

Bubble Wrap Faith

by Lindsey Hanekom

Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld. 2 CHRONICLES 20:20, NIV

The other day, Kyle asked Daddy to play the 'falling and jumping game', which involves him standing on the narrow top of the radiator, Johann stood in front of him saying, "don't fall" with a big smile and then Kyle falling and daddy catching him. Such a simple game always results in lots of laughing and giggling as the falling distance increases and the falling turns to jumping. However, today's game was different.

This time Kyle brought some bubble wrap and neatly placed it on the floor below where he was falling and jumping from. "This is for when I fall," was Kyle's explanation for such bizarre behavior. His logic was understandable. Bubble wrap keeps things safe when they are dropped, so surely it stands to reason that it would keep him safe when he falls. Obviously, such conclusions were flawed. The thin layer of bubble wrap wouldn't protect him in a fall from such a height, and so Daddy stayed right by his side and they played their usual game instead.

Both Johann and I responded to Kyle's attempt at self-protection with the words, "I think you have too much faith in the bubble wrap!" - a statement that got me to thinking about what I have faith in. What has protected me in the past? Am I believing it will protect me from much greater things in the future?

It's so easy to look at the financial protection of savings or pension schemes and think that they'll protect us in the future, yet the world economy is spiraling into an undisputed state of chaos. It's easy to think that the education my son is receiving will set him up for life with a good career, yet education is dissolving and jobs are disappearing. It's easy to think that our churches are a haven of rest in a restless world and yet they are being marginalized or liberalized beyond recognition. The list is endless but the truth remains... nothing is safe, faithful or trustworthy other than our Heavenly Father!

We can so easily look at the world around us and start laying down our own answers and protective measures. But such self-made efforts look as pitiful as those flimsy sheets of bubble wrap that Kyle thought would save him from harm. Not that they are wrong in themselves, but total faith in those things certainly detract from our faith in God and will lead us to harm.

The good news is that our 'Heavenly Daddy' will stay right by our side and will always be there to protect us. At one point in their game Kyle was adamant that he would be safe if he fell on to his bubble wrap, but Johann was able to persuade him that wasn't true.

So this is the challenge: are we able to listen to our Heavenly Father when He says that what our faith has been placed in isn't safe for us? Or will we continue with our own protections and then cry out when we fall?

Prayer: *Father God, the world is in turmoil and all that seemed safe no longer is. Help me to let go of my own protections in life and solely rely upon You. You alone are safe, faithful and trustworthy. Guide me in my daily life so I can live a life of joy, abundance and safety in You. Amen.*

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

NEIGHBORHOOD

FOCUS: Youth will link actual neighbors with Jesus' instructions to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

Scripture Focus: Luke 10:25-37 & Leviticus 19:11-18

Location: Neighborhood of one of the Youth, Alison & Tim Huskey

- I. Everyone will use safe distancing in the front yard.
- II. Lesson Plan
 - A. Ask each Youth to share something about one of their next door neighbors.
 - B. Ask: Can any of you, other than Chelsie and Emily, tell me something about this neighbor? (point to a home other than the ones the Huskeys shared)
 - C. Read Luke 10:25-37
 - D. Ask: Who is our neighbor?
 - E. Talk for a few minutes about how the youth are or are not neighborly to the people they do not know.
 - F. Ask:
 - What is a neighborly act?
 - Is it easier to do a kind, neighborly act for someone who lives next door or for a stranger? Why?
 - Tell about a time when you recently did something neighborly for someone you knew, for someone you did not know, for an enemy. How did you feel each of those times?
 - G. Read Leviticus 19:11-18 (Get several different youth willing to read every other verse.)
 - H. Share: These are laws from the Old Testament. Explain to the youth that the Old Testament speaks very clearly on how we should treat others. Jesus took this group of laws that speak about how we treat our neighbors and gave faces and directions on who our neighbors are. A Samaritan and a Jew lived in neighboring countries, but neither was thought to act "neighborly" toward the other. In fact, Jews were told to shun Samaritans. They were thought to be "unclean." Yet Jesus made a point to use these two neighbors in telling us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.
 - I. Ask: Who is someone or a group of people to whom you or someone else might find difficult being "neighborly?"
 - J. Bring up about over the railroad tracks by the church. Mission 5000 participants.
 - K. Ask:
 - What would it be like if you were to start today loving that person or group of people as you love yourself?

