

Lent to Easter 2015

Upside uMOI & Inside



Lent 2 — The God Who Does The Spectacular

Focus of Lent to Easter 2015

What does **renewal** look like for those already committed to Christ and his church (CMF)? Committed believers may not so much need a “reset” as **an invitation not to settle**.

God often turns our **expectations** “Upside Down & Inside Out” and calls us to **rethink** what we thought we knew, what we thought we were done with, and to discover more.

It was the “religious” who thought they had arrived and could learn nothing new about God and his plans for them.

So, what God needs from the faithful is **a willingness to be teachable** and to give ourselves to the way of **deep change**.

Faith (trust) in God to do the spectacular in our lives is dependent on our ability to see or imagine who he is, what he wants to do, and what he can do.

Genesis 17:1-7 NLT

¹ When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. ² I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”

³ At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, ⁴ “This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! ⁵ What’s more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!

⁷ “I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

Genesis 17:15-18 NLT

¹⁵ Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶ And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.”

¹⁷ Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?” ¹⁸ So Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael live under your special blessing!”

Genesis 17:19-22 NLT

¹⁹ But God replied, “No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. ²⁰ As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹ But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.”

²² When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.

“Abraham is not depicted here as one whose faith in God has reached full maturity; rather he is one whose faith must still be pushed beyond its present limits. His faith must grow if he is to continue to put his trust in God’s promise.”

John Sailhamer, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*

Paul, Romans 4:13-14 NLT

¹³ Clearly, God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God's law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith. ¹⁴ If God's promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless.

Romans 4:16-17 NLT

¹⁶ So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe. ¹⁷ That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations." This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.

Romans 4:18-22 NLT

¹⁸ Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, “That’s how many descendants you will have!” ¹⁹ And Abraham’s faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb.

²⁰ Abraham never wavered in believing God’s promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. ²¹ He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. ²² And because of Abraham’s faith, God counted him as righteous.

Romans 4:23-25 NLT

²³ And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded ²⁴ for our benefit, too, assuring us that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in him, the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God.

“Do we share Abraham’s faith? Do we look in love, gratitude and trust to the creator God who promises impossible things and brings them to pass? Have we learned to celebrate this God, and to live as one family with all those who share this faith and hope?”

Mark 8:31-33 NLT

³¹ Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. ³² As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things.

³³ Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. “Get away from me, Satan!” he said. “You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God’s.”

“If people can’t *see* what God is doing,
they stumble all over themselves;
But when they attend to what he reveals,
they are most blessed.”

Proverbs 29:18 MSG

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world,
but let God transform you into a new person by
changing the way you think.”

Paul, Romans 12:2 NLT



*Rick Hanson, Ph.D.
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“Our future shapes us to the degree that our anticipations or worries are re-presented in concrete ways. People who are highly motivated or optimistic tend to imagine the future in concrete, vivid, positive ways. They imaginatively see, hear, and feel possible best-case scenarios in the future as though they were already present, and this concrete re-presentation motivates them to work to bring about this imagined future.”

Greg Boyd, *Seeing is Believing* (pg 75)

Imagining the Spectacular

- Your picture of God, your knowledge of his desires, and experience of what he can do governs your spiritual growth
- Faith in God to do the spectacular in our lives is largely dependent upon our ability to imagine a hopeful future
- Information is abstract, but a disciplined imagination can form concrete experiences, solidifying faith over time
- When we are intentional in getting to know God in Christ, he will call us to trust him—letting go of fear and disbelief that immobilizes us, making it impossible to grow in faith
- God wants to do the spectacular, leaving his mark on your life; your part is to believe it with all your heart and mind

Paul, Ephesians 3:20-21 NIV

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.



Upside uMOI & Inside



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www.christiansburgmennonite.org

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