

## **Un-Trapped** **Week 1 - The Challenge**

**Romans 8:14-16:** <sup>14</sup> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

In this series we are going to discuss learning to live a life under the direction of the Holy Spirit. If you take the Holy Spirit out of the equation of our life, it would spell b-o-r-i-n-g. Add Him to the equation of life and anything can happen.

I don't know a single believer who hasn't been stressed out over trying to figure out the will of God for their life or situation. We want to help solve the mystery of the will of God. My experience tells me that intellectual analysis usually results in spiritual paralysis. We often try to fit God within the confines of our little intellectual world. But we will never figure God out with our little brains.

**1 Corinthians 2:9-16:** <sup>9</sup> But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. <sup>10</sup> But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup> For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. <sup>13</sup> These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. <sup>14</sup> But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup> But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. <sup>16</sup> For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

I think there is always a little bit of circumstantial uncertainty when it comes to following the direction of the Holy Spirit. Circumstantial uncertainty also goes by another name: **adventure**. Nothing is more unnerving or disorienting than passionately pursuing God. The sooner we come to terms with this spiritual reality, the more we will enjoy the journey.

### **Trapped Christians**

Sometimes I think as believers we live our lives in a trap. We try to remove the danger and the struggle out of life. We grow accustomed to the safety of the trap and we lose our sense for adventure.

**Matthew 19:16-22:** <sup>16</sup> Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" <sup>17</sup> So He said to him, "Why

*do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”<sup>18</sup> He said to Him, “Which ones?” Jesus said, “‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’<sup>19</sup> ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”<sup>20</sup> The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?”<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”<sup>22</sup> But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

Many Christians are in the same boat as the rich young ruler; they are bored with their faith. We know that our sins are forgiven and that we are on our way to heaven, but we still have a feeling that something is missing. Too many of us are settling for spiritual mediocrity instead of striving for spiritual maturity. Jesus is speaking to us and challenging us to come out of our trap, but coming out of the trap means giving up the very thing that we find our security and identity outside of Christ.

Just like the rich young ruler we have a choice to make. We can stay in our trap, end up with everything, and realize it amounts to nothing; or we can come out of our trap and pursue adventures with the Holy Spirit.

There are five traps that we are going to identify in this study that keep us from living the spiritual adventure God destined us to.

1. **Cage of Responsibility** – Over the course of our lifetime the God-ordained passions tend to get buried beneath the day-to-day responsibilities. Soon these responsibilities become spiritual excuses that keep us from adventures in the Spirit. Without even knowing it we begin to practice irresponsible responsibility.
2. **Trap of Routine** – This is a very subtle trap. At some point in our spiritual journey, we trade adventure for routine.
3. **Trap of Assumption** – Our assumptions keeps us from pressing into the spirit. (I’m too old, I’m too young, I’m under qualified, I’m overqualified, It’s too late, It’s too soon).
4. **Trap of Guilt** – The enemy’s tactics haven’t changed much from the Garden of Eden. He tries to neutralize us spiritually by getting us to focus on what we have done wrong in the past. As long as we focus on what we have done wrong in the past, you won’t have energy to dream kingdom dreams.
5. **Trap of Failure** – Ironically this is where our adventures begin. Sometimes our plans have to fail in order for God’s plans to succeed. Divine detours and Divine delays are ways God uses in order to get us where He wants us to go.
6. **Trap of Fear** – We need to quit living as if the purpose of life is to arrive safely at death. Instead, we need to start playing offense with our lives. The world needs more daring people with daring plans.

## Group Discussion Questions

1. What part of this teaching impacted you the most and why?

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2. Have you ever stressed out over trying to figure out the will of God for your life or in a particular situation? How did you handle it?

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3. Give an illustration of how the story of the rich young ruler relates to believers.

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4. Which of the six traps described in this teaching relates to where you are at right now and why?