- What might you do?
- L. Make a safe distancing plan of action!
- List some things that the youth suggest of how to show an act of love for a few of those “shunned neighbors.” (Make a list to be shared for later action.)
 - Hand out gloves and then pins.
 - Give out cards to be signed to be given out at next week’s Mission 5000.
- M. Close with Prayer, asking God for strength and help as you share the love of the gospel. Ask the youth to commit their action plans to God by saying, “Lord I’m going to love my neighbor as myself by _____.” Amen!

Hand out drinks and chips for short devotional time.

Make announcements:

- Ask if everyone got their July mail out calendar
- Tuesday night zoom
- Next Destination Unknown on July 19
- May skip July 26 Destination Unknown and move it to August 2 if I find out I have a church wide relaunch meeting.

End with UMY Benediction.

HOW TO MAKE BETTER DECISIONS

Have you ever made a really bad decision? Or maybe sometimes you just struggle with making a decision. Maybe you're afraid to make the wrong choice and so it's hard for you to commit to making a decision and stick with it. Making decisions can be tricky at times, but here's a few thoughts that we think will help make the decision making process easier.

- **God wants to help.** God wants to lead and guide His children into making good decisions. Whether it's what car to buy, or who to date, God is interested in helping you make a good decision about that thing. So lean on His wisdom and include Him in the decision making process.
“Those who are led by God’s Spirit are God’s children.” – Romans 8:14 (GNB)
- **Spend time with God.** To really get to know God and get His take on your decisions, you've got to start by spending time hanging out with God. You get to know God better by reading the Bible and talking to God/praying. So invest the time now getting to know God so that when a time of decision comes, you're ready to know and hear His voice.
- **Don't get mad if you don't get an answer right away.** It's easy to pray about something and expect an answer right that second. Sometimes, the answer doesn't always come right away. So don't give up or back out on involving God in your decisions if you don't hear anything right away. Choose to hang in there, knowing that God will always come through for you.
- **Balance God's wisdom with other people's wisdom.** If God speaks to you about a decision always go with what God says, not what others say. However, if you haven't really heard anything from God about a decision, it's okay to ask other people for advice or help. Some decisions aren't world altering, and so it's totally fine to just lean on the advice, thoughts, or wisdom of others.

Making better decisions always starts by putting God and His word first in your life. If you'll choose to always put those things first in your life, you'll find that you'll be making better decisions and living with less regret. Choose to always put God and the Bible first in your life!

The Big Picture

Have you ever tried to put together one of those giant jigsaw puzzles that has at least a thousand pieces? At first glance into the large box of tiny freeform pieces, it's hard to imagine they will form a picture. One tiny random piece doesn't look like much of anything on its own; but once you start putting them together, the formation of a beautiful picture begins to take shape. If even one piece is missing, the puzzle will be incomplete.

Puzzles are like life sometimes; except for one major difference, we get to see the end results of the puzzle before we begin the long toil of assembling it. The full picture of the completed puzzle is always on the box-top. We already know how it will turn out and we are not the least bit surprised by its ending. Even though one piece on its own does not look like much of anything, together with all its counterparts, a wonderful picture emerges.

I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: My plan will take place, and I will do all My will. ([Isaiah 46:10](#) HCSB)

God is the creator of our great puzzle called life. Each one of us has our own unique box with an amazing picture on the top, *The Big Picture* — the picture God carefully designed for each of us. Only God himself knows what our finished portrait will look like. He is working diligently on our behalf, tirelessly arranging all of our puzzle pieces into a wonderful order of abundant blessings on a pathway of unspeakable joy.

When we are going through a tough time, we must remember that this is just one tiny piece of our puzzle, without it we would not be complete. We need all the pieces — good and bad, easy and difficult — to shape us and guide us on our uniquely individual paths. We may have to be uncomfortable for a bit. We may have to weather some unwelcome storms. But I guarantee you those times of difficulty are never wasted. We learn through times of uncertainty. Our faith is fortified and strengthened. We learn to relinquish control and let God take the reins. He has the bird's eye view. He has the miraculous ability to look down and see our entire timeline, start to finish, beginning to end and every single second in-between. He sees the whole puzzle at once. We see only the one tiny piece we seem to be stuck on right now. He sees exactly where that piece belongs.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. ([Ephesians 2:10](#) ESV)

This Scripture tells us we were created for good works that God has already prepared for us ahead of time. So no matter where we seem to be or what issues we may be facing, they will be used for good because God has already gone before us and prepared the way. He sent His beloved son to pay the price in advance for everything we could ever need.

