

“Walking by Faith, Not by Sight”
Dave Hershberger
November 6, 2022

Stories have power. When someone shares their personal story with us, we’re drawn in. We connect pieces of our story with theirs. And I’m convinced that stories about our spiritual journeys have even greater impact, because they highlight God’s love and concern for us and the power God has to transform us. We’ve experienced the power that stories have over the past five weeks at McBIC as members of our staff have shared how God has worked in our lives.

We’ve seen the power of stories during our worship services in October, but I also want to encourage you to think about ways you can share your stories with each other in Sunday school classes (we call our adult classes “Bible Fellowship Groups”), in small groups you’re a part of, among ministry teams where you serve, or in one-on-one or small group accountability groups. And parents, telling your story to your kids, whether they’re young or adults, can be powerful for them to hear as well. Telling spiritual stories is beneficial for both the teller and the hearer. As we tell our story, we’re reminded of how God has worked in our life in the past and encouraged about all He’ll do in the future, and as we listen to the stories of others, we’re encouraged and challenged that God can work in our life just as He has in the lives of others.

You’ve noticed over the past five weeks that our staff members’ stories are very different. I began the series by sharing how God has shifted my focus from doing stuff to try to please God to cultivating a relationship with Him. Sherry shared the journey God has her on of stepping out of shyness and timidity to boldly embracing opportunities God has placed before her. Cody highlighted what God has taught him about community, accountability and vulnerability. Evan described how God has worked in his life to help him overcome anxiety. And last week, Cindy talked about how God has transformed her understanding of prayer and God’s desire to work in our lives. This morning Dave Hershberger (we call him Hersh) is going to share how God has shown Himself faithful in the midst of some difficult challenges.

Before Hersh shares, I invite you to turn to Philippians chapter 4—a letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the 1st century church at Philippi. Chapter 4 is the last section of Paul’s letter, and he writes about how appreciative he is that the Philippian believers have been praying for Paul

and expressing their deep concern for him as he has walked through some difficult trials. Listen as I read what Paul wrote in Philippians 4:11-13:

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. —Philippians 4:11–13

I'd like you to read the second half of verse 12 aloud with me: *"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want"* (Philippians 4:12). That is a powerful statement... one that may seem kind of unrealistic to us. Paul is able to make that bold statement for two reasons. First, he understood that contentment isn't dependent on what's happening outside us or around us or even to us. Contentment comes from what is inside us. Secondly, Paul is able to make this bold statement about contentment, based on the truth of verse 13.

I'd like you to read this aloud with me as well. *"I can do all this through him who gives me strength"* (Philippians 4:13). That verse is frequently quoted out of context as kind of a "genie that will grant me any wish" verse. But Paul writes the words about Jesus giving him strength in the context of him being able to be content no matter what situation he finds himself in. As you listen to Hersh's story today, I encourage you to focus on the nature of contentment and on the strength Jesus provides us.

Dave Hershberger has served as our worship leader at McBIC for 25 years—since 1997. Worship at our church has changed a lot in 25 years, but through it all, Hersh has led us to focus our attention on worshipping God, rather than on changing music styles or instruments or on the bells and whistles that can easily become our focus. Dave has also established a culture of shared ministry. His team of vocalists, musicians and tech people consists of nearly 50 people, and he's always been focused on investing in and training leaders of all ages, from young teens through adults in their 60s and 70s, and in sharing leadership with volunteer leaders. You

frequently see Hersh leading from up here, but I'm grateful for the opportunity we have today to hear Hersh's story of what God has done and continues to do in his life.

Thank you for the opportunity to hear my part of our collective staff story and to give glory to God for what He has done! I love what Layne, Sherry and Cody shared the last few weeks. If you did not hear that, you need to go online to listen!

Many of you are familiar with my story and journey, but I would like to go into a little more detail with the circumstances that surrounded it. Others are not familiar with it, and so I trust by sharing with you for the first time, you will be able to hear of God's goodness in times of difficulty. **I trust we all can reflect on His faithfulness in helping us walk by faith.**

Just a little about myself to start: I grew up as an easy-going, worry-free kid. I was an extrovert, laughing a lot, a jokester and prankster... and maybe even getting my siblings and other people in trouble a little bit. Of course, I grew out of that season :) I loved being around friends and family and yet could be content on my own. I grew up quite conservative as my father came out of the Amish tradition and my mom from the Brethren in Christ. That's double-conservative trouble. I thank my dad routinely for having the guts to leave the Amish as a young man. I deeply appreciate his faith journey and courage to move from "more law" to "more grace," but my real reason for being grateful is probably because I was only one generation away from wearing a straw hat, riding in a buggy and waving at the cars going by.

