

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

January 17, 2021

Win the Day – Fly the Kite

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On November 9, 1847, a civil engineer named Charles Ellet, Jr. was commissioned to build a bridge over the Niagara gorge. The question of course, was, when and where and how do you get the first cable across an 825 foot chasm, with 225 foot cliff on either side. Enter Theodore Graves Hulett, a local iron worker who suggested, get this, a kite flying contest. Of course, it was a 15 year old boy named Homan Walsh, who would win the \$10 cash prize for flying the first kite across that chasm. The day after the flight a stronger line was attached to the kite string then a rope then a cable with 36 strands of 10 gauge wire. It would become the world's first railway suspension bridge strong enough to support 170 ton locomotive. It all started with one kite string and it always does. Do not despise the day of small beginnings. If you do little things like they're big things, God will do big things like they're little things.

We're in a series called Win the Day. We have talked about three habits; flip the script, kiss the wave, eat the frog. And two messages, two habits this weekend, the Daily Double is habit number five, cut the rope. You'll find it on all of our channels YouTube, Vimeo, NCC app.

If you have a Bible, would you meet me in the book of Zechariah? We're gonna unpack habit number four, Fly the Kite. Let me shoot straight. I know people who say that they'll give more when they make more, okay. Love you but I'm not buying what you're selling because if you aren't generous with a little time, talent, treasure, you're not going to be generous with a lot. Generosity, come on, it starts right here right now. Now, I know people who say that they will serve more when they have more time. Yeah, no. You don't find time you make time. I know people who say they will step up when the big opportunity presents itself. Not if you aren't seizing the small opportunities that are all around you all the time.

Bill Payne serves as our general manager at Ebenezer's Coffee House, but he used to train Marines back in the day. He said there's a sign that hangs in the hallway from the instructors office to the students classrooms, at the basics school and it says this, "You don't rise to the occasion, you revert to your training, hoorah." Here's the bottom line and the big idea - how you do anything, is how you will do everything. If you're faithful with a little you will be faithful with a lot. So go ahead and dream big, okay. Show me the size of your dreams I'll show you the size of your God. Go after a dream that's destined to fail without divine intervention. But you can't just dream big you have to start small and you have to think long that my friends, is what flying the kite is all about. A single kite string can eventually become a bridge that connects two countries.

Zechariah four verse six, we're gonna go verse by verse phrase by phrase. Ready or not, here we go. Zerubbabel is the leader of this remnant, this creative minority, if you will, that return to Judah with a

God sized vision to rebuild the temple that Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed in 586 BC. We're about half a century later and Zerubbabel is kind of staring at all of these stones at these ruins and that's when the Lord says to Zerubbabel, *"It is not by might nor by power, but by my spirit sayeth the Lord and unless the Lord builds the house, they who labor, labor in vain."*

Let me go first. Without the help of the Holy Spirit, I'm below average but with the help of the Holy Spirit, all things are possible. Its game time hoops. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is the X Factor. The Holy Spirit is the difference between the best you can do and the best God can do. And so let me let you in on a little secret. God wants to do things in you and through you that are beyond your ability, beyond your resources and beyond your imagination. Why? So he gets the glory. How? By His Spirit. You can't feed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. Oh, but when you add God to the equation, five plus two doesn't equal seven anymore. No, no, no, five plus two equals 5,000, remainder 12. You have more leftover than you started with. It's called a multiplication anointing. And I pray it on your life. I pronounce it over your life. Would you receive that multiplication, anointing in Jesus name? Amen.

Verse seven, *"What are you mighty mountain?"* Now this is getting good. I love this because if I'm not mistaken, he's talking to a mountain. There comes a moment when you've got to stop talking to God about your mountains and start talking to the mountain about your God. That is one way that you, habit number one, flip the script. You have to declare his power, declare his grace, declare his peace, his glory, his love, his goodness, his healing. You don't deny the obstacles or the odds you confront the brutal facts, but you do it with unwavering faith. You don't lose faith in the end of the story and you exercise your authority, as a child of God as a follower of Christ, and as a citizen of this thing called the kingdom of God. Now every prayer that we pray, has to meet a twofold litmus test - has to be in the will of God and for the glory of God. If it's not, it's a non starter, if it is, game on.

July 2, 2016, I prayed a brave prayer and God healed my lungs of the severe asthma that I had for more than 40 years, I am 1,659 days inhaler free as of today. You know what? I'm preaching with a little bit more passion, a little bit more purpose, a little bit more power and I'll tell you why. When you have experienced victory in some area of your life, now, you have authority, and you've got to exercise that authority to believe God for even bigger and better miracles. Now, I have no idea what mountain you're facing right now. It could be the mountain of anxiety or addiction or anger. There's the mountain of injustice and unforgiveness, the mountain of depression, or frustration, or fear, it might even be a mountain range. For Lora and I, it's this mountain called cancer. Good news is surgery is behind us, non invasive, we got clear margins. But we have a climb in front of us. We have a battle to fight. But this is when and where and why I fall back in moments like this on what I know for sure. He's still the God who makes sidewalks through the sea. He is still the God who makes the sun stand still. He is still the God who turns water into wine, and he is still the God who moves mountains.

