

## WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE SO HARD?

(Matthew 16:21-28)

- Intro: Why does it have to be so hard?  
-Why does life have to be so hard?  
-Why does a life of faith have to be so hard?

### I. Why Does Life Have To Be So Hard?

#### A. My Sister.

1. Thinking about coming to Tulsa this fall for a visit.
  - a. She was looking for a break.
  - b. She's never met Sophia.
    - My 16-month-old granddaughter.
2. We all checked our calendars.
  - a. My sister.
  - b. My son.
  - c. Me.
3. We found a weekend that worked for all of us.
  - a. But when Janet checked with her boss.
  - b. Her boss told her that he was going to be gone that weekend.
    - For a wedding.
  - c. They can't both be gone at the same time.
    - So she had to change her plans.
  - d. Why does life have to be so hard?
4. As we were searching for another weekend.
  - a. I mentioned to her:
    - I was looking for a Green Bay Packers Super Bowl XLV stein.
      - #I have steins from the other Packer Super Bowl victories.
        - \*Super Bowl I.
        - \*Super Bowl II.
        - \*Super Bowl XXXI.
      - #I wanted to add the latest one to my collection.
      - #I hadn't found one in Tulsa.
      - Had she seen anything like that around Milwaukee?
    - b. She did some checking.
      - Memorabilia stores didn't have any.
      - But she found some online at the Packer Store.
        - #At Lambeau Field.
        - #In Green Bay.
      - She sent me a computer link.

- But between the time:
  - #She sent me the link.
  - #I was able to check it out.
  - \*Stein disappeared from their website.
- I asked her what happened.
  - #She didn't know.
  - #She suggested that I call the store.
- I did.
  - #I learned that they had sold out of the steins.
  - \*In the couple of days since she did her research.
  - #They couldn't guarantee they were going to get any more.
- With my sister's help
  - #I found one online at Amazon.
  - #I ordered it.
  - #It came on Friday.
- c. Why does life have to be so hard?

B. My Homeowner's Insurance.

1. I switched my car insurance in February.
  - a. Because my rates were going up 25-30%.
  - b. I haven't had:
    - Accident.
    - Claim.
2. This summer my homeowner's insurance was set to go up 30-35%.
  - a. I haven't had a claim.
  - b. That was too much.
  - c. I decided to shop that around.
3. I moved my homeowner's insurance to the company that insures my car.
  - a. I got more coverage.
  - b. For half the price.
4. But the insurance agent told me.
  - a. She needed to send an appraiser.
    - To do a visual inspection of the outside of my house.
  - b. I would need to fix the curled up shingles on my roof.
5. I asked:
  - a. "What shingles?"
    - Agent didn't know.
  - b. "Which side of the house?"
    - She didn't know.
  - c. "Do you have pictures?"
    - Yes, she did.
  - d. "Could you email them to me?"
    - She did.

6. Guess what!
  - a. It wasn't my house.
  - b. It wasn't my address.
  - c. It wasn't even my street.
7. They had to send another appraiser.
  - a. This time to the right house.
    - I know.
    - I was home.
  - b. More pictures.
    - No curled up shingles.
8. I got the insurance.
  - a. But it took two months to get this done.
  - b. Why does life have to be so hard?

## II. Why Does A Life Of Faith Have To Be So Hard?

- A. Our Evangelism Committee Wanted To Participate In ORU's Church Rush.
  1. Matt Stevens suggested it to us.
    - a. Matt was one of our ORU students from last year.
    - b. He gave us all the info.
  2. I emailed the Dean of Spiritual Formation at ORU.
    - a. On June 7<sup>th</sup>.
    - b. At 9:41 A.M.
    - c. Asking:
      - When was church rush?
      - How could we reserve a spot?
      - What did we need to know?
      - #I got no response.
      - #All summer I got no response.
  3. When our Evangelism Committee met at the beginning of August.
    - a. We decided:
      - I needed to follow up with ORU.
    - b. I called several offices at ORU.
      - All I got was voice mail.
      - I hesitated to leave a message.
      - #Because I was leaving on vacation the next day.
  4. When I got back from vacation.
    - a. I tried again.
    - b. I finally got a person.
      - Right person.
      - #Administrative assistant to the dean.

- c. She told me we were too late.
  - One day too late.
  - Church rush was the next day.
  - #All the tables were spoken for.
- d. I said:
  - “How far ahead do we need to plan to participate in this?”
- e. She said:
  - “Yesterday would have been early enough.”
- f. I said:
  - “I sent the dean an email at the beginning of the summer.”
  - “But I never got a response.”
- g. She said:
  - “When exactly did you do that?”
- h. I said:
  - “June 7<sup>th</sup>.”
  - “9:41 A.M.”
  - #I still had a copy of the email.
  - #I offered to send it to her.
- i. She became very apologetic.
  - She said:
    - #“I tell you what.”
    - #“If you send me a letter of application.”
    - \*My bio.
    - \*Ascension’s Mission Statement.
    - \*Description of how students could be involved.
    - +On church letterhead.
    - #“I’ll make sure you get a table.”
  - I said:
    - #“First thing I need to do,”
    - \*“Make sure we would have people to staff a table.”
- j. So I got on the phone.
  - I called:
    - #Cathy Newsome.
    - #Mary Peterson.
    - \*On the golf course.
    - #Avis Erickson.
    - #Keith Khoo.
  - They all said they would be at ORU the next day.
- k. So I scrambled to put together a letter.
  - Cathy Newsome scrambled to put together a table display.
  - Mary Faulkner scrambled to produce:
    - #Welcome brochures.
    - #Name slips.
    - \*For a drawing.