Growing up, I had a pretty good imagination. If you gave me a basketball, I could make up wonderful games on my own, have countdown buzzers in my head, and dream of making final game-winning shots. I could do this all afternoon... and all by myself. I could also play on the swing for an extended time, swinging as high as I could, and jumping off to pounce on a stuffed bear I had perfectly positioned in advance, impersonating my childhood hero Daniel Boone ;-) All to say, I was very easy-going, stress-free, and fairly athletic.

Sports (basketball and volleyball) played a big role in my life, especially in high school and college. Spiritually speaking, I accepted Christ as my Savior at the age of nine in a revival service to be assured that I would not go to hell. Hearing other believers' testimonies, that seems pretty common from that era ;-) Knowing Jesus became MUCH more personal as a

teenager and then especially going into my college years and beyond. Music and worship became something that I began to love, especially in college, and as you know, is still important. After college, I worked at Messiah University in Student Life & Ministry and coached in the men's and women's volleyball programs for about 8–10 years.

While working there in my early 30s, I was going through a very painful emotional crisis. This season extended into a few years of horrible sleep patterns, anxiety and depression. This was such a deep and long season that I refer to that time as my "Dark Night of the Soul." There is no time to elaborate about the dark night of the soul, but just to say that it is a term that refers to a deep collapse of perceived meaning and with a long duration... and it's not all that uncommon and can happen in any season of life. I went to counselors to help address my emotional wounding, to doctors to address my physical responses, and to well-known spiritual leaders to make sure I had not embraced enemy mindsets or opened myself up to spiritual forces that would have been destructive to my soul. I wanted thorough and complete help. They were all very helpful and necessary, but not sufficient.

There was a common visual image that I recall summarized my feelings during that time. I was positioned at the very bottom of a dry well. As I tried to claw my way out, I would only get so far until the ground or roots would break away, resulting in my continual fall to the bottom. Time and time again, I fell. I tried so hard to get out of this space. Even after meeting with the specialists and getting help, I ended up in the same pit... Falling right back down to the bottom, discouraged, anxious and depressed and fatigued.

While I was going through this, I was also being diagnosed with possible cancer. Those few months were transformative about understanding my values. Everything abruptly became purposeful and clear. The values God led me to were these and in this order: my relationship with God, the Bible and worship, my immediate family and close friends, and health. Everything else (everything... skills, drive, money, future, etc.) took a back seat to that. Through my growing relationship and intimacy with the Lord, I recall going to the doctor's office with total surrender, completely free and with no fear of bad news. Since then, I've certainly been pulled and tugged to value many important things outside of those few, and even at times giving them too much attention. But when those "secondary values" become too important and stressful, upon

reflection and time to pray, I am reminded of what's truly most important when push comes to shove.

I'm extremely grateful to tell you that my test results were benign, yet a couple short months afterward, I was diagnosed with an acute and classic case of fibromyalgia, and a significant battle of unexpected weakness, fatigue and pain. As you might imagine, it was a brutal new normal. I lost all ability to have sports as an outlet within a couple of weeks' time, so that dramatically changed my life. And yet I started loving music more, loving scripture more, and loving Jesus more. My spiritual journey became more of an adventure, anticipating what was next, trying to pay more attention to what God was saying and being obedient to His "nudges." During the early years of fibromyalgia, the Lord constantly led me to personal worship, prayer and solitude. Fibromyalgia has been part of my journey in varying degrees of intensity for almost 30 years now.

So while a journey of fibromyalgia began, that season was also the foundation of a call to personal worship, eventually leading to an opportunity of leading worship and becoming a pastor of worship. My worship foundation really began in the depths. God led me to seek Him with abandonment and adventure, with submission and worship, being grateful for each day. You see, I finally gave up trying so hard to "crawl out of the well" and declared to the Lord that if I needed to stay there in the pit of despair, I would stay, but I only asked that He be with me and that His Presence would be enough.

Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still and know that I am God." That was a foundation for me. Be still and know that He is God. In that place, at the base of an emotional well pit, worship began. Previously, I had been in meaningful worship experiences and even led some, but this stage was driving a stake in the ground about my LIFE. True worship often starts and even develops with surrender, and that's clearly where I was. Even while depressed, over time, hope was stirred, and the heart and experience of worship began to take shape.

Isaiah 61:3 says, "Provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair." There was a time that I felt sort of branded with a new identity. It's more than just "interesting" to me that often we find fresh identity, vision and purpose out of the

most painful places. It's in those moments where the Lord asked us to walk by faith, not by sight. I'm not suggesting or naïve enough to state that difficult and painful life seasons always result in fresh vision and new purpose. That being said, **positioning ourselves to hear his voice and inviting him to be with us, no matter what our circumstance, is essential for the fruit of true vision and purpose to be realized.** Eventually, in this case, God led me to seek Him with new and fresh understanding.

