



## Adventures and Big Lives

Ephesians 1:11-12 NIV

**In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.**

### What Has Been Your Biggest Adventure?

The greatest adventures are usually unexpected and unplanned. Just a couple of months after Mary Jo and I got married, her sales team earned an all-expenses paid trip to Rio de Janeiro. We had the time of our lives and even got to spend a couple days on the world famous Ipanema beach. Because I loved body surfing as I have mentioned before, I hit the waves. Mary Jo sat on the beach and watched as I swam out to where the surf was breaking. It was so different from the beaches of northern California. The water was warm, the sun was hot, and the waves were big and powerful. Several times I rode sizeable waves and exulted in the wildness of them. I went out a little bit further and caught a wave that just kept surging and surging. I found myself at the top of it looking down at the water below, nearly twenty feet up. It felt like I was caught in the hand of God as He was about to hurl me through space. The wave kept rising and my body was half in, half out of the water. Finally, the wave dropped, and it slammed me into the sand at the bottom and dragged me into shore. I was too stunned by the adrenalin rush I felt to realize how close I was to losing my life. My chest was bruised by the impact and sand was all over me. It took me a few minutes to catch my bearing and almost as soon as I stumbled up to where my wife had been watching, beach patrol came over to us and ordered us out of the water. They said the waves were too large for safe swimming. I wasn't disappointed. I felt like I had dodged a bullet and was just happy to still be alive.

There is nothing like the thrill of doing something that you know is bigger than you, that rises above the ordinary. Our passage today hints at just that, extraordinary living. **In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.** (Ephesians 1:11-12 NIV) This is a fascinating declaration made here and it is a bit tough to see what is meant in the English text, but it is essentially this. Everything God has done to bring us salvation has an endgame. It will make God look good. This may sound self-centered on His part but be careful before you critique God's motives. What our Lord has done in us, transforming us, and adding to our lives the Holy Spirit, is a master stroke and will be acknowledged at every level within the Kingdom of God. It is comparable to Leonardo DaVinci putting together the Mona Lisa. Did he paint it to have to his credit the most acclaimed painting of all time? No, he painted the Mona Lisa with quality and perfection in mind. The result was the universal praise it garnered. Did Shakespeare write his plays so that he would be remembered until the world ends for his story-telling. Of course not, he wrote because creativity flowed through him like a torrent and it could not be held back. That is precisely what Christ has done with you. He used salvation to make you perfect and what He has accomplished in you will be acknowledged! Glory will come naturally.

Having had four children in sports, all of whom have done well, I found it happening numerous times that a parent would point at me in the stands when one of my kids did something great either on the court or ball field. That is how it is with God and you. Hebrews 12: 1 indicates the A-list observers in the stands, watching us. Having spoken of such spiritual luminaries as Noah, Abraham, Moses and even the converted prostitute Rahab in Hebrews 11, the Bible tells us that we are being watched by them all. **Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.** (Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV) At some point or another as you take this adventure with Christ to new levels, God will be cheered because of what you have done. Glory to God is the natural outcome of your life being transformed by Christ and the Holy Spirit living in you! In an underappreciated revelation, the beginning of Job tells us that God pointed out to Satan what a terrific saint Job was. **Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."** (Job 1:8 NIV) God was watching...and so was Satan. Whether you like it or not, you are on display both among the greats in heaven as well as before the enemy of all God's people, Satan.

Consider a couple examples of how this could have played out in the past. Moses is listed as one of those taking note of how God's people are doing. Just after he left this life, the leadership reins of the nation of Israel were handed over to his apprentice Joshua. Joshua sat under Moses and learned from him for forty years. He saw the mistakes he made and the great acts of faith. He was able to be there when Moses and the Lord talked together and saw the ten commandments handed over to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Joshua and eleven other spies were given the high honor of going into the Promised Land and bringing back a report of how it looked. When ten of the other spies tried to discourage the people of Israel from trying to conquer Canaan, Joshua along with another spy Caleb whole-heartedly called for Israel to advance into the land and take it. For forty years Joshua was Moses's greatest cheerleader and ally in the monumental task of leading God's people. Now, Moses was gone and Joshua was commissioned by the Lord to lead Israel into the land He had promised them. The very first challenge he had was to cross the Jordan River with all of Israel when it was at flood stage. God had said that He would help them get across if Joshua just trusted Him and Joshua did. With the Ark of the Covenant being carried on the shoulders of the priests and them leading the way, as soon as the feet of the priests touched the water, the Jordan River backed up and everyone, all two million plus of them, walked across on dry ground. Imagine Moses pumping his fist in the air! "That's my Joshua! I knew he would do it!" He might even have pointed a finger towards the Lord and given Him that look of "yes!". And then just a couple weeks later, as Joshua and the fighting men marched around Jericho the seventh time and the walls collapsed outward and the entire army went streaming in to take the city, Moses may have shouted for joy and screamed his praise to God. "Hallelujah!", might have burst out of Him. Joshua certainly made God look good! Heaven must have rejoiced in what they saw!

One of the lesser known lights in the New Testament is a widow named Dorcas. The scripture says of her that she was always doing good and helping the poor. You have to believe someone was watching her with God, maybe her parents or some of the poor who she had helped before they passed away. When Dorcas grew sick and then died, there was a large collection of widows and friends who were completely distraught. She had been so kind and generous. They were beside themselves with grief. Hearing though that Peter the Apostle was staying in a town not far away, a couple of devout Christians sent messengers to see if he would come and raise Dorcas from the dead. Imagine the audacity of that!! If someone proposed going to get a pastor to raise your mother or grandfather from the dead, that person would be looked at as crazy. Who does that? Yet, that is exactly what happened, and it is not hard for me to imagine a crowd of witnesses with God shouting "amen" and "praise the Lord" when the messengers were given their directions. We can't imagine doing that ourselves, but the believers thought they would give it a shot and see what the Lord might do through Peter. When Peter arrived, widows were surrounding the dead body of Dorcas. **Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had**

**made while she was still with them.** (Acts 9:39 NIV) Clearly God was paying attention to what was happening because after Peter prayed for her, the Lord raised Dorcas from the dead. Can you picture all the shouting and clapping and fist pumping in heaven when God's glory was revealed that day? Of course, there had to have been quite a bit also at Dorcas's house too!

You may not have the faith Dorcas's friends had to try and find a Christian to raise a loved one from the dead and you might not possess the spectacular calling Joshua did leading an entire nation into battle at God's direction, but you are made to take on great endeavors as well and what you do for God's sake will raise the roof of heaven with Christ praises too. During this pandemic you could write encouraging notes or make phone calls that inspire faith in Christ. You could become a prayer warrior who prays for people you see and meet. You might bring food to someone who is homeless or pay for the person's order who is waiting behind you in the drive through. Find out the name of a missionary and contact that person to see what you can do to help that ministry. Start making plans for a mission trip yourself, one that would take faith in Christ and push you spiritually. Look for a widow or elderly couple who needs home repairs or work on a car and figure out a way to help. Give gospel tracts to people and boldly get the name of Jesus into the hands of others. Picture Christ cheering you on; Moses and Paul, the Apostles and people who are awaiting you in heaven giving fist pumps and loud "amens" as you bring Christ honor by what you do. Overlook an offense, forgive a debt, walk away from an argument. Give God a reason to cheer as He watches you this week.