If you're taking notes, I want you to jot this down - testimony is prophecy. Testimony is prophecy. Well, what does that mean? Pretty simple. If God did it before he can do it again and if God did it for me, he

can do it for you. Why? He's the same yesterday today and forever. Nothing, not even a mighty mountain will stand in Zerubbabel's way it will become a level plane before him.

Now, I love it because in this story you've got several habits. Okay? Flip the script habit number one, by speaking to the mountain; you declare the will of God, the glory of God.

You've got habit number two, kiss the wave the obstacle is not the enemy, the obstacle is the way. You don't go around the mountain. Listen, sometimes God delivers from he can do it but more often than not God delivers through and when you get to the other side, now you have a testimony and guess what bigger the mountain, the bigger the person you become by getting to the other side. You cannot spell testimony without the first four letters, T-E-S-T. You've got to pass the test. How? You got to learn the lesson, cultivate the character, curate the change and those mountains that you overcome they become part of your testimony and testimony is prophecy. Listen, I believe that God is activating faith in your life. God is activating the gifts of the Spirit in your life. God is conceiving dreams and visions within you. Here's the bottom line. You have the authority to move mountains.

Who? You! How? With faith as small as a mustard seed. Well, how can something that small move something that big? Well, its habit number three, eat the frog. It's those high leverage habits that we talked about in the bonus message last week. It has a domino effect over time. If you want God to do the super you have to do the natural.

All right, let me drop down to verse 10 and this is where we fly the kite This is where we're gonna roll up our sleeves go to work. Verse 10, *"Do not despise the day of small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand."* Plumb line kite string same difference. A plumb line was an ancient measuring tape. Stop and think about this God is rejoicing before they even begin building. They don't even have permits, they haven't even broken ground. All they have is blueprints and God is getting them a standing ovation. God is great, not just because nothing is too big God is great because nothing is too small. He celebrates the small steps of faith. He celebrates the small acts of kindness.

I think we're often easily overwhelmed by the size and scope of dreams or goals that God has given us. I think that's why 75% of New Year's resolutions fail in the first month. I think it's why 83% of people want to write a book but very few do. Why? Well, you can't finish what you don't start. And so it doesn't matter whether you're writing a book, running a marathon, getting a graduate degree, you've got to reverse engineer those goals and turn them into daily habits. You have to fly the kite, like Homan Walsh.

So let me try to make this as simple as 1, 2, 3. Three keys to flying the kite...

- One give yourself a start date

- Two go ahead and dream big but start small.
- And three. If you want every day to count, count every day.

One give yourself a start date. When I was 22 I felt called to write. One minor problem I just taken a graduate assessment, it showed a low aptitude for writing. In other words, whatever you do, do not write books. Writing is not a natural gifting but God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the called. But you can't just pray like it depends on God you have to work like it depends on you. So here's what I did. I started reading because I figured I better reverse engineer some books to figure out how people write. And so I read 3,000 books before I wrote one and then I started taking my messages and turning them into an e-votional that we would send out via email. And then I started a blog to practice my writing. Can I tell you what I was doing? I was flying a kite. Now, 13 years later, still had nothing to show for it, and finally got fed up. Said I'm not gonna turn 35 without a book to show for it. Now, I gave myself 40 days, pulled it off, is it the best book I've ever written? No. And I actually tried to get it out of circulation but once it's on Amazon, its forever. Okay. But it was a seed-bed for some later books and I had to prove to myself that I could do it. I'm guessing that you're watching right now and there's some dream, there's some goal, and you haven't finished it because you haven't started it. You've got to give yourself a start date. And so whenever someone says to me, someone that wants to write a book, I usually ask the question, do you feel like God's called you to do this? Because if he hasn't, it's going to be really, really hard. But if he has, guess what? Delayed obedience is disobedience and that flips the script. This is about a stewardship issue. What has God called you to do? And if he's called you to do it, you got to give yourself a deadline but then you start by giving yourself a start date.

All right, let me get a couple of excuses out of the way. One, I'm not qualified. Oh, welcome to the club, not enough education, not enough experience, right? You know what I've learned? God wants to use your strong hand. He gave you those gifts but God also wants to use your weak hand. Why? Because that's where his power is made perfect. I mean, I don't know, I mean part of me wishes it was easier for me, I guess. I wish that it was a little bit more of a gifting. But I'll tell you what, every time I write I take my shoes off because it's holy ground. And I'm cognizant that I need the Holy Spirit's help combining those 26 letters of the English. I'm not qualified but I'm called and so I'm gonna be obedient to it.

