

No More Than You Can Handle

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

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Last weekend we considered the context of this text from Joshua 1: ***“Be strong and courageous”*** and learned 5 leadership lessons.

- Submit to the Purposes of God
- Seize the Promises of God
- Stand on the Precepts of God
- Soak in the Presence of God
- Stay on Point with God

Edgewood has been blessed with many strong and courageous servant leaders for more than a century. At our December business meeting we honored Randy Matya for serving over 30 years as a deacon and trustee and today I want us to show our appreciation to Jim Koehler, who has served as a deacon for over 30 years, most of them as chairman! Jim, come on up!

I asked those who've served alongside Jim to share some words that best describe him. We came up with a list of 25 descriptive words and phrases.

1. Dedicated
2. Faithful
3. Hardworking/Industrious
4. Humble
5. Honest
6. Tenacious
7. Wise
8. Courageous
9. Generous
10. Tender
11. Fruitful
12. Spiritual
13. Genuine
14. Unselfish
15. Godly
16. Caring

17. Compassionate
18. Thorough
19. Goes above and beyond for “*such a time as this*”
20. Determined – “*If he sets his mind to a project, there’s a high probability it’s going to happen!*”
21. Gracious
22. Insightful
23. Loving
24. Heart for God, for people and for his family.
25. Biblical model of marriage with Marcia

Marcia is his partner in marriage and ministry, his sounding board and faithful encourager!

Jim reminds me a lot of Joshua because he is also a man of Scripture. Jim and Marcia taught the college/career class some time ago and they’ve been leading a Sunday morning Growth Group for many years – it’s so full that they’ve run out of space!

Speaking of Scripture, there are many sayings in our society that find their source in Scripture. Here are just a few...

- “*Like a drop in a Bucket*” comes from Isaiah 40:15: “***Behold, the nations are as a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales.***” This declares God’s sovereignty and power over the nations and would have meant a lot to a people that had been exiled to Babylon.
- “*Nothing but skin and bones*” refers to someone who is emaciated because of sickness as first used in Job 19:20a: “***My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh...***”
- “*To escape by the skin of your teeth,*” means to have a narrow escape. Job 19:20b: “***And I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.***”
- “*A scapegoat*” refers to someone who takes the blame for something and comes from Leviticus 16:9-10 where a goat was chosen by lot to be sent into the desert to make atonement for sin.

- “*See the writing on the wall*” is a way to say that something bad is about to happen Daniel 5:5: “***Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace...***”
- “*Go the extra mile*” is from the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus said in Matthew 5:41: “***And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.***”
- “*Wash your hands of the matter*” communicates that one no longer has responsibility and comes from Matthew 27:24: “***So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.’***”

And there are common cultural sayings that are often quoted as if they come from the Bible, but they don’t...

- “*To thine own self be true.*” This saying originates from Shakespeare but is not found in Scripture.
- “*Cleanliness is next to godliness.*” Sorry, moms, but this verse is not in the Bible.
- “*Money is the root of all evil.*” Actually, we learned two weeks ago that 1 Timothy 6:10 says, “***The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil...***”
- “*God wants you to be healthy and wealthy.*” This certainly sounds good to us Americans and is propagated from many pulpits and popularized by TV preachers but is not found in the Bible. We’ll tackle this topic July 15-16.
- “*God helps those who help themselves.*” We’ll consider this common quotation July 22-23. Actually, God helps those who cannot help themselves.
- “*God won’t give you more than you can handle.*” That’s our topic today.

In a post called, “*God Will Give You More Than You Can Handle,*” Mitch Chase writes: “*Christians can make the strangest claims when comforting those who are suffering. What do you say to someone whose life is falling apart? If you have but*

a few precious minutes with a person who's lost a job, home, spouse, child, or all sense of purpose, what comfort do you give?

