



BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

May 2022

Editor Janelle Daum

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“And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, ‘If You will give the Ammonites into my hand, then whatever comes out from the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the Ammonites shall be the Lord’s and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.’”

Judges 11:30-31

A businessman took a flight across the country. After the plane reached cruising altitude the flight attendants began serving the first-class passengers a meal. As the man picked up his fork to eat his salad he noticed a big black roach just beneath a lettuce leaf. He was so disgusted by the experience that he wrote an angry letter of complaint to the airline. He unloaded his anger on the president of the airline, threatening to never fly with them again.

E-mail: jbvbeditor@hotmail.com your article.

When he returned home at the end of his trip he was surprised to find a special-delivery letter waiting for him. It was perfectly typed on the airline's letterhead – and it was personally signed by the president of the airline. It dripped with diplomacy. The president assured the man that immediate action was being taken. “I have temporarily pulled that particular aircraft off the line. We will strip the upholstery from all the seats and remove the carpet from the floor. New fabric has been ordered. It will not return to service until everything is in perfect condition.” The letter continued, “The flight attendant who served your meal has been reprimanded. I assure you her job is in jeopardy. You have my word that such an embarrassing incident will never occur again. We hope you will continue to fly our airline.”

The businessman was really impressed with the prompt reply and the action taken. But then he noticed something unusual. The secretary who had typed the president's letter had inadvertently included the original complaint letter in the same envelope. As the man looked over the letter he noticed that the president had written a note to the secretary. Obviously penned in a hurry, it said, “Send this guy the standard roach letter.”

Would you agree that is no way for a business to act? We expect a business to have high standards and to treat customers in the right way. The same is true of the church. The standards of the church are no higher than the standards of the people who are in it.

Last month we started looking at visionary faith as it is illustrated in the life of Jephthah. As we continue in Judges 11 we see that Jephthah was a man who followed through on tough commitments. This brings faith down to the nitty-gritty of our everyday lives. Our faith is seen in our willingness to make and to keep tough commitments.

This month we look at how Jephthah made the tough commitment to keep his word. Last month we saw that Jephthah had just taken over as leader over all of Gilead. His willingness to forgive the injustice of the people had put him in this position of leadership. Believe it or not, that act of forgiveness was the easy part of his faith. It's often easier to act in a faithful way when the pressure is on and you know that people are watching you. It's more difficult to act in faithful ways in the day-to-day world where it's only us and God watching. That was Jephthah's new challenge.

In v.29 we are told that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah and he led the people into battle at Mizpah. Just prior to the battle Jephthah made the vow before God that is seen in vv.30-31. It left him in a difficult position.

It's important that we have a clear understanding of what Jephthah was vowing before the Lord. It's clear in v.31 that he was expecting a person to come out of the house. The statement "whatever comes out from the doors of my house to meet me" always refers to people. It's also clear that he was not considering a human sacrifice. Jephthah is always presented to us as a godly man. He was aware of the biblical admonitions against human sacrifice and would never have done it. The fact that he is mentioned among the people of great faith in Hebrews 11 tells us that he would never have done something that God declared was an abomination.

The essence of Jephthah's vow was that he would give to God whatever God chose to claim as His own... whatever came out of the house first to greet Jephthah. Jewish commentators from the Middle Ages point out that the last two clauses of the vow are not identical... "it shall be the Lord's" never refers to animals to be sacrificed, and

“burnt offering” never refers to human beings. So his vow was that whatever, or whoever, met him would be offered to God in accordance with God’s holy and righteous procedures. It’s a vow of humble submission that allows God to claim His own reward.

God kept His part of the covenant. Verses 32-33 tell us that the sons of Ammon were defeated and completely subdued by the Gileadites.

Then came the time for Jephthah to keep his part of the covenant. When he returned home his daughter came out to meet him to welcome him home. Verse 34 tells us that she was his only daughter which makes this commitment even harder to keep.

Jephthah is left with an integrity check. God had kept His part of the covenant. What was Jephthah going to do? In Leviticus 27 God provided allowances that made it possible for Jephthah to redeem his daughter from this vow, but God had been faithful and Jephthah knew that he had to be faithful in return, even though it tore his heart out. As we will see next month, Jephthah followed through and kept his word to God.

One of the tough commitments that comes when we live by visionary faith is that we keep our word, even when it means that we are going to suffer greatly for it. We all face the integrity check of tough commitments. What we do with those commitments shows our level of faith. If we are not people of integrity then we are not people of visionary faith.

Blessings,
Pastor Randy

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR MAY AND BEYOND

EVENTS CALENDAR 2022:

Sunday's

9:30 a.m. Worship Service

10:30 a.m. Fellowship

10:45 a.m. Sunday School for the Whole Family

Wednesday's

7 p.m. Middle & High School Youth Group (no Awana)

Thursday's

3 p.m. Prayer & Women's Bible Study at BVBC

6:30 p.m. Women's Evening Bible Study meets at various homes.

