

That's exactly what Jonathan did. He decided to pick a fight with the Philistines. He was tired of backing down, so he stood up. He was tired of playing defense, so he decided to go on the offensive. He was tired of settling for the status quo, so he decided to disrupt it.

How do you pick a fight? It starts when we get on our knees. Prayer is picking a fight with the enemy. It's spiritual warfare. Prayer is a moment when God fights for us. But we can't just hit our knees. We also have to take a step, and take a stand. When we do, we never know what God will do next.

In trusting in God, don't worry about next week or next year. As Dale Carnegie says, "Live in day-tight compartments. Don't stew about the futures. Just live each day until bedtime." Take your challenge one day at a time! Don't worry about results. If it's the right thing, the results are God's responsibility. Focus on doing the right thing for the right reason. It will take all-out effort, but you can do all things through Christ, who gives you strength. A failed attempt is not failing.

Failing is not trying. If you are trying, you are succeeding. Going all out is giving it everything you've got.

On October 31, 1517, a monk named Martin Luther picked a fight with the religious leaders at that time. Luther criticized and attacked the selling of indulgences. 'Indulgence' is a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for sins. In other words, a ticket to heaven. He posted ninety-five theses on the door of ALL Saints' Church in Wittenberg, Germany, and ignited the Protestant Reformation. Finally, at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Martin Luther was summoned by the Holy Roman emperor Charles V and put on trial for his beliefs. Instead of recanting, Martin Luther took a stand and said: "My conscience is taken captive by God's word, I cannot and will not recant anything. For to act against our conscience is neither safe for us, nor open to us. On this I take my stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen." For whom do you need to stand? For whom do you go all out? Take the first step! Climb the cliff. Pick the fight. Perhaps the Lord will act in your behalf.

September 24, 2017

ALL IN (3)

All Out: Rim Huggers

1 Samuel 14:1-14

Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

How many of you have been to the Grand Canyon? How did you like the place? I know the Grand Canyon is one of the seven natural wonders of the world. I heard many people are amazed at its magnificent and spectacular view. But, unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to visit there, so it is one of the places I want to visit someday. In his book, "ALL IN" Mike tells about his experience of hiking the Grand Canyon from rim to rim with his son, Parker. It was a memorable experience for them, but it took an all-out effort to come out on the other side. When they reached the south rim, they saw people from the hotel staring at the scenic view. Mike calls them rim huggers. Mike and Parker stood right next to the rim huggers looking at the very same view, but it was totally different. The rim huggers saw it secondhand, but Mike and Parker had experienced it firsthand. Some of those rim huggers might have knowledge about the canyon – facts they read in a travel guide or park brochure or from the tour guides, but it was intellectual, not experiential. It was informational, not transformational.

The character of God is like the Grand Canyon. We don't get to know God by looking at Him from a distance. We have to hike into the depths of His power and the heights of His holiness. We have to go rim to rim with God. Psalm 23 says, "*Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.*" (4) And if we take a single step of faith in God's direction, spiritual adrenaline will surge through our veins once again.

We wonder why we're bored with our faith. It's because we're holding out. We want joy without sacrifice. We want character without suffering. We want success without failure. We want gain without pain. We want a testimony without the test. We want it all without going all out for it.

We are already educated way beyond the level of our obedience. What we need most is not another sermon. Please don't get me wrong. We certainly need to do more with what we know. We need to learn and grow in God's words. But, at the end of the day, God will not say, "Well thought, Intellectual," or "Well said, Orator." There is only one commendation: "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

In the Hebrew language, there is no distinction between *knowing* and *doing*. Knowing is doing and doing is knowing. In other words, if we aren't doing it, then we don't really know it. It's time to go all in by going all out. The phrase "all out" literally means "maximum effort." It's giving God everything we've got – 100 percent. It's loving God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strengths. It's not just worshiping God with words. It's worshipping God with blood, sweat, and tears. We cannot be the hands and feet of Jesus if we're sitting on our butt. We need to remember that we are the church. Church is not a building with a specific address (432 59th St. Downers Grove, IL). Church is not a gathering at a certain time. If we are the church, then church is happening whenever and wherever we are! Your workplace is your mission field. Your job is your sermon. Your colleagues are your congregation.

King Saul had a long history of letting others fight his battles for him. Saul was a rim hugger! But his son Jonathan was a cliff climber. Saul was playing not to lose. Jonathan was playing to win. That's the difference between fear and faith. If we let fear dictate our decisions, we will live defensively, reactively, and cautiously. Living by faith is playing offense with our lives. It's going all out for God.

Let us explore the story in today's text. During the early days of Saul's kingship, the Philistines controlled the western border of Israel and battle lines were at the pass called Mikdash. Saul seemed content to sit on the sideline, but Jonathan wanted to be on the front line. He says in today's text, "*Come, let's go over to the Philistine outpost on the other side.*" (1 Samuel 14:1)

Going all out for God always starts with one step of faith. It's often the longest, hardest, and scariest step. But when we make a move that is

motivated by God's glory, it moves the heart and hand of God. There comes a moment in our lives when enough is enough. The pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of change. We need to reject the status quo and to refuse to remain the same.

This is that moment for Jonathan. It seems like a dumb plan. It was the worst military strategy ever. Jonathan exposed himself to the enemy in broad daylight and conceded the high ground. Then he came up with this sign to determine whether or not to engage the enemy. Jonathan says, "*But if they say, 'Come up to us,' we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands.*" (1 Sam 14:10)

Jonathan chose the most difficult, dangerous, and daring option. There was no guarantee that Jonathan would even survive the climb. Even if he made it to the top, Jonathan and his armor-bearer were outnumbered ten to one. It's the difference between letting things happen and making things happen. What motivated Jonathan to climb the cliff? What quelled his fear? We may find its answer from Jonathan's words: "*Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf.*" (1 Sam 14:6)

Most people operate out of the opposite mentality: perhaps the Lord won't act in our behalf. They let fear dictate their decisions instead of faith. Our lack of guts is really a lack of faith. Instead of playing to win, we tend to play not to lose. But cliff climbers would rather fall on their face than sit on their butt. They'd rather make mistake than miss opportunities. Cliff climbers know that one step of faith can create a tipping point that changes not only their destiny but the course of history. Today's story ends with this sentence: "*So on that day the Lord saved Israel.*" (1 Sam 14:23)

There are two kinds of people in the world – those who ask 'why' and those who ask 'why not.' Going all out is asking 'why not.' 'Why' people look for excuses. 'Why not' people look for opportunities. 'Why' people are afraid of making mistakes. 'Why not' people don't want to miss out on God-ordained opportunities!