We might turn to conventional wisdom instead of Scripture and end up saying something like, 'Don't worry, this wouldn't happen in your life if God didn't think you could bear it.' The sufferer may object, head shaking and hands up. But you insist, 'Look, seriously, the Bible promises God won't ever give you more than you can handle.' There it is—conventional wisdom masquerading as biblical truth. You've promised what the Bible never does."

In case you zone out during the rest of our time, here's the sermon in a sentence: *God will give you more than YOU can handle, but he will never give you more than HE can handle!*

To be fair, most people who promise that God won't give us more than we can handle mean well. One could argue that this idea comes from 1 Corinthians 10:13 because the words "temptation" and "trial" are actually the same Greek word: ***"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."***

God does promise that He will provide a way out when we're tempted, but He never says that He'll shield us from struggles. Actually, 2 Timothy 3:12 says, ***"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."***

Let's tackle this text by going to the context of 1 Corinthians 10 where we will see that temptation is clearly in view. According to Genesis 4:7, sin stalks us: ***"Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it."*** The Apostle Paul retells the history of God's people and how they were prone to fall into sin. God was not delighted with their decisions. In verse 5 we read: ***"Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness."***

Verse 6 helps us see why reading the Old Testament is good for us: ***"Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did."*** We're to learn to do right by looking at what the Israelites did wrong.

There are four specific sins we're to stay away from:

- **Idolatry.** We see this in verse 7: *“Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.’”*
- **Sexual immorality.** The Israelites committed idolatry, which often led them to immorality as seen in verses 8-9: *“We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents.”*
- **Grumbling.** Maybe you don’t struggle with idolatry or immorality, but it’s easy to become irritable and start grumbling, isn’t it? We see this in verse 10: *“Nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.”*
- **Pride.** At the core of sin is pride, where we think we know best. Paul puts it like this in verse 12: *“Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.”*

These four types of temptation – idolatry (what we worship), immorality (how we use our bodies), grumbling (our words) and pride (our attitudes) are sins that God’s people have always struggled with and these temptations are still alive today.

Now, let’s consider this text in light of the context: *“No temptation* (these four sins and even more) *has overtaken you that is not common to man* (your temptations are not unique or unusual – everyone faces them). *God is faithful* (you can count on His character; the first place to start is to focus on God’s faithfulness), *and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability* (with Christ in your life as you walk in the Spirit and do battle, you can handle the temptations), *but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape* (This word is vivid as it was used of an army that was totally surrounded and then suddenly they see and take an escape route), *so that you may be able to deal with it”* (He’ll give us everything we need to tackle the temptation).

After meditating on this verse, I wrote down three phrases that can help us deal with temptation.

- **Look out** – be on the alert for temptations and don’t be surprised when they come because no one is immune.
- **Look up** – put your focus on the faithfulness of God and count on His character.

- **Look around** – see your escape route and don't hesitate to take it immediately.

We've established that the context and text of 1 Corinthians 10:13 deals with temptation and God will give us a way out. If you're still not convinced, listen to the verse that comes right after: ***“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”***

So let's come back to the common quote: *God won't give you more than you can handle*. This phrase is doctrinally deficient and dangerous for at least five reasons.