Saturday's

8 a.m. Men's Bible Study on Zoom (1st & 3rd Saturdays of the month)

Monday, May 2, 6 p.m., Spiritual Vision Team Meeting

Thursday, May 5 - Saturday, May 7, Youth Group Rummage Sale

Sunday, May 8, Mother's Day

Tuesday, May 10, 2 p.m., Discipleship Team Meeting

Sunday, May 22, Newsletter Articles are Due

Monday, May 30, Memorial Day Office Closed

Monday, June 6 - Saturday, June 11, Youth Group Trip to the
Creation Museum

Sunday, July 17 - Thursday, July 21, Vacation Bible School

CRISIS IN UKRAINE



Today, we praise God for allowing His church in Ukraine to be a place of refuge. Here is an update from a church partner in Ukraine:

Our situation is tense. The air raid sirens are constantly going off. We can hear explosions. The air defense system is working. Today a rocket hit a nearby town. Otherwise, everything is OK. We help people with food and many spend the night in the church. Yesterday 30 people spend the night in the church basement. Every night we have at least 10.

We organized for three busses and brought people out of a conflict zone. They are being bombed, shelled and shot. We also took some humanitarian supplies there. Right now, we are running a food bank. We are filling the stress.

We take refugees to the train station or the border. In a word, we are trying to be Christians during war. Praise God for everything!

MISSIONARY OF THE MONTH

Crystal Springs

Camping with a Christian Purpose

Are you looking for a camp that combines good, clean fun with sound Christian teaching?

Crystal Springs Baptist Camp is the answer! This camp combines both worlds in a beautiful lake side setting. Located 65 miles east of Bismarck, Crystal Springs is an oasis in the midst of North Dakota's gently rolling plains. It was founded in 1954 with a special purpose in mind: Present the love of Jesus Christ to all who attend, and invite each to have a personal relationship with Him.

Crystal Springs Baptist Camp is affiliated with the North American Baptist Conference, but is also available for rental to other church groups and denominations.

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MISSIONARY UPDATES

AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



April 4, 2022

A STEP OF FAITH

“Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1).

What was going through Abram’s mind and heart when God gave Him this instruction? Was he excited and eager to go? Was he wanting to leave his current situation? Did he really even know who God was before God told him to go? Was he anxious about leaving without knowing where He was going?

The Bible doesn’t really give us any answers to these questions, but it does tell us that “Abram went, as the Lord had told him” (v 4). What amazing faith he must have had!

Later, we see Abraham’s faith again. God promised to make him a great nation, and he believed God. However, he was old and Sarah was barren. He saw no way for God to bring about this nation from him.

In Romans 4, we read this about Abraham: “**In hope he believed against hope**, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, ‘So shall your offspring be.’ **He did not weaken in**

faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ***No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised***" (vv 18-21, emphasis mine).

These words convict me every time I read them or think about them. How do I have hope against hope? How can I be unwavering concerning God's promises? Am I fully convinced that God is able to do what He has promised?

So now I face a step of faith, much like Abraham. Marissa and I have been led by the Lord to start this house as a place for new Faith Academy staff to transition to the Philippines. We are so excited for this, as is just about everyone we talk to. They see the need and the value of such a house. We have had people donate money already. Others have donated items. Others have said they will donate some furniture when we have a house. And God has provided a house helper for us already.

But we still don't have a house.

And we don't have any single women coming yet for next year.

How do I have hope against hope? How can I be unwavering concerning God's promises? Am I fully convinced that God is able to do what He has promised? We looked at one house that seemed so perfect for us and this vision, but the owners decided not to lease it out (we're still praying they change their minds if it is the house God wants us to have!). We looked at another house that was just not what we needed for this vision. Afterwards, my contact asked me if I knew how rare it was to find a house close to school like we are looking for. I do know.

But I also know **that we have a God who is unlimited**. We serve a God who says: "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything

too hard for me?” (Jeremiah 32:27). We serve a God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10). We serve a God who leads and directs us and then provides all that we need. Sometimes He shows us where we are going and how He will provide. Other times He just tells us to go, and He’ll show up as we obey.

This is so hard. My faith feels so small and so far from what it needs to be. It’s so hard to have faith and to trust when we don’t see. We don’t see any houses available. We don’t know who will be staying with us next year. We don’t know where all of the furniture and household items and air conditioners and appliances will come from. But we trust God and believe He is calling us to this ministry. We trust that He will work and do mighty things for the glory of His name and the good of His people.

And so we ask that you join us in this step of faith. Would you consider being a part of what God is doing? Would you pray with us that God would provide a house by June? Would you consider giving a one-time gift to help us furnish this home when God provides it?

In all likelihood, the house will be completely empty (no appliances, furniture, curtains, etc). In the community where we live, people are often selling items as they leave or move, and we’d love to avail of those as they become available in order to save money and not have to buy everything new when we move in.

The hope is to have a house within the next two months and move in June, right after school is out. Please join us in prayer as we wait for the right house. Pray that we would be in contact with the right people to find it. Pray that we can find what we are looking for in our price range. Pray that God will bring women to stay with us next year. Pray that through this process, God will deepen our faith and our walk with Him. Pray that God would be glorified in this story.