We must put our focus and trust in Him. Our trials build faith in our wonderfully omniscient God. If we knew what God knows, we would never change a thing. We would see the magnitude of impossibilities we could never face without God going before us to clear the way and secure our footing.

Enjoy your life piece by piece. Do not worry about tomorrow today. Let God be God!

Run to win that which has already been won for you. No matter what things may look like, a new piece of the puzzle is coming. God is already searching in the box for the perfect piece with the answer you have been praying for. God always sees *The Big Picture*.

A Piece Of The Puzzle

Today's Scripture:

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

At my friend's birthday celebration, the honored guest turned the tables by giving everyone at the party a gift. Christie gave each of us a personal note expressing what we mean to her, along with encouraging words about the person God made us to be.

Enclosed with every note was one piece of a jigsaw puzzle as a reminder that each of us is unique and important in God's plan.

That experience helped me to read 1 Corinthians 12 with new eyes. Paul compared the church—the body of Christ—to a human body. Just as our physical bodies have hands, feet, eyes, and ears, all are part of a unified body. No follower of Christ can claim independence from the body, nor can one part tell another that it is not needed (vv.12-17). “God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased” (v.18).

It's easy to feel less important than others whose gifts are different and perhaps more visible than ours. The Lord, however, wants us to see ourselves as He does—uniquely created and highly valued by Him.

You are one piece of a picture that is not complete without you. God has gifted you to be an important part of the body of Christ to bring Him honor.

Transformation-Stretching

Scripture Reading — [Philippians 3:12-16](#)

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me ...
[Philippians 3:14](#) —

A rubber band isn't much use unless it is stretched. Similarly, we will not achieve the peak of our potential unless we are stretched by God.

Christian psychiatrist Paul Tournier explains that a pilgrimage of faith means having the courage to step out from a secure place into an insecure place. It's like a trapeze artist who swings from one trapeze to another. There is that breathless moment when the artist is in midair between the two trapezes. The performer has to leap, trusting that he or she will be able to grab the other trapeze. Likewise, we have to stretch to catch the next opportunity God sends our way.

Paul sees himself stretched by God so that he can achieve his full potential. It's the same with us. We have to be willing to go beyond our comfort zones. We must forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead. We must relinquish our fears and focus on what we can be if we allow God to stretch us.

Stretching means trusting God in moments of surrender. Stretching means walking into our fears and coming out as people of faith. Stretching means believing in God when we don't see him working. Stretching means trusting God in all circumstances.

Then we will be more like "rubber bands" God can use to do his work in this world.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, help us to forget our past failures and lack of faithfulness in order to press on toward our heavenly prize. Stretch us toward your goals and your glory. Amen.

Rubber-Band Faith

READY

"Then Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, 'I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.'"

— [Matthew 8:10](#)

SET

I love rubber bands. They are one of the greatest inventions ever! They are simple, practical, and useful. And, while there are many uses for them, one of the most basic functions of rubber bands is to hold a group of objects together.

I always keep a rubber band around my wrist. You never know when you might need one! But my habit took on new meaning this past year when my friend and FCA teammate, Donnie Dee, who also wears one around his wrist, offered me a challenge. When I asked him why he wore his rubber band, he said that it was a constant reminder that God wanted to stretch him daily. I was converted on the spot!

Rubber bands are pretty useless unless they are stretched. When they are extended beyond their standard form, they can hold things together and accomplish their purpose. After hearing Donnie's reasoning, I began to look at my rubber band as a reminder to have rubber-band faith.

Think about it. Faith is much like a rubber band in that it is useless unless it is stretched. Our faith needs to be tested, because when we step out of our comfort zone, it is expanded. Scripture tells us that Jesus was astonished only twice—once for a man's great faith ([Matthew 8:5-10](#)) and once for a group's lack of it ([Mark 6:4-6](#)). The Roman commander in Matthew had so much faith that he asked Jesus to just speak words of healing and his servant would be made well. Jesus' response was, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." ([Matthew 8:10](#)). That's rubber-band faith.