- **It's not true to life or to the testimony of Scripture.** People often face way more than they can handle. Some of you are overwhelmed right now. I think of Joseph, Job and Jeremiah in the Old Testament and Peter, Paul and John in the New Testament.
- **This thinking brings God down to our level.** We like the saying, *“God will not give us more than we can handle”* because it strikes us as fair and we like the idea that the scales are in balance. But here are a couple questions to consider: *How can God be limited by our limitations? Is His sovereignty to be curtailed by how much suffering I can handle?* Unfortunately, when we're overwhelmed and out of sorts, it's easy to conclude that God has somehow let us down. Get this, team: We are never in position to evaluate the Almighty's actions or weigh His will according to what we think is fair! He is the Potter and we are the clay.
- **This quote elevates our abilities and strength.** Since when are we called to be Wonder Woman or Superman? Let's just admit that we *don't* have what it takes to handle trials on our own. This superficial and trite quote points people inward while the Bible points us Godward. My greatest hindrance to living the victorious Christian life is my own self-reliance. To say that God won't give us more than we can handle sounds more like pop psychology or a spiritual pep talk.
- **This can make us feel guilty when we struggle.** When I posted the sermon summary on Facebook this week, my sister-in-law Deanna made a comment related to how she felt when her young daughter Mikayla was diagnosed with cancer: *“How many times have I heard this in the cancer world? It's so discouraging to parents whose child has cancer. Of course we couldn't handle it! It just makes parents feel guilty for not being ‘okay.’”*
- **This mindset steals our joy.** When we feel like God has let us down or that there's something wrong with us, then how in the world can we put James 1:2-4 into practice: ***“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of***

various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

So what do we do when faced with terrible trials? Let’s move to the book of 2 Corinthians, which is Paul’s most personal and emotional letter. Paul is being questioned because he was going through struggles and stresses. He started the church and now new teachers are suggesting that suffering is a sign of sin. By adopting the culture of Corinth, they are lifting up the brightest and the best and have concluded that God wouldn’t bring suffering to someone who is spiritually minded.

Let’s consider just a few passages from 2 Corinthians that lay the foundation for a theology of suffering, which is sorely lacking in the American church today.

2 Corinthians 6:4-10: *“But as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.”*

2 Corinthians 7:5: *“For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within.”*

2 Corinthians 11:23-29: *“Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of*

my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?"

Let's hit rewind and go back to 2 Corinthians 1. In the opening verses of chapter one, the word "**comfort**" is used 9 times! Verses 3-4 says that God comforts us in our catastrophes so we can comfort others as they go through theirs: "**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**"

This last week in our team time and then again at the deacon meeting Tuesday night, I quoted John 5:17 – "**But Jesus replied, 'My Father is always working, and so am I.'**" It's so cool that our Triune God is always at work in the midst of our woes...and sometimes we get to see Him do His work!

As you may have heard, Edgewood member Mike Syler was related to the young man who was hit on his bike this past week while riding on I-74 and killed.

Mike spoke at the memorial service Wednesday. I called him in the morning and left a voicemail to let him know I was praying for him. When I got up Thursday morning I saw that I had missed a call from Mike Wednesday night at 10:30. He left a message so I listened to it.

As I listened, it became obvious that he had "pocket-dialed" me and his phone recorded a four-minute message. Normally I just delete these so as to not embarrass anyone but I kept listening because it was clear that Mike was sharing the gospel with a bunch of grieving people! He was telling them how God brought him out of alcohol and drugs and giving all the glory to Him.

Which got me to thinking, how many people would like their conversations recorded and left on people's voicemails? Would I want everything I said recorded? Well, actually God hears and records every word I speak according to Matthew 12:36-37: "**I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.**"

I love watching how God uses our Celebrate Recovery Team for His purposes! Props to Pastor Dan for pouring into guys like Mike! As people come with their

hurts, habits and hang-ups, they find the forgiveness and freedom that comes only from Christ. And as they find comfort in Christ, they share the comfort of Christ with others.

Let's go back to the sermon summary: *God will give you more than YOU can handle, but he will never give you more than HE can handle!*

The Apostle Paul was often overwhelmed according to 2 Corinthians 1:8-9: ***“For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.”***

I love how he refers to them as **“brothers,”** which is a reminder that all believers are part of the faith family.

Let's dig into the despair Paul describes...