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## ***Un-Trapped*** **Week 2 - Coming out of the Trap of Routine**

**Matthew 15:1-9:** <sup>1</sup> Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.” <sup>3</sup> He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? <sup>4</sup> For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ <sup>5</sup> But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God”— <sup>6</sup> then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. <sup>7</sup> Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: <sup>8</sup> ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. <sup>9</sup> And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’”

When was the last time you thanked God for keeping us in orbit? Isn't it ironic that we have a hard time believing God for the little stuff, while we take for granted the big stuff? Keeping the planets in orbit is a perpetual miracle. So why aren't we overwhelmed with awe over our annual orbit? The reason is simple: *we take constants for granted.* That is our problem with God. God is the ultimate constant. He is unconditionally loving, omnipotently powerful, and eternally faithful.

**Malachi 3:6:** *For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.*

**Hebrews 13:8:** *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

Our minds are wired in such a way that when a new stimulus is introduced into our environment we become intensely aware of it. But over time we adapt to the sights, sounds, and smells that constantly surround us. Eventually awareness fades, and the constants in our environment become invisible. The extraordinary becomes ordinary and routine.

Spiritual Application: the sacred becomes routine. When this happens, we not only forfeit spiritual adventure but we start losing the joy of our salvation. Pursuing the Holy Spirit is the way we get it back. But that means we have to come out of the trap of routine.

Where have you gotten too comfortable as a Christian? Where has life become too routine? What have you turned a blind eye to, or a deaf ear to? If you let routine rule your life, you will never get where the Holy Spirit wants you to go.

Sacred routines become empty rituals when we do them out of memory instead of imagination. One of the greatest dangers we face spiritually is learning how, and forgetting why – just going through the motions.

**Matthew 6:7:** *And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.*

**Exodus 3:1-5:** <sup>1</sup> *Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." <sup>4</sup> So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup> Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."*

You never know when the Holy Spirit is going to invade your routine life. Have you ever experienced an epiphany – a moment when God unexpectedly and unforgettably invaded your life? This is one of those moments for Moses. God showed up and in an ordinary place – a bush on the backside of the desert – and it became holy ground. This seems to be how the Holy Spirit works. He is predictably unpredictable.

### **Coming Out of The Trap:**

#### **1. Change of Perspective**

**Ephesians 1:17-18:** *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,*

#### **2. Change of Pace**

**Hebrews 12:1-2:** *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

## Group Discussion Questions

1. What part of this teaching impacted you the most and why?

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2. What do you think about the statement, *“we have a hard time believing God for the little stuff, while we take for granted the big stuff?”* How do you think this affects our walk with God?

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3. Where have you gotten too comfortable as a Christian? Where has life become too routine that you have forfeited spiritual adventure?

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4. Have you ever experienced a moment when God unexpectedly and unforgettably invaded your life? If you are comfortable, will you share that moment with the group?

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## ***Un-Trapped*** **Week 3 - Coming Out of the Trap of Assumptions**

**2 Timothy 3:16-17 Amplified:** *Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose, and action), so that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

The Bible says in the beginning God created man, He created him in His image and likeness. But since then man has been making God in his image. If we make this fatal error and reduce God to what we can figure out through human ability, then we are left with a God who can never surprise us, never overwhelm us, nor astonish us, nor rise above us.

When we pick and choose the truths we want to accept, we become trapped in our own logic. Our lives are limited to those things we can comprehend with our limited understanding. We end up in the trap of our own assumptions. And the more assumptions we make, the harder it is to get out of the trap.

**Genesis 15:5:** *Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."*

God promised to give Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. But He did something extraordinary – He took Abraham outside. God gave him an object lesson that caused him to increase his vision. Abraham would never look into the night sky the same way again. The stars became nightly reminders of the promise God had given to him. I think it was God's way of saying, "Don't put a ceiling on what I can do."

**Jeremiah 32:27:** *Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?*

### **Challenging Assumptions**

Children are born with a holy curiosity. They are not only interested in everything; they believe everything is possible. Children don't make assumptions, but instead they live in the realm of all things are possible.

Unfortunately, at some point in our lives, most of us stop asking questions and start making assumptions. We stop stargazing and start staring at the ceiling. I think one of the reasons God gives us children is to challenge our assumptions. Children do not know what cannot be done.