Two - I'm not ready. Ha, I wasn't ready to get married. We weren't ready to have kids. I certainly wasn't ready to pastor a church. We weren't ready to go multi-sites. I've never been ready for anything that God's called me to do. If you wait until you're ready, you're going to be waiting for the rest of your life. If God has given you a green light, it is go - set - ready?

And then finally, I'm waiting for the right situation. Aren't we all? "People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are", said George Bernard Shaw. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on this world are people who get up and look for the circumstances they want and if they

can't find them, make them. Okay, it is what it is. The writer of Ecclesiastes said, *"Whoever watches the wind will not plant and whoever looks at the clouds will not reap."* At some point, you have to cast your bread on the water, in other words, you got to fly the kite.

And so one, give yourself a start date. Would you do that right now? Is there some dream that's been gathering dust? Is there something that's in your spirit? Give yourself a start date.

Two go ahead and dream big, but you have to start small. I biked six miles yesterday. Okay, thanks for sharing. You know, big deal, right? Well, yeah, I mean, it's not a not a big, big deal but let me put it in context. Every year, I try to either have some kind of adventure that's going to get me out of my comfort zone, or some kind of physical challenge that I'm not capable of doing right now and so I did bike a metric century. But I mean, let's be honest, we don't have kilometers here in America. And so probably I ought to bike a real century, right 100 miles and so that's the big goal this year and so August 28, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, I will bike a century.

Now, if I had a fourth key to flying the kite, it might be what I'm doing right now. Can I tell you what I'm doing? I'm going public. Okay, one of the advantages of being a preacher is I use you, okay to hold me accountable. In 2017 I said I'm gonna run a marathon. There were so many times I am not going to run a marathon, oh wait, I said I was going to run a marathon. And your pastor felt like maybe just maybe he should keep his word. Why do you think I've told you someday I'm gonna make a movie? Because sometimes it feels like a pipe dream. Sometimes it feels so far away. But if I feel like God has put something in my spirit, sometimes you have to go public. It's one reason why we cast vision around here. Okay, now we really need to do this. And so maybe, maybe just maybe you need to go public with something.

Now, last week talked about three M's. You have to make your goals measurable, meaningful and maintainable. And so, you know, I'll bike 100 miles, but here's the deal, I can't just go out and bike 100 miles. So let me tell you how I'm making this meaningful. What I'm trying to do is model goal setting or habit forming. Our oldest son lives in Santa Cruz, California, and I'm hoping he'll ride this bike century with me. But he has a little bit of an advantage and I'll tell you why. Because he climbed 200,000 feet last year on his mountain bike. Okay, just to put that in perspective, that's up and down Everest three times. And so I probably need to get in more than six miles to keep up with my son. But I did the math he lives 2341 miles from us and so I'm going to bike across the country. No, not literally. No, not in like 12 days, okay but between now and August 28, just to make it meaningful to me. I'm on a bike across the country, I will log 2,341 miles. All of that to say this, go ahead and dream big but then you have to make it measurable, meaningful, maintainable. And so start small and then I'll add one more thing to the mix. You need to think long.

If you're taking notes, jot this down remember the future? I hope I can do this justice. I'm just kind of pulling this out of the hat but I think this is accurate. During the regular season, NFL season, the Bears

had a little bit of a losing streak. But I think six games into the losing streak their coach Matt Nagy evidently, gave his players and some coaches some save the date cards dated for January 3, 7pm because he said that's when we'll find out who were playing in the playoffs. Honestly, when he gave them those cards on a six game losing streak, this is not looking good but that is remembering the future. You've got to find a way to remember the future.

I'll just make it personal. I'll be honest, let you know every time I write a book, I'm tempted to throw in the towel like this is just not working. Almost every goal I've gone after you second guess it at some point. And I'll say this in the early days of this church, you know, we're pastoring first year on average about 25 people thinking to myself, is this really...we could just... we could quit and you know, only 25 people would know the difference. Present tense? Future tense? No, no, no, we would have compromised the 10's of 1000's of people that this church has been able to touch over the last 25. When you count the cost you can't just count the actual costs you have to count the opportunity cost. If you forget the future, you trade your birthright for a bowl of stew, like Esau, and you forfeit your future. No, you need to remember your future; who it is that God has called you to be and the dream that God has put in your heart.

