

A Few Words From Your Pastoral Staff

I have been thinking about a quote I read recently from the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“Courage is an inner resolution to go forward despite obstacles; cowardice is submissive surrender to circumstances. Courage breeds creativity; Cowardice represses fear and is mastered by it. Cowardice asks the question, is it safe? Expediency asks the question, is it politic? Vanity asks the question, is it popular? But, conscience asks the question, is it right? And, there comes a time when we must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but, one must take it because it is right.” *Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Jesus, when he came to this earth chose the courageous thing - in fact the whole Trinity did, because there was very real chance of failure - but you and me are worth the risk. Jesus chose to spend most of his time with “sinners” because that’s what God does - the Holy Spirit is constantly everywhere in the world reaching out to human hearts trying to attract them back to God; intimately experiencing the very worst this world offers in order to win people to God’s Kingdom of Light.

The early followers of Jesus chose the courageous path when it was neither the politic or safe thing to do; and the early Adventists, following the debacle of William Miller’s Great Disappointment, chose to keep studying their bibles and looking for truth - even when it was not the popular thing to do. We discovered God’s precious gift of Sabbath in the process.

After 1888, Ellen White, our of our church’s founders, chose to go against the grain and to refocus her life and ministry away from the legalism that had characterized the early Adventist Church and to turn her whole life on Jesus - her courageous choice resulted in her being banished as far away as the church’s leadership could figure a way to send her - to Australia, a place that had been a penal colony for over a century so that she could have as little influence on the church as possible.

In the 1960s, God called a group of pastors and theologians and Bible teachers to once again refocus our church’s gaze on Jesus and to lead us away from the legalism that had come to characterize our church from the time of Ellen White’s death up through the late 1950s and to turn our eyes once again on to Jesus and his righteousness. The Gospel’s good news has been transforming our Church and many in it for the decades since. We owe a tremendous debt to them for their courage.

Jim Pedersen and Ricardo Graham and their respective Conference Committees showed extraordinary courage in choosing to follow the direction of the Bible and the written and oral guidance of Ellen White when they led in the ordination of women to ministry in the Adventist Church in our area - when it would have been much easier to follow the politic or popular path and to cave to the often vicious opposition of many on the far right of the Adventist Church.

Two people who exemplify courage for me are John and Carolyn Rudometkin! John, when his sport's professional life was interrupted by lung cancer, chose to face the future with great courage. Then, he chose to join a church that at that time was not the 5th largest Christian Church, and the most racially and culturally diverse church, in North America. When it was not the politic thing to do, John taught a Sabbath School class for over 20 years that focused on Jesus and his righteousness when the norm in much of our denomination was elsewhere. And, John and Carolyn chose to befriend me when I came to this church, and to love and support me, when many of our most conservative members were not.

Carolyn chose to courageously love, support and care for "her Johnny" when many would have walked away or put him in some kind of facility. And, finally, John, confident in his relationship with Jesus and the certainty of his salvation, was able with courage and serenity to decide to ask that his life support be withdrawn so that he could die peacefully with Carolyn and the boys standing courageously by his side as he went to sleep in the arms of the Jesus who one day soon will restore him to perfect health.

So, how about you? How about me? Are we willing to live lives of courage - choosing to live our lives by doing the right thing when it is not easy?

That is really how a follower of Jesus lives their life.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan", with a stylized flourish underneath.

Pastor Dan