**Romans 4:18-12 NIV:** *Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your*

*offspring be." Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.*

Faith doesn't ignore reality; it just adds God into the equation. Faith is not mindless ignorance; it simply refuses to limit God to logical constraints based on what we think we know. Logic questions God; but faith questions assumptions. Faith is trusting God more than we trust our own assumptions. What assumptions are keeping us trapped?

It seems that the people God uses the most are those who make the fewest assumptions. Joshua didn't assume that the sun could not stand still. Elisha didn't assume that an iron ax head couldn't float. Mary didn't assume that a virgin couldn't conceive. Peter didn't assume that he couldn't walk on water. And Jesus didn't assume that dead people couldn't be raised to life again.

***Philippians 4:13:*** "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".

We need to make a decision today to not live our lives in such a way that the best we can do is the best we can do.

When I fail to pray, the best I can do is the best I can do.  
When I fail to give, the best I can do is the best I can do.  
When I fail to love, the best I can do is the best I can do.

I wish I could tell you that God delivers on His promises in sixty seconds flat. Sometimes He does, but more often He doesn't. God called Abraham out of Ur when he was 75 years old, but Isaac wasn't born until Abraham was 100. God delivered on His promise, but it took 25 years.

God didn't just bless Abraham with a son. Abraham became the father of a nation. And that nation gave birth to the Savior of the world. Like all experiences with God, this one began with one small step of faith.

***Hebrews 11:8:*** *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

If we are going to come out of the trap of assumptions, then we are going to have to be willing to go somewhere we have never been, or do something we have never done. If we take that step of faith, God will go with us. This is how we experience God's best in our lives'.



## Group Discussion Questions

1. What part of this teaching impacted you the most and why?

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2. Give some examples of ways that assumptions have limited believers from experiencing God's best.

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3. How do you think a child-like faith can challenge these assumptions?

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4. How does adding bible faith to the equation challenge our assumptions?

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**Un-Trapped**  
**Week 4 - Coming Out of the Trap of Guilt**

**Hebrews 4:14-16:** *14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

“Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of His grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God’s grace. Every day should be a day of relating to God on the basis of His grace alone” – **Jerry Bridges**

When we sin, guilt is a healthy and holy reflex. Thank God for the conviction of the Holy Spirit that drives us to repentance. But false guilt will immobilize us emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. The moment we confess our sin, God has forgiven us (**1 John 1:9**).

But for most, it is far easier for us to accept God’s forgiveness than to forgive ourselves. We can become fixated on false mistakes that we forfeit future opportunities. We mistakenly think that our past mistakes disqualify us from being used by God. These feelings of guilt become a trap that keeps us from experiencing God’s best.

**Romans 5:20:** *Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,*

**Peter’s Denial**

**Luke 22:54-62:** *54 Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest’s house. But Peter followed at a distance. 55 Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. 56 And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, “This man was also with Him.” 57 But he denied Him, saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.” 58 And after a little while another saw him and said, “You also are of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!” 59 Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, “Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.” 60 But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!” Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” 62 So Peter went out and wept bitterly.*

I wonder if Peter felt a twinge of guilt every time he heard a rooster crow? Have you noticed how different stimuli trigger different memories? Seemingly insignificant sights, sounds, and smells can evoke powerful memories.

**1 Peter 5:8:** *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

Satan prowls around like a roaring lion. He is the accuser of the brethren (**Revelation 12:10**), and his tactics have not changed since the Garden of Eden. He wants to remind us of our greatest failures over and over again. He knows if we focus all our energy on past failures, then we will have no energy left over to dream kingdom dreams or pursue kingdom purposes, and ultimately never experience God's best for our lives'.

Jesus focused so much of His teachings on reconditioning reflexes:

Pray for those who persecute you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you; if someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles

Nothing reconditions our spiritual reflexes like prayer.

**Luke 22:31-32 Amplified:** *Simon, Simon (Peter), listen! Satan has asked excessively that [all of] you be given up to him [out of the power and keeping of God], that he might sift [all of] you like grain, but I have prayed especially for you [Peter], that your [own] faith may not fail; and when you yourself have turned again, strengthen and establish your brethren.*

Praying to forgive others doesn't just make you feel better about them; it keeps you on your path to experiencing God's best for your life.