I think we all need to examine our level of faith and ask ourselves if it is getting stronger or weaker. When we are willing to step out and stretch ourselves, God shows up and does what we can't do. We need to keep putting ourselves in situations where we whisper, "God, if You don't show up, I am bound to fail. I can't do this in my own strength."

As competitors, we have been blessed with incredible talents and skills to perform at a high levels. It's hard to have rubber-band faith as athletes and coaches because we rely too much on our own abilities. But we need to step out and ask the Lord to stretch us on the field of competition and in the arena of life. When we have rubber-band faith, we will immediately respond, "God did it!" instead of, "I did it!"

True faith begins at the edge of your comfort zone. Be bold and courageous and step out, letting God extend you. Trust me, you were made to be stretched.

GO

1. In your own words, how would you define rubber-band faith?
2. When has your faith been stretched the most? How did God show up?
3. As a competitor, how can you play with rubber-band faith? How can you live with rubber-band faith?
4. Read [Mark 6:4-6](#). Why was Jesus astonished? What can you learn from this passage?

WORKOUT

[2 Chronicles 16:9](#)

[Luke 7:2-9](#)

[Hebrews 11:6](#)

OVERTIME

"Lord God in Heaven, I ask for rubber-band faith—the kind of faith that depends on You to show up. Help me to be a competitor who plays and lives with great faith. Today, I ask You to strengthen my faith. I want my faith to be at full-strength all the time. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen."

Secret of a Rubber Band

'Remember how the Lord your God led you.' (**Deuteronomy 8:6**)

'Remember the wonders He has done.' (**Psalm 105:5**)

My heart cries out to be increasingly intimately acquainted with Jesus. As one man wrote, *"to sift the days for symbols and scan the sunsets for meaning (to) enter into the being of life, alert to transcendencies in ordinary things."*

But despite my best intentions, busyness, inattentiveness and the common everyday distractions of living divert my attention. At the end of too many days, I discover that rarely, if ever, during those waking hours have I been consciously aware of God. Even more devastating is the realization that frequently I have been doing "God's work" with such unawareness of His presence.

Guilt over my condition does nothing to help. The practicalities of life do not allow me to periodically seek out a literal "prayer closet". What is the solution?

Somewhat humorously a friend suggested I slip a rubber band on my wrist and at times snap it as a reminder to acknowledge Christ presence and *"invite Him in"* to the moment. **To my amazement, it worked!** In fact, simply seeing it on my wrist was a 'sufficient' and 'blessed' reminder.

Just as a skilled cook no longer needs the exact recipe for an oft-prepared dish, I look forward to the day when I no longer need my *rubber band*. But, until then? God and I just smile at the Rubber Band Secret.

Thank you, Father, for the grace you extend to me as I walk so falteringly with you. Thank you for the moments when I feel your presence and for those times when the feeling is absent but the presence still with me.

Measuring Up

Have you ever heard the saying, he just doesn't measure up? Do you have any idea what that means? (Listen for answers.) It sounds like this might have something to do with how tall someone is, but it has nothing to do with the height of an individual. When someone doesn't measure up, that means he or she is not quite good enough.

There are many things in life that we are not able to measure up to, especially if we've never tried to do those things before. For example, (insert your own experience) the first time I ever tried to water ski, my bathing suit almost came completely off! It took a lot of practice before I could even stand up on the skis.

Today, I want to talk to you about measuring up to God. The Bible tells us that we have all sinned, and fall short of God's glory, his perfection (Romans 3:23). Our problem is that we cannot get into heaven unless we are perfect. No matter how hard we try, or how much we practice, we cannot measure up to God's glory and perfection! God knows this. And do you know what God did for us? He came down out of heaven, in the form of a man, Jesus, and lived a perfect life. Only Jesus was able to measure up to God's standard of perfection! But he did more than that! The Bible says the things we do wrong, our sins, need to be punished. The punishment for our sin is eternal death, that is separation from God (Romans 6:23). The great news is that Jesus took our punishment by dying in our place, and then rose from the dead to give us eternal life with God.

Boys and girls, wouldn't you like to measure up to God so that you can live with him forever? The Bible tells us that EVERYONE who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved (Romans 10:13)..

PRAY: Dear Jesus, please forgive me for sinning against you. Thank you for dying and taking my punishment. Please come into my life and help me to follow you. Thank you for making it possible for me to measure up to God. Amen.

The next time you hear the phrase; He just doesn't measure up. Remember that no one apart from Jesus can ever measure up to God!