Good Things are Only Achieved Through Hard Things

I was recently asked, by an old friend, if I would like to join him on a hike up to Camp Muir on Mt. Rainier. I quickly responded “yes,” without putting much thought into it.

I then decided to look up what the hike would entail. The hike is about 10 miles round trip and it has an elevation gain of approximately 4600’ which to help put into perspective, is about 460 flights of stairs.

As my friend, his cousin, and I were heading out of the paradise parking lot, his cousin said, “This is hard.”

It was hard. The trails out of paradise are steep and at first they are paved. If you are smart, you are prepared with plenty of food and water, the essentials for hiking a few extra layers of clothing and maybe even an emergency shelter. This was my friends cousin’s first time ever carrying a back pack.

When he said, “This is hard,” I instantly replied “hard things come before good things.” I wasn’t exactly sure where that came from and why it came from my mouth so quickly, but I have thought a lot about it over the last two weeks. And the statement I made is true good Things are Achieved Through Hard Things.

Proverbs 13:11 says about money:

Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears;
    wealth from hard work grows over time.

Proverbs 13:11

Now before you start going through a mental checklist of all the people you know who got rich quick and are still rich, I want to point out that proverbs are general principles, they are not absolutes. Yes, there are some people who have gotten wealthy quickly and they have used wisdom with their money and stayed wealthy. But this is very rarely the case. It is the reason that high-risk investments are called high risk. The money comes quickly but it can go away just as quickly.

Good things, things that last and matter are achieved through hard things. Hiking to camp Muir, for some, would be a hard thing. For others it might be easy, but that would be because they had done other hard things similar to it.

Why am I telling you this?

Because I want you to find fulfillment and enjoyment in life and generally speaking, doing hard things makes life good and foregoing the hard things makes life empty and unsatisfying. As Christians, we are supposed to do hard things which brings about good things for us and for those around us.

This is the Ultimate WWJD life moniker.

As Jesus said to His disciples:

**24**… “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. **25**If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.

Matthew 16:24-25

Or as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth:

**10**Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

**11**Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. **12**So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you.

**13**But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, “I believed in God, so I spoke.” **14**We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you. **15**All of this is for your benefit. And as God’s grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.

**16**That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. **17**For our present troubles are small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!

2 Corinthians 4:10-17

Or as Paul wrote to the Galatians:

**8**Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. **9**So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up.

Galatians 6:8-9

We were made to thrive the most, to have the most abundant of lives, in the midst of doing the hardest things.

You know what is hard. Living a life of faith. That is why Paul wrote to Timothy:

**9**But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. **10**For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

**11**But you, Timothy, are a man of God; so run from all these evil things. Pursue righteousness and a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness. **12**Fight the good fight for the true faith. Hold tightly to the eternal life to which God has called you, which you have declared so well before many witnesses.

1 Timothy 6:9-12

It is also why Paul said to the Corinthians:

**13**Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. **14**And do everything with love.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

I have been the pastor here at Bonney Lake for around 10 years and I have seen people continue to trust God in the face some incredibly difficult things.

I have seen husbands and wives forgive each other for years of hurt.

I have seen people trust God through battles with Cancer (even ones that ended in death).

Foster parents who have to give up kids that they have loved on for years. But they kept on as a foster parent.

Parents whose children have died, and they have grown to be an encouragement to others through their loss.

Wives whose husbands have abandoned them and husbands whose wives left them.

People who have done time in prison.

The loss of a mom.

The tragedy of an unexpected death.

Sexual abuse

Physical abuse

Bankruptcy

Foreclosure

Chronic poor health and sickness

Divorce

I want to encourage you and give thanks to you because I have seen you keep faithfully serving God through these kinds of struggles and more.