While I am standing here as a staff person sharing my story of chronic pain and God's provision, I am acutely aware of friends and acquaintances that have life circumstances more difficult and challenging than my own. While there are some similarities, the circumstances are unique for each one. I can still say with confidence that the Lord cares about each of you equally and with great compassion. He wants us to **"lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him"** (Proverbs 3:5-6). Life circumstances can be abrupt and painful, and loss can take us by surprise. I know something about that, most recently with the loss of my brother almost exactly one year ago. He passed away on October 25 from COVID at 65 years of age. Many of you walked with me and Bonnie through that time. Your love, prayers and support were a direct extension of God's love for us! Chronic conditions and terminal diagnosis in general can be debilitating. **All of these can also be daily reminders of our total dependence on the Lord, his strength and the importance of embracing biblical truths.**

There are a lot of chronic conditions here among us. They don't have to be physical. It can be a chronic way of thinking (victim mentality, for example), a chronic way of feeling (nobody loves me), a chronic pattern that needs broken (addictive behaviors). Regardless of the type of condition that is a part of your life, I firmly believe it can result in a deeper knowledge, understanding and love of Jesus. It can be the reminder we need to depend solely on the Lord and His mercy, goodness and faithfulness. In my case, it led me to worship, and it changed everything.

I am so grateful for His faithfulness and goodness. **"My Grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness"** (2 Corinthians 12:9). **"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing is from God and not from us"** (2 Corinthians 4:7). We should not be victims of circumstance but rather pray for healing, protection, embrace truth,

keeping our disposition forward and not back. But whatever circumstance you have, with His presence, whatever the enemy means for evil, He can turn it for our good. **Inviting and embracing His presence and power is the key.**

Just last Sunday evening, our Life Group gathered to eat, share and pray together. It reminded me of very real issues that can assail us so deeply. They can be chronic in nature or sudden and unexpected. Several of us had a current, very serious physical condition. Another involved caring for a child already experiencing a chronic condition at a young age. Some struggled with discouragement, while another was wrestling with significant identity concerns. Yet another just needed to gush out pent up emotional pain. There was amazing support among us as we prayed for one another. But even more so, we all felt a clear sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit bringing truth, and embracing healing, and setting our eyes toward Jesus, our Healer. **The way forward is to walk by faith, to seek wisdom, stay vulnerable, connected, pray and worship Him.**

I meet with a spiritual director/counselor three or four times a year, and he often says, “What is God saying in this situation?” The role of a counselor or spiritual director is wonderful! **The Holy Spirit is our ultimate Counselor and Comforter**, so on a regular basis, we MUST position ourselves in a place to train the skill of hearing “what GOD is saying to me” about my current circumstances or situations. (That might be equivalent to going to a counseling room to talk and listen.)

So today, what is God saying? What does it mean for you to walk by faith regardless of your circumstance?

There are many scriptures and songs that impacted me during those years. I felt led to go back to the Bible that I was using in those years to see what I highlighted, and I’d like to share a very small slice of them with you here in our response. I also want to share some song lyrics. These scriptures and songs deeply ministered to me, and I trust they will to you, as well, to walk by faith.

Please don’t ponder my circumstance but consider and identify yours. I would love for you to consider what “chronic” condition or “impossible trial” you might be willing to surrender to the Lord in light of His promises and truths.

Psalm 138

- 1 I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart;
before the “gods” I will sing your praise.
- 2 I will bow down toward your holy temple
and will praise your name
for your unfailing love and your faithfulness,
- 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve my life.

Psalm 112

- 1 Praise the Lord.
Blessed are those who fear the Lord,
who find great delight in his commands.
- 6 Surely the righteous will never be shaken;
they will be remembered forever.
- 7 They will have no fear of bad news;
their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord.
- 8 Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear;

Psalm 121

A song of ascents.

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
- 2 My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- 3 He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
- 4 indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The Lord watches over you—
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
6 the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
7 The Lord will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
8 the Lord will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

Matthew 6:33

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Nehemiah 8:10

... the Joy of the Lord is my strength!

“Garments of Praise”

Put on the garments of praise
For the spirit of heaviness
Let the oil of gladness
Flow down from Your throne.

Isaiah 40:31

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

Great is Thy faithfulness, oh God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee.

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided.
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.
Morning by morning, new mercies I see,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.

“Goodness of God”

I love You Lord, Your mercy never fails me.
All my days, I’ve been held in Your hand.
From the moment that I wake up until I lay my head,
I will sing of the goodness of God.
All my Life, You have been faithful.
All my life, You have been so, so good.
With every breath that I am able
I will sing of the goodness of God.