We need to love people when they least expect it and least deserve it. If you want to impact someone's life, love them when they least expect it and least deserve it. When people blow it we have an opportunity to impact their lives forever. Remember, none of us deserve God's grace.

**Let me challenge you to love someone this week that least expects it and who least deserves it.**

Who do you need to forgive? By definition it won't be someone who deserves it. But if you have the courage to forgive them, it will set you free. It will recondition your heart in the process.

Sin – Grace = Guilt

Sin + Grace = Gratitude

The grace of God is the difference between drowning in guilt and swimming in gratitude. When our spiritual reflexes have been reconditioned by the grace of God, it frees us up to come out of the trap of guilt and pursue God's best.

## Group Discussion Questions

1. What part of this teaching impacted you the most and why?

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2. How can a fixation on our past failures keep us from pursuing future opportunities? Give an example.

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3. What spiritual encouragement can we glean from Jesus' prayer for Peter in **Luke 22:31-32**?

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4. How can an understanding of God's grace help us get out of the trap of guilt?

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**Un-Trapped**  
**Week 5 - Coming Out of the Trap of Failure**

**2 Corinthians 4:7-10:** *7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. 8 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*

**Four Facts about Failure:**

1. Everybody fails - *“If at first you don’t succeed, you’re running about average.”*
2. Nobody enjoys failure - *“Failure has no friends.”* – **John F. Kennedy**  
*“If at first you don’t succeed, destroy all evidence that you ever tried.”*
3. Anybody can learn how to fail forward. - *“If stupidity got us into this mess, then why can’t it get us out?”* – **Will Rodgers**
4. Somebody needs to teach others how to fail forward.

The major difference between average people and achieving people is their perception and response to failure. In Acts chapter 27 we read about how Paul was near the end of his missionary career when he experienced a shipwreck. He was on his way to Rome to stand trial before Caesar when his ship sank.

**Acts 28:1-4:** *1 Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta. 2 And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. 3 But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live.”*

What a redefinition of what it means to have a bad day. A shipwreck alone qualifies as a bad day; but a shipwreck and snakebite? This is a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. But God has a way of turning what seems like bad luck into a big break. He turns shipwrecks and snakebites into supernatural opportunities that somehow serve His purposes.

**Acts 28:5-10:** *5 But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. 6 However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god. 7 In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. 8 And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. 9 So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed. 10*

*They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary.*

Without this Divine detour, Paul and Publius would have never met. It took a shipwreck to strategically position Paul at this place. It took a snakebite to set up a divine appointment with Publius. But when you are following God's direction for your life, you never know where you'll go or whom you'll meet. God used a shipwreck and snakebite to set up an island-wide revival.

Sometimes a closed door is the very thing that gets us to where God wants us to go. While our failed plan can be incredibly discouraging and disorienting, God often uses the things that seem to be taking us off our course to keep us on His course.

***Psalm 37:23-24:*** *The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand.*

Few things are as disorienting as in-between times. Nothing rattles us like a bad diagnosis, a pink slip, or divorce papers, but the upside is that it will cause us to seek God. Disorientation has a way of driving us to our knees. This is why the bad things that happen to us can turn out to be the best things that happen to us.

### **How could Paul overcome his past failures and endure the setbacks along the way on his journey?**

1. Paul realized that God was the source of his strength. *"Anything done in our own strength will either fail miserably or succeed even more miserably."*
2. Paul refused to allow difficulties on the outside get inside of him. *"We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed."*
3. Paul could continue without understanding everything. *"We are perplexed, but not in despair."*
4. Paul knew that God was with him during the tough times. *"We are persecuted, but not forsaken."*
5. Paul didn't allow the event to overshadow the process. *"We are struck down, but not destroyed."*

### **Two Perspectives that enabled Paul to Fail Forward:**

1. The Grace Perspective – **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**
2. His God Perspective - **2 Timothy 1:8-12**

## Group Discussion Questions

1. What part of this teaching impacted you the most and why?

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2. Have you ever experienced a Divine detour in your life? If so, please give an example.

