

Bethel Focus

Bethel Presbyterian Church, Organized 1764

What if the Worst Happens? By Vaneetha Rendall

I found myself growing fearful. Not a heart-stopping, all-encompassing fear, but the kind of constant gnawing that occurs when you look at the discouraging trends of the present and assume things will never change. When you think about the future and wonder, “What if the worst happens?”

What if.

I’ve spent a lifetime considering the “what ifs.” Those questions have a way of unsettling me, destroying my peace, leaving me insecure.

People in the Bible were uneasy about “what if” questions, too. When told to lead the Israelites, Moses asked God, “What if they don’t believe me?” Abraham’s servant asked about Isaac’s future wife, “What if the young woman refuses to come with me?” Joseph’s brothers asked, “What if Joseph bears a grudge against us?” All of them wondered what would happen if circumstances went awry. Just like we do.

We all face a staggering



array of “what ifs.” Some are minor issues while others have life-altering repercussions. What if my child dies? What if I get cancer? What if my spouse leaves me?

The uncomfortable truth is, any of those things could happen. No one is free from tragedy or pain. There are no guarantees of an easy life. For any of us. Ever.

I was considering this sobering reality a few months ago. Over the course of several days, I had brought numerous longings and requests before the Lord. I wanted them fulfilled. *But the unthinkable question haunted me: What if my inmost longings are never*

met and my nightmares come true?

As I sat poring over my Bible, I was reminded of the questions I had wrestled with for decades. “Is God enough? If my deepest fears are realized, will he still be sufficient?” Each time those questions had come up in the past, I’d pushed them out of my mind. *But this time, I knew I needed to face them.*

I wondered: If my health spirals downward and I end up in an institution, will God be enough? If my children rebel and never walk closely with the Lord, will God be enough? If I never remarry and never feel loved by a man again, will God be enough? If my

October 2014

Sermon Schedule

- 10/5 “A Glimpse of Glory”
Matthew 17:1-13
- 10/12 “Greatness in Overcoming”
Matthew 18:1-9
- 10/19 “Resolving Conflict”
Matthew 18:15-20
- 10/26 “The Perils of Not Forgiving”
Matthew 18:21-35

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ministry doesn’t flourish and I never see fruit from it, will God be enough? If my suffering continues and I never see the purpose in it, will God be enough? I wish I could have automatically said, “Yes, of course God will be sufficient.” But I struggled. *I didn’t want to give up my dreams, surrender those things that were dear to me, relinquish what I felt entitled to.*

October 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	01 Katherine Taylor Basketball	02 Brenda Gess	03	04
05 Choir Practice Deacon's Fund Collection Session Meeting Sunday Evening Celebration!	06 Staff Meeting FLC Reserved - MOC	07 Circle #1 Diaconate Meeting	08 FLC Reserved Chaz Dixon Coleen Riddle Circle Basketball	09 FLC Reserved Good Samaritans	10	11 Kim Coburn Ginger Bowman FLC Reserved
12 Choir Practice Jackie Krashner Lib Jackson Ladies Parlor reserved Sunday Evening Celebration!	13 Clint Boyd Vicky Henderson Jonathan Taylor Staff Meeting Circle #3	14 Circle #2	15 Elaine Mosley Basketball	16 Kathy Compton Lee Coble	17 Jim Davis Moriah Slavens Patrick Love	18 Amanda Richmond
19 Choir Practice Brandon Harrell Sunday Evening Celebration!	20 Brenda Boyd Charles Flanagan Jesse Holben Neil Boyd Pat Miller Shirley Brackett Susan Pursley Staff Meeting	21 Grace Alexander	22 Kimberly Richards Nell Martin Basketball	23 Andy McCarter Mandy Mullis Tom Cuffman Miriam Hovis Sharan Shively	24 all facilities...	25 all facilities... Johna Griesman
26 Choir Practice Grayson Love Sherry Clayton Reformation Celebrations Sunday Evening Celebration!	27 Staff Meeting	28	29 Beckham Boyd Munn Harper Lee Munn Jennifer Boyd Munn Senior Citizens Luncheon Basketball	30	31 Chris Munsey	01

What if the Worst Happens? continued

I reflected on my unilateral unwritten contract with God, where I promise to do my part if he fulfills my longings. *I reluctantly admitted that part of my desire to be faithful was rooted in my expectation of a payback.* Didn't God owe me something?

Reluctantly, I opened my hands, filled with my dreams, and surrendered them to him. *I didn't want to love God for what he could do for me. I wanted to love God for who he is.* To worship him because he

is worthy.

God's presence overwhelmed me as I relinquished my expectations. He reminded me that I have something far better than a reassurance that my dreaded "what ifs" won't happen. I have the assurance that *even if* they do happen, he will be there in the midst of them. He will carry me. He will comfort me. He will tenderly care for me. *God doesn't promise us a trouble-free life. But he does promise that he will be there in the midst of our sorrows.*

God doesn't promise us a trouble-free life. In the Bible, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not guaranteed deliverance. Just before Nebuchadnezzar delivered them to the fire, they offered some of the most courageous words ever spoken. "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it . . . But *even if* he does not, we want you to know that we will not serve your gods . . ." ([Daniel 3:17-18](#)).

Even if.



Session Minutes

The Session of Bethel Presbyterian Church met Sunday, September 14, 2014 at 2 PM in the Conference Room of the Family Life Center with Moderator, Rev. John Gess, for the regular scheduled monthly meeting.

