

Let Your Life Speak

Luke 4:14-21
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Tim Dearborn, in his book *Taste & See: Awakening Our Spiritual Senses*, tells of a Scottish theology student named David upon whom the Spirit of the Lord also rested. In this particular instance, though, it wasn't the poor, the captives, the blind or the oppressed that benefited from the indwelling Spirit, but rather another of God's blessed creatures.

As Dearborn tells it, "David and I were driving across the Scottish countryside early one Sunday morning to lead the worship service in a rural church.

David was a fine theological student with a fascinating background. He had been a shepherd for 20 years and now, in his forties, following a dramatic conversion, was preparing to become a pastor.

As we crested a hill," says Dearborn, "the sunlight broke through onto a green pasture where dozens of sheep grazed. I said to David as we passed, 'That must bring back many memories.'

All David said in reply was 'Tim, please stop the car.' I stopped," said Dearborn, "and ... David quietly opened the door, walked across the road and climbed over the stone fence. As I watched, he walked to the far end of the pasture. A distressed sheep was stuck on its back, and he gently shoved it upright so that it could scramble away.

I didn't realize this," said Dearborn, "until David later explained what he'd done, but unshorn sheep are so top-heavy that they can get stuck on their backs and suffocate. Unless they are set right, they will die.

David and I had seen the same field," said Dearborn. "I had admired its pastoral beauty. He had seen the one sheep out of a hundred that was in danger. ... Without his sight and his touch, the sheep would have soon died.¹"

David had a calling for which he developed gifts and talents, both spiritual and earthly.

In today's New Testament lesson, Jesus speaks of his calling, and he does so by quoting scripture. Jesus quotes what might be thought of as his life verse, a verse of scripture that speaks to who he is and what he's called to do – bring good news to the poor, ... proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, ... let the oppressed go free, (and) ... proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

¹ Tim Dearborn, *Taste & See: Awakening Our Spiritual Senses* [Downers Grove: Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1996], 131.

That's quite a calling. I don't think any of us would claim such a verse of scripture as our life verse. And yet, we can all benefit from finding our life verse and letting it bless our lives and the people all around us, and the animals.

David's life verse as a shepherd-turned-theology-student might have been, "Tend my sheep," John 21, verse 16. Perhaps it was that simple verse that inspired David to expand his shepherding to include pasturing a congregation.

If that was David's life verse, what is yours? Do you have one? I'm sure we all do. It's just a matter of taking the time to find it, or putting yourself in a place where it will find you.

We don't know whether Jesus in the synagogue that day selected the scroll of Isaiah, or was it selected for him? But we do know that when he unrolled the scroll, Jesus "found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, ... proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'" We know he found his life verse.

And we know some of the events leading up to that moment, events in the life of Jesus that just might help us to find our life verse. First, Luke tells us that Jesus was "filled with the power of the Spirit."

Which begs the question, when have you felt filled with the power of the Spirit? What do you remember as the greatest God-moment for you? That might be a starting point in finding or reapplying your life verse – when have you felt filled with the power of the Spirit? Think about that.

Next, think about where that led you in life. Luke notes that the Spirit led Jesus to return to Galilee. Where did it lead you when you felt the hand of the Lord in your life? That's another question that can help you identify and apply your life verse.

A third question for us arises in Luke's description of Jesus entering Galilee, where Luke says that "a report about him spread through all the surrounding country ... and (he) was praised by everyone."

What did people say or think about you during that time of spiritual or divine power and guidance? Were they affirming? That could tell you something about your calling, your life verse, couldn't it?

Finally, as Jesus was traveling through Galilee, Luke tells us that "he began to teach in their synagogues" What were you doing or what did you start doing during that time when you felt the Spirit's power guiding and energizing your life?

These are all questions that can help us find our life verse and put it into action on a daily basis. As you consider 1) a time you really felt filled with the power of the Spirit, and 2) where did that lead you in life, and 3) what did people say or think about you at that time, and 4) what did you begin doing in response – as you think about those questions, consider

also how you might go about finding a verse or two of scripture as your life verse, or affirming and enhancing your relationship with a life verse you already have.

Online blogger Corey Ray Jones provides the following process for finding a life verse.² First, he says, begin with prayer. Ask God to speak to you through the scriptures and guide you through the selection process. Ask for understanding and wisdom as you select a verse or two that will impact and guide your life in powerful ways.

Next, do your research. There is no need for you to look through all 31,102 verses in the Bible. Instead, “if there is a word or phrase that keeps coming to your mind, begin with that search.” Do an online search or ask at the library for verses about the word or phrase that comes to mind during your prayer and reflection time.

Then, narrow down your list and seek wise counsel. After thinking and praying about your list of possible verses, ask a few of your friends or family – or your pastor – ask what they think of your list. “Talk about what these verses mean and why you narrowed your list to these specific few, and then ask for feedback.”

Finally, select the verse and commit it to memory. As you pray over your life verse, seek to put it into action, letting it guide and energize your life. Display the verse around your house and pray that God will allow this verse to change your life – and the world – for the better.

So, what’s my life verse?

From Paul’s letter to the Colossians, chapter 3, verse 16 (ESV):

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

There is power and guidance and blessing in that verse, for me, and through me. And there is power and guidance and blessing in and through you in whatever verse you embrace as your life verse. May God bless you and guide you as you find and energize your life verse. Amen.

² <https://coreyrayjones.com/2016/06/the-challenge-of-choosing-a-life-verse-for-your-child/>

PASTORAL PRAYER

Merciful God, we are bombarded with information, all of it claiming to be the truth. Yet we know that there are false messiahs among us – those who seek to use and exploit rather than serve us, those who are after only their own gain, those who distort, twist and stretch the truth to suit their own purposes. Our public discourse has been reduced to sound bites. Our relationships are frequently no deeper than what can be tweeted or texted.

Into this shallow and hollow vacuum, you come as the Way, the Truth and the Life. Thank you for offering us a bottomless fountain of eternal truth from which to drink and be filled.

And we ask, O Lord, that you would send your comforting and healing spirit upon those in need, those devastated and displaced by sudden and tragic events, those grieving the loss of loved one, and those nearing their heavenly reward. We pray all this in the name of Jesus and in the spirit of love and blessing, as we pray the prayer that he taught us, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.