I tried to think about the hardest job I ever did while working construction. And it had to be a job, in the early 90’s, where me and friend of mine were told that we would make $200 each to pour a 4 foot by 4 foot by 1 foot deep concrete pad, seemed easy enough. But when we arrived at the job, and saw the ¼ of mile of hill side that was so steep you had to hold a rope in one hand walking down it the easy job didn’t seem so easy. It took us four hours just to get the 36 bags of concrete to the pad location. And then we had to mix concrete with water we bucketed from a bee infested swamp. I got stung several times. For the next two days, I could barely walk.

But that job was nothing compared to facing the death of a friend.

Or helping another friend bury their miscarried child.

Or getting a phone call that someone in the congregation had lost their teenage son.

I know that I told you that Good things come after hard things. And of the hardest things I have faced, I don’t have a storybook answer about some reason that God allows bad things to happen. In fact, I can sometimes get a little bitter wondering why God allows us to go through so many trials.

But I can say this, over the years so many of you have encouraged me in my faith, because of your faith!

Hard things come before good things.

As James wrote:

**2**Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. **3**For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. **4**So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

James 1:2-4

Notice our faith gets tested and our ability to endure takes time to grow, being able to do the hard things doesn’t happen overnight.

**Learn** to do good.
    Seek justice.
Help the oppressed.
    Defend the cause of orphans.
    Fight for the rights of widows.

Isaiah 1:17

2 Timothy talks about training in righteousness. And Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9 that he “…disciplined his body, like an athlete, training it what to do.”

If you have never hiked before, I would not suggest Camp Muir as your first hike. You would not be happy with me, you probably wouldn’t make it, and you may never, ever want to hike again.

In spiritual things, like physical things, we have to train and training happens consistently and over time. There are no get rich quick schemes that work or last.

I’m telling you this as an encouragement. If you asked me to take you on your first hike, I would find a place with a good intensity-reward ratio. In other words, short hike amazing view! There are a few places out there that are like that, but remember, generally speaking good things are achieved through hard things.

Sometimes introducing people to Jesus can lead to later disappointment because the gospel has a high intensity to reward ratio. We get introduced to Jesus who did the hard things on our behalf, so that we could enjoy the good things of God. I list four things, because these four good things that Jesus accomplished by giving up His life.

Forgiveness—Being forgiven is so freeing, truly forgiving someone is painfully difficult.

Reconciliation and peace with others is incredible…But it requires sacrifice.

Adoption—Being part of a family who chose you is special, but it takes all kinds of adjustments in the lives of the children and the parents.

And finally…

Love—All I am going to say about love is that it is The Best Thing Ever and the Hardest Thing Ever.

Because that is how life works, the best things in life are the hardest to come by. Rare stones are always worth more than common gravel.

Jesus, through His death and resurrection, offers us forgiveness, reconciliation, adoption, and love. And our job is to offer these to others.

Do you want to enjoy life to the fullest? Then you are going to have to take steps to forgive, reconcile, embrace as family, and love those who have wronged you in the past.

Remember, I am not asking you to hike to camp Muir on your first hike, in fact I wouldn’t suggest it, because it will probably lead to burn out and bitterness. What I am asking you to do is consider a shorter hike that will help you to prepare for one that is longer and harder.

When parents train children they give them small easy tasks at first and as they grow they give them tasks that are more difficult and require more endurance.

Kids, I would guess that your parents don’t expect you to clean the whole house. Now someday, when you move out, you will be responsible for your whole house. So start training for it by cleaning your room.

My hope is that you will grow spiritually in a steady and healthy direction.

Spend a little time in Bible study, a little time in prayer, a little time thinking and talking about the deeper things in life. Because, in this life our faith is going to have to the endurance to survive some hard things.

I don’t believe in spiritual get rich quick schemes and you shouldn’t either, short cuts to endurance will end up knocking you down. Trusting in a shortcut to endurance is a little bit like that concrete job that I thought was going to make me a boatload of easy money.

I know that life is hard. But there are no good things without someone doing a hard thing. Thank you to all of you who have showed me your enduring faith. And be encouraged once more by James who wrote:

**12**God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

James 1:12