- The word **“affliction”** is used 9 times in the letter and means, *“to crush, press, squeeze and break.”* This could be part of what Paul referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:32 when he says, ***“I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus.”*** Or it could be what happened in Acts 19 when Artemis, a silversmith who made shrines to false gods, and because he was threatened, rage and riots broke out as Paul was preaching.
- They were **“utterly burdened beyond our strength.”** The word **“utterly”** in Greek is *“hyperbole,”* from which we get hyperbole. It means to *“an exaggerated extent and exceedingly off the charts.”* **“Burdened beyond strength”** was used of a ship that was so full of cargo that it was sinking.
- Paul and his companions **“despaired of life itself”** or literally, *“pressed out of measure beyond strength; to be at a complete loss without any resource or options.”* I wonder if Paul was thinking about Acts 14:19: ***“They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.”***
- They summarize how they felt in the beginning of verse 9: ***“Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death.”*** The word **“indeed”** is like saying, *“Yea, here's the bottom line...”* They saw themselves as dead men walking, like they had received an official death sentence.

My guess is that while some of us might feel some of these things, most of us have not gone through what Paul and his companions experienced. I love what comes

next! All of this was way more than they could handle on their own: ***“But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.”*** The Christian life not a journey from dependence to independence but is instead a process of moving from arrogant self-reliance to a deep, spiritual dependence on God for everything!

When we are miserable and out of resources we are made to rely on God. God’s purpose in our problems is to get us to trust Him! I resonate with the question asked by the psalmist in Psalm 121:1: ***“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come from?”*** And I love his answer found in verse 2: ***“My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”***

We worship a God who raises the dead, which means He can do anything. Or as Paul wrote later in 2 Corinthians 4:7: ***“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”*** Jeremiah 17:5 says, ***“Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord.”*** And verse 7 says, ***“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.”***

Listen. God *will* give you more than you can handle so His resurrection power can be put on full display in your life! 2 Corinthians 4:17: ***“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”***

One of the purposes of trials is to propel us to trust in God!

Summary

1. Look for the way of escape when facing temptations.
2. Live to expect trials.
3. Lean in and express trust when facing trials.

God will give you more than YOU can handle, but he will never give you more than HE can handle! Do you believe this? If so, let’s start saying this whole phrase and no longer tell people that God won’t give them more than they can handle. Are you with me?

God will give you more than you can handle so that you realize you can’t handle it on your own.

God will give us more than we can handle so that we will give Him the handle to steer our lives.

The key to the Christian life is not to be strong in our strength but to admit that we're weak.

God gives us tasks and tests and trials that are much bigger than us so that we give Him the glory as He works in our weaknesses.

Close your eyes as I read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. We don't know what exactly Paul's thorn in the flesh was, but we know that he asked God to get rid of it three different times. For reasons known only to Him, God didn't take this trial and torment away. We know one result is that it kept Paul humble and trusting. Listen to these words and apply them to your own hurts today: ***“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”***

It's time to surrender to the Savior. Give him your trials and your tears and your torment. Give the Lord your lament and your loss. Let Him bear your bitterness. Here's the good news. You don't have to handle everything that comes your way. You can't. But He can. Will you give it to Him right now? Will you surrender to Him? Give Him all the stuff and give Him all of yourself.

1 Peter 5:6-7: ***“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”***

Psalm 61:1-3: ***“Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer; from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint. [David's heart was hurting and his faith was faint. Where did he go? He went higher!] Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.”*** [Go to the higher rock, the greater refuge, the stronger tower...go to God himself].

You need a scapegoat for your sins. That's what Jesus did when He took your sins on Himself. Your sins are written on the wall for you to see and there's no way for you to wash your hands of the matter. Jesus has gone the extra mile for you when

He died in your place. Will you repent, believe and receive Him as your Lord and Savior right now?

Closing Song – “Always”

*Oh my God
He will not delay
My refuge and strength always
I will not fear
His promise is true
My God will come through always*

New Members

Jerry and Annie Rauba – Saturday night

Lynn Johnson – Sunday at 8
Carrie Collins (Hunter) – Sunday at 8

Samantha Williams – Sunday at 10:45
Makenzi Schaefer – Sunday at 10:45

Benediction

Jude 24-25 – “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”