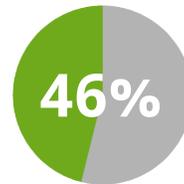


JOURNALS POSTED ON APRIL 12, 2018

From Fear to Love



ALISE & MARK JUANES



SUPPORT PLEDGED



THAILAND

Every time I take a step in the direction of generosity, I know I am moving from fear to love. – Henri Nouwen

About a month ago, I was blessed to speak at the American Baptist Women's Ministries of the West spring conference. It was my first speaking engagement and I was very nervous. However, the women were warm and welcoming and put my nerves at ease. Afterwards, a dear sister, came to me and said that she had no income for the last 4 years but just started

with some a few months prior. Then she handed me a check and said, "God wants me to share it with you!" Tears filled my eyes as I felt I was actually living out the bible story of the widow giving her last two coins to the church for God. I was overwhelmed by her generosity. The amount of the check didn't matter, her giving heart and faithful generosity was far greater than anything I could ever receive.

Then a couple Sundays ago, my husband, Mark, and I gave the message at our home church (Crosswalk Community) about unity and humility and I have to tell you, we were profoundly humbled and touched by the generosity from many of our fellow church members. So many people came up to us afterwards and said they wanted to partner with us – whether it be in finances, energy, time, or prayer. Generosity is encouraging and touching because it is a reflection of where our hearts are. All of us invest ourselves, all of who we are – in what we love. When we make those investments in the church, in a ministry, or in what God is doing in this world, it is a reflection of our love. Generosity reflects our love for people, our love for the Lord, and our love for what He is doing in the world. That is why since sharing our hearts on Sunday this quote from Henri Nouwen was stuck in my head. "Every time I take a step in the direction of generosity, I know I am moving from fear to love." The generosity we show really does move our hearts from fear to love.

Our main scripture that Sunday was from Philippians and we spoke about how Paul and the church of Philippi worked together with Paul in the sharing of the Good News. The role the church took was to correspond with Paul and encourage him, to pray with him, and to send support in the forms of finances, time, and energy. At the end of the letter, Paul expresses another reason he is excited for their generosity: Even while I was in Thessalonica, you helped out—and not only once, but twice. Not that I'm looking for handouts, but I do want you to experience the blessing that issues from generosity. (Phil. 4:16-17 MSG) The givers benefit from their own generosity as well – there is a certain blessing that comes forth from giving, though the blessing is not their goal, it does affect them. What is the blessing then? We receive fruit for our generosity. However, I see it as less transactional and more relational. Giving is something which affects our hearts – we go from a place of fear to a place of love and caring. We are moving in the direction of generosity.

Any way in which we can eliminate fear from our lives and move to a place of love has to be explored. I admit, fear strikes me at times – more than I would like if I am to be honest. Fear of saying the wrong things, fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of danger, etc. How do we overcome fear? Not by simply trying harder to not be afraid, but rather conditioning our hearts to what is good. When my kids wake up in the middle of the night from a nightmare and jump on top of me at 2:00 am – my response is not to tell them to stop being afraid and go back to bed. My response is to comfort them and pray with them, to teach them how to stop being afraid, to teach them how to find comfort and love. As we become mature, it is still comfort and love which combat fear. If my focus is on loving people and loving the Lord, then rejection, failure, danger, etc. all of a sudden are less important. They are still considerations, but fearing them is not what holds me back. What Nouwen is saying here, and what Paul is saying, is that generosity is one way to condition our hearts to make love the motivating factor. Generosity is both a reflection and a change agent that moves us towards a place where love, not fear, is what moves us. I pray that this week it is love, and not fear, which guides each of us. When we see someone new at church, or a person in need, or a hurting friend; I pray it is love and not fear which allows us to take action instead of inaction.

Trying to follow,



The kids are bringing up Thailand in conversation...A LOT!!! The number one question from Sydney, Gavin and Kolin... "When are we going to move to Thailand?" I wish I could give them a definitive answer, but I can't. However, it allows an opportunity for them to learn about waiting on the Lord and how GOOD and SWEET is HIS timing. They too are anticipating and waiting patiently on God's provision and people to partner with us. Please continue to pray for them that God would also speak to THEIR hearts through this process.