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3. How do you handle the “in-between” times in your life? Can you share an example with the group?

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4. Paul had two perspectives that helped him to fail forward – the grace perspective and his God perspective. How could the application of these perspectives help us to fail forward?

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## ***Un-Trapped*** **Week 6 - Coming Out of the Trap of Fear**

**2 Timothy 1:7:** *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

One of the characteristics that keep us from pursuing God's best, is fear. Too many of us have a better safe than sorry approach to the will of God. What we need today are Christians who are more afraid of missing opportunities than making mistakes. We need people who are more afraid of life-long regrets than temporary failure – People who dare to dream the unthinkable and attempt the impossible!

### ***Daring Plans***

**1 Samuel 14:1-10:** *1 Now it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who bore his armor, "Come, let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side." But he did not tell his father. 2 And Saul was sitting in the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron. The people who were with him were about six hundred men. 3 Ahijah the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, was wearing an ephod. But the people did not know that Jonathan had gone. 4 Between the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on the other side. And the name of one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. 5 The front of one faced northward opposite Michmash, and the other southward opposite Gibeah. 6 Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few." 7 So his armorbearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart." 8 Then Jonathan said, "Very well, let us cross over to these men, and we will show ourselves to them. 9 If they say thus to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stand still in our place and not go up to them. 10 But if they say thus, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up. For the LORD has delivered them into our hand, and this will be a sign to us."*

This takes place in the early days of Saul's kingship. The Philistines were threatening to invade Israel's western boarder. Someone would have to take a step if this invasion would be stopped. That someone was Jonathan. He did not allow fear to dictate his decision.

Jonathan didn't wait for something to happen, he made something happen. He followed the conviction of his faith. Instead of following the dictates of fear, he chose to walk by faith.

I believe no other single factor has more impact on our success or failure than our ability to handle the force of fear. Just as surely as faith moves the hand of God, fear moves the hand of the Devil.



**How can we identify fear?** By looking for one or two things: Panic or paralysis. Either one of them will keep you from walking in the promises of God.

The first effect, panic, is by far the most visible and blatant manifestation of the force of fear. Panic is uncontrollable terror, irrational fright; an irresistible desire to run away. Panic is the spirit of fear producing the emotion of fear. And though it may be the most easily recognized manifestation of fear, it is *not* the most dangerous.

The most damaging effect of the force of fear is paralysis. It is far more dangerous because it's so subtle. The Devil's goal in producing paralysis is simply to keep you from doing anything. He neutralizes your God-given power to change your life by trapping you in indecision.

### ***Five Steps to Overcome Fear***

#### **1. Take A Step**

Taking a step is a prerequisite to overcoming the force of fear. So, take a step toward the closest promise of God. The Bible says God always provides a way of escape. So, if circumstances have you backed into a corner, look for an open door of escape and move toward it.

#### **2. Get Mad!**

Handling fear is very often something you have to do alone. That's because very often the Devil will use godly people, the very people you respect most, to reinforce the fears you're fighting. Don't look for someone else to get rid of your fears for you. It is a charge that you alone have to undertake.

#### **3. Remember Past Victories**

Build your confidence in God's ability to deliver you by remembering past victories (David – the lion and the bear). Confidence in God's ability to deliver is our greatest weapon against the pressure generated by fear. Past victories are easily lost in the fog of fear and pressure, so you must be diligent to dwell on those confidence-building memories of past victories.

#### **4. Talk to Fear**

You can be assured it is talking to you! When fear talks to you, talk back to it with "it is written". Speak to it with stout words of faith.

#### **5. Run to It!**

The final step in conquering fear is to run - not away from your fear but toward it.

## Group Discussion Questions

1. What part of this teaching impacted you the most and why?

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2. The force of fear can produce paralysis in our life. Give an example of how this occurs. What can be done to overcome it?

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3. Which steps for overcoming fear helped you the most and why?

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4. Now that we have completed this series, do you feel more confident to dream the unthinkable and attempt the impossible? If so, how has it helped you?

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