

Unsung Heroes

On Sunday, we hosted the official Indy Pride Interfaith Worship Service. Focusing on the theme of “unsung heroes,” we studied the Biblical story of Gideon.

Special Reminder: We’re hoping to have a large contingent from our church to march in the Pride Parade, so we can send a powerful message of God’s love for LGBTQ people. Can you be there this Saturday at 9 am? If you’ve not yet RSVP’d, send an email to Spencer James, SpencerJames@LifeJourney.church, and he’ll send you the logistical info you will need.

1. Warm-up Question: What’s one of your most notable Pride Day memories?
2. Gideon lived in Israel at a time when the powerful Midianites routinely conducted cross-border raids to steal crops and livestock. The oppression was stifling. Farmers like Gideon would break their backs all season, only to have their crops stolen at harvest time. Everybody wanted it to stop, but nobody felt they could make a difference, including Gideon. Note how Gideon described himself: “My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” Judges 6:15.
 - a. What are some of the negative or disempowering things you tend to tell yourself?
 - b. Why is it so tempting to embrace negative or disempowering thoughts?
3. We tend to see the worst in ourselves, but God tends to see the best. We’re pessimistic; God is optimistic. We say, “I can’t,” but God says, “Oh yes, you can!” Read Judges 6:1-6 and 11-16.
 - a. Imagine what Gideon and his family were going through. Had you been part of that family, what thoughts and emotions would you have likely experienced?
 - b. Normally wheat would have been threshed on a big flat rock near the top of a hill, so wind could carry away the chaff as wheat was tossed in the air. Instead, Gideon secreted himself in a cramped winepress and was trying to thresh wheat there. The angel of the Lord found him and said, “The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior!” Put yourself in Gideon’s place. What do you think he felt upon hearing the angel’s greeting?
 - c. Gideon responded to the angel by complaining, “If the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us?” To which the angel replied, “Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian.” What kind of answer is that? When the angel refers to “this might of yours,” what’s he/she referring to?
 - d. The angel goes on to say, “I hereby commission you,” i.e., to deliver Israel from Midian. The word “commission” means “an order granting the power to perform various acts or duties.” Have you ever felt “commissioned” by God to do something? Tell us about it.
4. Gideon’s story reminds us that God uses ordinary, insecure people to do really important things. I Corinthians 1:28 says, “God [chooses] what is low and despised in the world . . . to reduce to nothing things that are.” And in II Corinthians 12:8, God says, “My power is made perfect in weakness.” Why is that? Why is weakness a catalyst for the flow of God’s power in and through us?

5. Jeff shared the story of three ordinary, unsung heroes whom God has used in the battle for LGBTQ equality and spiritual acceptance in central Indiana. Let's reflect on those three stories.

a. Rev. Bo Daniels was the founding pastor of MCC Indy in 1972, at a time when most people thought women and lesbians couldn't be pastors. She was shot at by bigots and her congregation was raided by the Indianapolis police. Yet she persisted! What lessons or insights can we glean from Bo's story?

b. Bryon Williams was a member of MCC Indy starting in 1973. He served faithfully there until MCC Indy folded under the weight of persecution. When LifeJourney MCC was founded in 1990, Bryon joined and has served faithfully ever since. When he almost died in 2009, his greatest regret was that he might not achieve his goal of serving in leadership for 20 years. He has since hit the 20 year mark and beyond. What lessons or insights can we glean from Byron's story? What are people like Byron so important to the success of a church or any worthy organization?

c. D Bracken's birth name was Dahlia, but from his earliest memories he has always known deep in his spirit that he's a boy. An old doctor at Riley Hospital told D's Mom, "Either put him on hormone blockers when the time is right or plan his funeral." Mom rose to the challenge and, more importantly, so has D. When asked what he most wants people to know, D says, "That it's ok to be yourself. And you have to tell people you love that you feel that way about yourself before it's too late." What lessons or insights can we glean from D's story?

6. Teddy Roosevelt said, "Do what you can with what you have where you are" – which is just another way of saying, "Bloom where you're planted." If we follow that advice, Jeff said that each of us will be able to live into our significance and discover the hero inside of us.

a. As you look back across your life, what's something significant God has used you to accomplish? (For purposes of this question, "significant" is defined as something that feels deeply meaningful, whether it's something done on a mountain top where everyone can see or quietly in the coal mine.)

b. Given who you are and where you are now planted, what's something significant God is calling you to do during this current phase of your life? Are you embracing that call? If you're hesitating, why?

See you at the Parade?