The meeting was called to order and opened with reading of the Scriptures from Matthew 10:5-16 and prayer by the Moderator.

A quorum was present. Elders present: Neil D. Allen, J. Brent Clinton, Robert N. Boyd, Frank C. Falls, Robert C. Love, Jr., Steven H. Linder, D. Ross Love, W. Hampton Stowe, III, James G. Long, Timothy G. Marsh, and Robert B. Meek, Jr. Also present was Diaconate Chairman, Steve Britt.

A motion was M/S/A to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2014 and August 27, 2014 Session meetings as written and mailed to each Session member.

Steve Britt gave the Deacons Report and reviewed the minutes of the September 2, 2014 Deacons meeting, a copy of which is appended to these minutes. A motion was M/S/A to approve the Deacons Report, Deacons minutes, financial report and actions taken. Steve was then dismissed from the meeting with prayer by Neil Allen.

The next meeting of Fellowship Presbytery will be Thursday, September 25, 2014 at Hopewell Presbyterian Church in Rock Hill, SC. A motion was M/S/A to approve James Long as Session representative to this meeting.

A Congregational Meeting will be held Sunday, October 19, 2014 to elect 3 Deacons to the Class of 2018.

A motion was M/S/A to pay up to \$5,000 in moving expenses for Rev. Gess, upon retirement in 2015.

A motion was M/S/A to form a commit-

tee to establish a Session Operating Procedure for an annual review process for the pastor and all staff members; the committee includes Neil Allen, Brent Clinton, Ross Love, and Tim Marsh.

A motion was M/S/A to set the 2015 Homecoming celebration date for either the last Sunday in May, the first Sunday in June, or the second Sunday in June, to accommodate Rev. Gess' schedule, as well as to affirm that Bethel will be responsible for Rev. Gess' costs of attendance at 2015 General Assembly in Chattanooga, TN.

A motion was M/S/A to adjourn.

The meeting was closed with prayer by Ross Love.

Robert C. Love, Jr.
Clerk of Session

What if the Worst Happens? *continued*

Even if the worst happens, God's grace is sufficient. Those three young men faced the fire without fear because they knew that whatever the outcome, it would ultimately be for their good and for God's glory. They did not ask "what if" the worst happened. They were satisfied knowing that "even if" the worst happened, God would take care of them.

Even if.

Those two simple words have taken the fear out of life. *Replacing "what if" with "even if" is one of the most liberating exchanges we can ever make. We trade our irrational fears of an uncertain future for the loving assurance of an unchanging God. We see that even if the worst*

happens, God will carry us. He will still be good. And he will never leave us.

Even if the worst happens, God will carry us.

Habakkuk models this exchange beautifully. Though he had pleaded with God to save his people, he closes his book with this exquisite "even if" . . .

Even if the fig tree does not bloom and the vines have no grapes, even if the olive tree fails to produce and the fields yield no food, even if the sheep pen is

empty and the stalls have no cattle—

Even then,

I will be happy with the Lord.
I will truly find joy in God, who saves me. ([Habakkuk 3:17-18](#))

Amen.

From desiring God. Used with permission. Vaneetha Rendall is a freelance writer who lives in Raleigh, NC. She blogs regularly at www.danceintherain.com.

Bethel Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian Church in America
Organized 1764

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Prayer Requests:

Pastor John Gess and Interns Will Milks and Jonathan Goundry as they preach and minister to the Bethel congregation, and for their families. The Ashbaugh family, and the ministry of RUF at Winthrop.

The Lees as they seek to implement the Member Care Ministry for MTW Latin America, that the Lord will enable them to minister to the MTW missionaries of Latin America with compassion and humility; for Justin Marshburn, Amber's boyfriend and Tegan's father; that the Lord will draw Justin to Himself.

Please pray for the Pulpit Committee and all facets of the search for Bethel's next pastor. Please pray that God would be glorified in the process and for His provision for the church.

Session and Diaconate members, WIC officers, Sunday School teachers, Bible Study leaders, Youth leaders/teachers, giving thanks for their faithfulness and willingness to serve.

Missionaries throughout the world, as well as local ministries such as Habitat for Humanity, God's Kitchen, Clover Area Assistance Center and Biblical Studies Released Time. Please pray fervently for the work in Northern Mexico.

Pray for people in western Africa who are afflicted by the Ebola outbreak, and for aid workers. Pray for effective treatment, containment and eradication of this terrible virus.

Our college students, and expectant mothers and their unborn babies within the church family.

Our soldiers serving in Afghanistan, Europe & Iraq: John Rice (grandson of Joe & Phyllis Wyszor) recovering

from injuries from a roadside bomb explosion, Greg Sandifer, and Ted Trevino.

Charlotte Barnett, Monnie Blackman (C. Robinson's sister, lupus), Loma Burton, Abe Craddock (friend of J. LeMoyne, emphysema), Zeke Dunbar (3 year old suffering from cancer, friend of M. Falls), Susan Heffner (cancer), Sherer Gordon Hopkins, Bob Kenley, Herb LeMoyne (J. LeMoyne's brother, Parkinson's disease), Rick Lindsay (Pastor of Scherer Memorial PCA, cancer), Harold McCarter, Randy McCarter (son of Duke & Maxie McCarter, cancer), Jesse Patino (B. Love's brother-in-law, lymphoma), Jim Pittman (V. Linder's brother, prostate cancer, has spread to his spine), Susan Ramsey, Bobby Wallace (effective cancer treatments), Clay West. Pray for our church and the Pastoral Search Committee.

