whole idea of fleeing evil and pursuing righteousness is tough, especially when we truly begin to understand what it means to me righteous in the eyes of a Holy God. This stuff is really difficult to do on our own, that's why Paul says to do it "along with" Paul is writing to Timothy who's a pastor. He wants the pastor to flee evil and pursue righteous with his team, the church that God's given him. Timothy is one of Paul's disciples and Paul realizes that Timothy won't do well on his own, if Timothy, the seventeen year old preacher can't do it on his own, we'll need help as well. Look at what else scripture tells us,

Heb 10:24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Heb 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The writer of Hebrews knows it's tough out there, and he encourages the believers, don't do it alone. Encourage and challenge each other, don't give up. Solomon said it best when he wrote,

Ecc 4:9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: Ecc 4:10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Ecc 4:11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Ecc 4:12

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

You see we were created to do things together, to live together (among each other), to walk alongside each other and to do life together. The whole idea of doing hard things is to do things that are too big for you. Allow God to use you and the others that do life with you. Which is why Solomon is so clear are the dangers of doing life by your self...

He who separates himself seeks *his own* desire, He quarrels against all sound wisdom.
(Prov. 18:1, NASB)

You see the scripture tells us that the person who separates themselves doesn't see the need for the team, for the family, for anyone other than themselves; they're foolish and fight against wisdom. They don't make any sense. Not only do they miss out on the team, but they end up making a mess out of what's been given to them.

Think about this for a second, "A study of horses revealed that a single horse could pull an average of 2500 lbs. The test was repeated with two horses. One would think that weight pulled would be doubles, about 5000 lbs. Not so. Two horses working together pulled 12500. That's almost five times the amount one could pull alone." This adds a whole new understanding of what Solomon was talking about in Ecc. 4:9-12, and really begs the question, why would you want to do anything of value any other way.

We see that God's desires to use teams of people to do hard things, great things for him. But what separates the teams your already apart of from a team that does something hard, or something worthwhile? What separates a team that does hard things for the kingdom of God and the teams that most of us are now is the purpose in it. When we play on a sports team, nine out of ten times the purpose is to win. We want to win a trophy, a tournament, maybe even some cash. But that purpose is all in itself, it's all in us. Is the purpose really worth while? Jesus said in Mathew 6;

Mt 6:19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. Mt 6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Jesus said that the things we treasure here on earth, they're not really worthwhile, and most of the stuff we work so hard for will be gone before we are. What Jesus says is that the gifts and talents you've been given use them for the kingdom of God where they are not going to be destroyed or stolen. You see the things, the wins, the performances, the competitions that we value so much in this life. If we're only a part of those teams for the things we win or achieve, than they can be stolen and/ or destroyed. But anything that's done for the kingdom of God, anything that's done for God, it can't be stolen or destroyed. It was done for Him and the kingdom of Heaven, where thieves can't break in and steal and moths can't destroy.

We're going to close in a second, but before we do I want to challenge you to be still and quiet before God. You guys who usually use this to space out and pray, I want you to really try, just for a minute to be still before God ask Him to speak to you and listen. Ask Him what he wants you to do for His kingdom. He might say nothing, just listen, or he might have something for you that's way beyond you, something that you'll need a team around you to accomplish.

(After a minute or two)

I want to show you a video clip of a person your age who heard God tell him to do something that was beyond him and he couldn't say no. What's interesting is that unless you're paying attention you won't recognize how God spoke to Him. As we watch this, see if you can tell and consider what God might be telling you to do.

(Video Clips)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_754g-beMQ

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6itzWT2pSN0&feature=channel>

You see God spoke to young guy, same age as most of you and placed something in his heart so deep and in such a way that he had to do something about it. When the kid stepped up people rallied around him, why because they saw God at work and wanted to be a part of it? Is God calling you step up, to lead a team to do something that won't be stolen or destroyed, something for his kingdom? If so will you do the hard thing and not only be a part of what God's doing, but a part of what God's doing through the team He's given you?

Suggested Discussion questions:

For the small groups I would suggest working through the "The 10 Things We've Learned about Teams" on pages 119-130, I understand it's a lot of reading, but most of it is illustrative stories from the authors lives that you can skim if need be. If you want to skip a few of them my suggestion is to cover 1-3 individually, skip 4, and combine 5-7 and 8-10.