

## What a Life of Faith Looks Like

1. Warm-up Question: At the outset of Sunday's sermon, Jeff said sometimes life is like "When Harry Met Sally" (a romantic comedy) and other times it's more like "A Nightmare on Elm Street." Is there a movie that captures what your life feels like right now?
2. Sunday's sermon was inspired by a story about a lizard. The story claims to be true, but even if it's not – whether its parable or history – it packs a powerful punch and illustrates two key aspects of a life of faith. The text of the story is found on p. 3. Have someone read it aloud to your Oasis Group.
3. Each lizard featured in the story illustrates a critical aspect of what it means to live by faith. Let's start with the lizard that gets trapped. One moment life is going great; you're running through the walls chasing insects. The next moment a nail shoots through the wall and into your foot, and everything changes. You're trapped.
  - a. Imagine yourself as the trapped lizard. In the immediate aftermath of being nailed to the wall, what are you thinking and feeling?
  - b. As day turns into night and you're all alone, what are you thinking and feeling?
  - c. When your partner finally finds you, what are you thinking and feeling?
  - d. When you're two years into your captivity, what are you thinking and feeling?
  - e. If you were the trapped lizard, do you think you would have kept eating or would you have given up? Explain your answer.
  - f. Where in your life right now do you feel most like the trapped lizard?
4. In the Bible, Job knew what it feels like to want to yield to despair. In a series of rapid succession tragedies, he lost all of his adult children in an accident, then lost all of his wealth, then lost his health. Theologians debate whether the book of Job is parable or history. Either way, like the lizard story, it really makes us think. Read Job 2:7-13.
  - a. As already noted, Job experienced three devastating losses in a row – financial loss, loss of loved ones, and loss of health. Looking back over your life, what has been your greatest season of loss?
  - b. During your season of loss, did you hear a voice in your head saying, "Why do you persist in the integrity of your faith? Curse God and die." If so, how did you respond? What got you through?
  - c. What do you think Job means when he says, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God and not receive bad?"

5. The lizard who got trapped and Job both remind us that **faith is the stubborn refusal to yield to despair even when life traps us**. Jeff told two stories of people who refused to yield to despair – one was a man dying of cancer in middle age; the other was someone in our church who struggles with chronic depression and suicidal thoughts. Both held on to their faith and kept putting one foot in front of the other when life made no sense – eating the next meal, smiling the next smile, laughing the next laugh, worshiping defiantly. Where does that kind of faith come from? Do you feel you have that kind of faith? Why or why not?
6. The other critical character in the lizard story is the partner of the lizard. She could have said, “This is too painful, I can’t watch this, I’m outta here.” Instead, every day for five years several times a day, she hunted and trapped for her partner and brought him food. Her example reminds us that **faith is also the stubborn refusal to give up on someone else when life traps them**.
  - a. How do you think the partner felt when she first found the other lizard nailed to the wall? How do you think she felt two years later?
  - b. What kept her from abandoning her partner? Where does that kind of faithfulness come from?
  - c. Take a look at the comic strip reproduced on p. 3 and have someone read it aloud. What are your thoughts and feelings?
  - d. Jeff said the comic strip reminded him of the story of Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi. After experiencing tragic loss, Naomi prepared to return to her homeland to a very uncertain future. Ruth could have easily returned to her family of origin and remarried. Instead she refused to part ways with Naomi. Read Ruth 1:6-18.
  - e. In your own life, who has shown Ruth-like, lizard-like faithfulness to you?
  - f. To whom have you shown that kind of faithfulness?
  - g. Why is Ruth-like faithfulness so critical to each of us?
  - h. Jeff said, “Yes, there are times when a person needs to fend for themselves. Loving someone doesn’t mean enabling them. But everybody needs somebody sometimes. We need people who stubbornly refuse to give up on us no matter what.” How can we know the difference between Ruth-like faithfulness and enabling?
  - i. Who in your life right now needs you to be like the lizard’s partner to them?
  - j. In what aspect of your personal life right now do you need to stubbornly refuse to yield to despair?

# The Lizard Story

As a builder was renovating a house in Japan, he tore into a wall that was to be removed. Japanese houses typically have a hollow open space between the wooden walls. When breaking open the wall, the builder found a lizard stuck inside. Somehow a nail hammered into the wall from outside had pierced through one of the lizard's feet.

Seeing this, the builder felt both pity and curiosity. He knew the wall had been place there when the home was first constructed five years earlier. This was the first time the wall had been touched since. How on earth had the lizard survived in this position in the dark for five years, unable to move a single step?

Mind boggling!

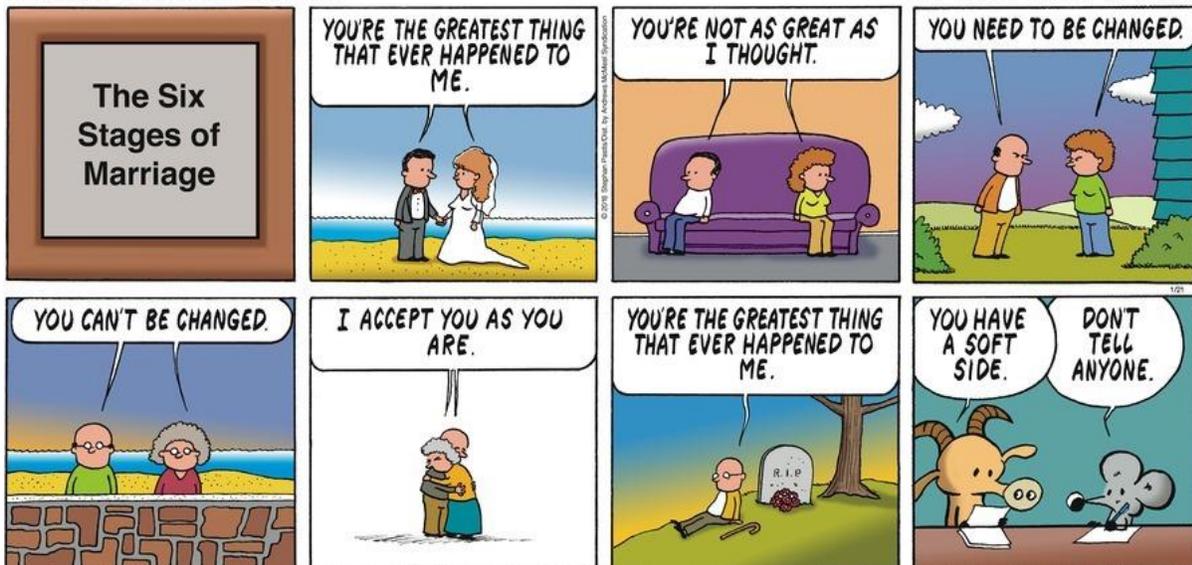
Impossible!

So the builder stopped his work and observed the lizard to try to figure out how it had survived? It didn't take long to find the answer. Soon another lizard appeared . . . with an insect in its mouth and dropped it at the feet of the trapped lizard, who gobbled it up.

The builder was stunned and deeply moved. That's how the lizard had survived! For five long years, every single day, several times a day, the other lizard had been catching and delivering food, stubbornly refusing to give up on its partner. The builder wept at both the tragedy and the beauty of it all.

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## PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



## BY STEPHAN PASTIS