You know, in everything we do as a church, we've got to be thinking remote futurity. It's this idea of doing what we do for the third and fourth generation. We're building out phase two at the Turnaround - 20,000 square feet of kids' ministry space, Child Development Center. Every time I walk in, I think about Psalm 22:31. Baby's not yet conceived, will hear the good news. We're gonna make a difference to the third and fourth generation, we're gonna remember the future.

All right, number three, if you want every day to count, count the days. During the 2019 NCAA basketball tournament, Coach Buzz Williams asked if I would give a little talk to the Virginia Tech Hokies who were playing the Duke Blue Devils in the sweet 16. Now, Virginia Tech hadn't been to the sweet 16 in 52 years. And so I gave a little talk and then he was kind enough to let me stick around for the film study, and for the coach's session. And I remember two things in particular, I always take notes in situations like this, I want to see how different people lead. And Buzz did not remind them of their record - how many games they had played, he reminded them of how many practices they had had, which happened to be 74. Why? Because he was counting those practices, because those practices count. Then he said something that just, it was kind of mind blowing to me, almost off the cuff said that it was day 1,811 in his tenure as the head coach of Virginia Tech. Let me just ask you a question. Do you know how many days you have been in your job? Like who? Who knows how many days they've held a job? I'll tell you who, someone who is making every day count? Now, this series started, and by the way, if you have a loved one who has gone through AA and maybe is kind of wrestled with, struggled with overcoming alcoholism, I bet they know how many days they've been sober. See, you've got to count the days because it's about creating winning streaks in your life. And so the series started with a question, can you do it for a day and the good news is anybody can do anything for a day. Then you've got to get up and do it all over again, do it two days in a row and you are flying the kite. So I don't care if it's a

marathon training plan or a Bible reading plan. Failing to plan is planning to fail. You've got to count days just like you count calories absolutely critical.

All right, let me let me close with this. 25 years ago today, the day recording this message 19 people gathered in a DC public school. Now first official week was the week before blizzard of '96 left two feet of snow. Lora and I didn't realize coming from Chicago that DC shuts down with a chance of snow, let alone two feet and so three people showed up Lora, our three month old Parker and me. Next week, 19 people and that first year, you know, wow it was tough sledding. Average about 25 people including Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. On a good Sunday, we'd start services with six or eight or 10 people in the cafetorium, monthly income \$2,000, \$1,600 to rent the DC public school, left \$400 for our salary and all other expenses. Now we did top 40 on our first Easter and I was over the moon. I think we might even have a picture and so I'll be honest, this is record attendance, okay. And yes, I did used to wear a suit. All of that to say this put yourself in my shoes. I'm looking back 25 years to the day. And I'm thinking to myself, look what the Lord has done. Do not despise the day of small beginnings. We think right here, right now God is thinking nations and generations. We think that what God does for us is for us, but it's always for the third and fourth generation.

And so I don't know what goal you're going after, what problem you're trying to solve, what habit you're trying to break or build you gotta fly the kite. How? Well give yourself a start date even if it's the blizzard of '96. You dream big, but you start small and think long and you bank on long obedience in the same direction. And if you want every day to count, you count the days. There are decades when nothing happens but there are weeks, when decades happen.

In August of 1996, three defining moments and I'll close with this, I'm walking down memory lane a little bit, but I hope that's okay. 4.7 mile prayer, walk \$50 check to missions, and a \$400 drum set; I can't tell you all three of those stories, but I really liked one of them. You know, our worship team is amazing and they're going to come and just a moment and lead us. You know, we've got about 150 people on our worship teams across our campuses, I guess, during non COVID. And, wow, last year released this amazing, wrote and recorded this amazing album, The Jesus Way. More than half a million downloads are ready on Spotify. And I'm so grateful for the worship that this church puts out not only for us, but for the kingdom. Back in the day, believe it or not, I led worship for a little bit. Now the only thing that's worse than my voice is my rhythm and we didn't have a drummer. This is a problem. And so our predominant prayer our first year was Lord, send us a drummer, send us a drummer, save people but send us a drummer. And I must have prayed it 100 times and then one day heard that still small voice, "Why don't you go out and buy a drum set?" Well, just as soon as you send us a drummer. I mean, we don't have the spare cash but it was one of those Field of Dreams moments. If you buy it, they will come. And so I remember on a Thursday, driving up to Silver Spring, Maryland, in our Ford Taurus I bought a \$400 drum set that was all of our expendable cash. And wouldn't you know it? That's Sunday, a kid walks in clean cut, Marine Corps, Drum and Bugle Corps. God didn't just send us a drummer he sent us a rock star. And I learned a lesson, I don't care if it's a 4.7 mile prayer, walk a \$50 check to missions,

or a \$400 drum set. They're just moments in your life where you have to fly the kite and you never know that single kite string could be a suspension branch to something that you can't even ask or imagine. And so "20 To him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen."