

Living Life in Big Ways – by Leah Clarke

Living life in a big Ways – Bible verses from The Message.

This talk was written by Leah Clarke, looking at what Paul said to the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 6.11-13 and then drawing out 10 ways from 2 Corinthians, that can enable us to live in big ways.

Dear Corinthians, I can't tell you how much I long for you to enter this wide-open, spacious life. We didn't fence you in. The smallness you feel comes from within you. Your lives aren't small, but you're living them in a small way. I'm speaking as plainly as I can and with great affection. Open up your lives. Live openly and expansively!

2 Corinthians 6:11-13

So, how do we live in big ways?

1: 'Don't link up with those who pollute you'

'We can be in the world but not of it'

Don't become partners with those who reject God. How can you make a partnership out of right and wrong? That's not partnership; that's war. Is light best friends with dark? Does Christ go strolling with the Devil? Do trust and mistrust hold hands? Who would think of setting up pagan idols in God's holy Temple? But that is exactly what we are, each of us a temple in whom God lives. God himself put it this way: "I'll live in them, move into them; I'll be their God and they'll be my people. So leave the corruption and compromise; leave it for good," says God. "Don't link up with those who will pollute you. I want you all for myself. I'll be a Father to you; you'll be sons and daughters to me."

(2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

2 : Keep Clean Temples

'Make a clean break from what defiles us, both inside and out.'

With promises like this to pull us on, dear friends, let's make a clean break with everything that defiles or distracts us, both within and without. Let's make our entire lives fit and holy temples for the worship of God. More Passionate, More Responsible. 2 Corinthians 7:1

3 : Realise that God has confidence in us.

Know that He has plans greater than our greatest dreams. We can step out in confidence because our steps are ordered by him.

4: Finish what you started.

So here's what I think: The best thing you can do right now is to finish what you started last year and not let those good intentions grow stale. Your heart's been in the right place all along. You've got what it takes to finish it up, so go to it. Once the commitment is clear, you do what you can, not what you can't. The heart regulates the hands. This isn't so others can take it easy while you sweat it out. No, you're shoulder to shoulder with them all the way, your surplus matching their deficit, their surplus matching your deficit. In the end you come out even.

2 Corinthians 8:10-14

Once the commitment is made do what you can Not what you can't!

When the foundations are laid, houses can be built years after.

5: Take your time

Remember: A stingy planter gets a stingy crop; a lavish planter gets a lavish crop. I want each of you to take plenty of time to think it over, and make up your own mind what you will give. That will protect you against sob stories and arm-twisting. God loves it when the giver delights in the giving.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

Don't force or hurry anything at the last minute!

6: Plant seeds.

'A lavish planter gets a lavish crop'

The 'weak' seeds can be thinned out or nurtured by others with big plans.

Make sure you are using your own ideas. Don't jump on the band-wagon! You will end up with a watered down version of someone else's project, but, God does call us into others ideas and visions.

7: Living in big ways is more than meeting the bare needs of an individual!

Carrying out this social relief work involves far more than helping meet the bare needs of poor Christians. It also produces abundant and bountiful thanksgivings to God. This relief offering is a prod to live at your very best, showing your gratitude to God by being openly obedient to the plain meaning of the Message of Christ. You show your gratitude through your generous offerings to your needy brothers and sisters, and really toward everyone. Meanwhile, moved by the extravagance of God in your lives, they'll respond by praying for you in passionate intercession for whatever you need. Thank God for this gift, his gift. No language can praise it enough!

2 Corinthians 9:12-15

It is walking with others, listening and relating and drawing the positive out of their situations and confirming the truth in God's Word.

People will pray for us and be thankful to Him for what He is doing.

8: We live in an unprincipled world.

The world is unprincipled. It's dog-eat-dog out there! The world doesn't fight fair. But we don't live or fight our battles that way – never have and never will. The tools of our trade aren't for marketing or manipulation, but they are for demolishing that entire massively corrupt culture. We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ. Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience into maturity.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6

Having firm principles to stand by give us standards and guidelines to live by. Take the guidelines of God's word, make them personal and live by them.

9: Stay within the territory God gives you.

We're not barging in on the rightful work of others, interfering with their ministries, demanding a place in the sun with them. What we're hoping for is that as your lives grow in faith, you'll play a part within our expanding work. And we'll all still be within the limits God sets as we proclaim the Message in countries beyond Corinth. But we have no intention of moving in on what others have done and taking credit for it. "If you want to claim credit, claim it for God." What you say about yourself means nothing in God's work. It's what God says about you that makes the difference.

2 Corinthians 10:15-18

10: What God thinks about us makes a difference.

Who are you seeking to please with your work and life? Do you look to people for their praise or to God for affirmation? Do you seek God's approval or man's?

'I played water-polo for Great Britain and I am a goal keeper. But more than anything, if I thought I played well and people said I had, I would always look to my coach to see what he said. If my coach said I played well then I know I did. '

If we look to God for His thoughts on our projects and ideas then we will get the truth. The cold hard truth. That is what we really need, because we know that if God said we did well then we did!!

And if He says that we need to rethink our lives and ideas then He won't just leave us alone to do that. God wants us to live life in big ways, whether it's in family situations, school, college or work.

Whether it's in behind the scenes and secret ways or up front and bold ways, He will be there. He promised never to leave or forsake us. Sometimes it's hard to see that, and it feels like we are living in small ways or not living at all, but truth be told God knows the desires of our hearts. Sometimes our timing clashes with His, but we know that all things work together for good in Christ. So keep living in big ways, serving Christ until He calls us home. And remember, every time you do something to serve someone else, every kind word said to people that hurt you and everything you do to worship God is another punch and kick at the darkness. Keep punching till His light pours through!