In Christ, Amanda

“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” Ephesians 3:20-21

Praises

- March has been great! I’ve really enjoyed getting to have the kids in class full time this month. It is SO life-giving after nearly two years online. We also just moved to Alert Level 1 in my province, so we will have fewer restrictions, though we still have to wear masks and social distance.
- We started having in-person PHAT again (Pursuing Holiness and Truth - our after-school middle school youth-group/Bible study groups). I’m co-leading a group of 8th grade girls. They are such a joy, and it is so great to be able to do this again!
- I am not feeling too stressed out with teaching. I’ve been able to have a decent life/work balance. It is much more complicated to teach hybrid, but I’m mostly in the hang of it. I do hope we don’t have to do it after this year, though!

Prayer Requests

- Pray that God would provide us a house for our ministry!
- Pray for more staff for Faith Academy next year. We really are in need of Middle School English, science, computers, and Bible teachers. High school also needs science and social studies teachers.
- Marissa is having ACL surgery on Friday. Pray for a smooth surgery and that she would recover well. It will take a while to fully recover. We have next week off of school, so she’ll hang out at my house for her initial recovery.

April 16, 2022

PowerUp! Prayer Update

Praises

- My friend's ACL surgery was successful, and there were many God moments in the past five days. She is recovering well and ahead of schedule with rehab!
- It has been nice to have a break to rest and hang out with friends without going anywhere. :)

Prayer Requests

- Pray for continued healing for my friend and wisdom as I help her recover (she is recovering at my house).
- Pray that I would be diligent to take time to get prepared for this last block of school. It can be easy to just hang out and not work!
- Pray that God would provide a house for our ministry for new female staff members.

Ongoing Prayer Requests

- That God will revive the hearts of the staff and students this year, that we would passionately follow after Him.
- That God would provide a house for Marissa and I by June that we can use to start our ministry for new single female staff members.
- That God will bring the staff members that we need for the next school year.

PAUL & JANET HARKNESS - AWANA



April 11, 2022

Greetings Everyone,

Past Activity...

April 1-2 We had a great time and great conversations with Pastors and Church Leaders at the Nebraska Association of Regular Baptist Churches Spring Conference in Gretna, Nebraska, talking with several who do not yet have Awana

April 6 Observed the Awana Club in Winner, SD

April 7 Had a conversation about resilient discipleship over lunch with a Pastor who doesn't have Awana at his church

April 10 Privileged to give the Palm Sunday message at our church

Coming Up...

April 13 Awana Awards Night in Platte, SD

April 14 Seeking to talk with a Pastor on the way home

April 15-17 Good Friday - Resurrection Sunday: Taking time to reflect on this glorious event in the world's history

For Additional Prayer...

Janet and I hope to take an extensive ministry trip in May. Prayer the details can fall into place.

Paul Harkness, Awana Missionary, Serving Nebraska, SE Wyoming, Southern South Dakota and SW Minnesota

SHAN REED - JAPAN



April 12, 2022

Dear Friends and Family,

“The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared the spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.” Luke 23:55-56

As we approach resurrection Sunday, in the story of Jesus, the days seem to become darker and darker. That Sabbath must have been an incredibly long day for the women and the other disciples. The darkness and silence of that day followed by the amazement of the resurrection on Sunday remind me of the hope we can have in even our darkest and most difficult times. Hallelujah!

Thank you for your prayers for me, the Komyo Church, and the ministry in Japan.

*Praise the Lord that soon after I sent my last update we were able to start meeting in person for worship services again at Komyo Christian Church!

*Praise God that the leadership at Komyo Church and Kongo Church (our sister JBC church in the next town) decided to rent the same hall as we did for Christmas Eve so that we can all worship together and sing praises on Resurrection Sunday. Pray for us as we

plan, prepare, and meet together.

*Praise God for how he continues to work in the lives of the youth in our Yeah! meetings at church. The youth will be singing a song and giving the children's story at the joint service. It was fun to watch them work together as they made preparations at our most recent gathering last week. Pray for these precious students as they learn how to love Jesus and live for him in an environment which does not easily accept or try to understand those who are different from the norm.

*Pray for me as I also teach English conversation classes. May our conversations be filled with the love and joy of Jesus so that the students will be drawn to him.

*Praise the Lord that I am going to get to go on a short retreat called "Still Waters" at the end of the month with a few other missionaries from around Japan. Pray for times of rest and refreshment and safe travels.

I pray that as you anticipate Resurrection Sunday you, too, will cling to the hope in the midst of the darkness and sadness in the world and in your own life.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Shan in Japan

"He is not here; he has risen!" Luke 24:6a

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To partner with us by your donations:

Go to <https://www.awana.org/missionary/harkness/>

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How To Give to North American Baptist Missionaries:

Step 1: Go to the NAB's new missions webpage **nabonmission.org**.

Step 2: Click on the “missionaries” label.

Step 3: Click on the national missionary to whom you would like to designate your support.

Step 4: Click on the “give to..” button on the national workers page.

Step 5: Fill out the form. All gifts given through the NAB are tax deductible.

**BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH
PRESENTING A CHANGELESS CHRIST FOR A CHANGING WORLD**