- l. We pulled this off.
      - But why does a life of faith have to be so hard?
- 5. At the church rush.
  - a. We had a drawing.
    - For an iPod Shuffle.
      - #Which Cathy donated.
  - b. Students filled out these slips.
    - Name.
    - Phone number.
    - Email address.
  - c. Cathy:
    - Compiled all of this information.
      - #On a spread sheet.
    - Sent it to me.
      - #In an email attachment.
  - d. I asked Mary Faulkner.
    - If there was an easy way to take Cathy's list.
    - Use it to send an email.
  - e. Mary said the only way she knew how to do it.
    - Copy the names.
      - #From the list.
      - #Into her browser.
- 6. Our Evangelism Committee had another meeting on Wednesday night.
  - a. We decided.
    - I should write a note to the ORU students.
      - #Inviting them to worship.
      - #Encouraging them to contact us.
      - \*If they needed a ride.
  - b. Thursday morning.
    - I wrote the note.
    - I sent it to Cathy for her approval.
    - I was preparing to send the email.
      - #Copying the email addresses one at a time.
      - #I had done about ¼ of them.
  - c. Cathy:
    - Called.
    - Said there was an easier way.
      - #Copying the list into a file.
      - \*My Data Sources.
      - #Taking my document.
      - \*Doing a "mail merge."
      - +Which I had never done before.

- Very patiently walked me through all of the steps.
  - #Over the phone.
- When something didn't work right.
  - #She backed up.
  - \*Found another way.
- d. When we got to the end of the process.
  - After:
    - #15-20 minutes.
  - I clicked on "ok."
    - #Nothing happened.
    - #It didn't work.
  - Why does a life of faith have to be so hard?
- e. Cathy:
  - Had to go to a meeting.
  - Said she'd call me back when she was free.
- 7. Meanwhile I went back to my method.
  - a. Copying the email addresses one at a time.
  - b. I had just finished.
    - When Cathy called me back.
    - We decided to save the "mail merge" lesson for another day.
  - c. I sent the email.
    - Seven of them bounced back.
      - #Undeliverable.
      - #Mailer demons.
      - \*"Get behind me, Satan!"
    - I went back to the slips.
      - #Figuring that Cathy might have misread some of them.
      - \*2 or 3 I figured out on my own.
      - \*Rest Mary Faulkner helped me decipher.
        - +If Mary can decipher my scribbles.
        - +She can help read the handwriting of ORU students.
    - I re-sent the email to those 7.
      - #They all went through.
    - But why does a life of faith have to be so hard?

B. July 31.

- 1. Gospel lesson.
  - a. Matthew 14:13-21.
  - b. Feeding of the multitude.
    - Jesus encouraged his disciples to do something.
      - #About feeding all of those hungry people.
    - I encouraged you to do something to make a difference.
      - #In my homily.

2. At the end of our 11:00 service.
  - a. Visitor:
    - Appeared.
    - Asked to make an announcement.
  - b. His story.
    - His parents had gone from Bethlehem to Syria.
      - #To rescue this young man's grandmother.
    - On the way out of Syria.
      - #Their vehicle hit an IED (improvised explosive device).
      - \*Killing:
        - +Father.
        - +Grandmother.
      - \*Hospitalizing the mother.
        - +In Lebanon.
    - Young man claimed:
      - #He was a student.
      - #Needed money for an airplane ticket.
      - \*Visit his mother.
      - \*Attend the funerals of:
        - +Father.
        - +Grandfather.
  - c. Some of you.
    - Thought I had planted this guy.
      - #To see how you would respond:
        - \*To my sermon.
        - \*To him.
    - Moved to open:
      - #Your hearts.
      - #Your wallets.
3. This past Tuesday I learned:
  - a. This guy was a con artist.
  - b. We were scammed.
    - We weren't:
      - #First.
      - #Last.
    - He's been running this scam.
      - #Since at least the middle of June.
  - c. My first response:
    - Kick myself for not paying more attention.
      - #To the alarms that were going off in my head at the time.
    - As pastor.
      - #I'm should be keeping you safe from the wolves.
      - \*I didn't do a very good job of that.

- d. My second response.
  - Totally different from Paul's admonitions in Romans 12:9-21.
    - #Extend hospitality to strangers.
    - #Bless those who persecute you.
    - #Do not repay anyone evil for evil.
    - #Never avenge yourselves.
  - \*Not exactly my first thoughts.
- 4. Why does it have to be so hard to live a life of faith?
  - a. I encourage you to be faithful and to live good and Godly lives.
    - You listen.
    - You try to do that.
    - #Somebody takes advantage of that.
  - b. Why does it have to be so hard?
    - To separate:
      - #Wheat from weeds.
      - #Sheep from goats.
      - #Good from evil.
      - #Legitimate needs from lying cons.
  - c. Why does it have to be so hard to live a life of faith?

### III. Life Of Faith Is Hard.

- A. Way Of Discipleship Is The Way Of The Cross.
  - 1. When Jesus asked his disciples:
    - a. "Who do you say that I am?"
      - Matthew 16:15.
    - b. Peter was right there like a rock.
      - "You are the Christ,"
      - "The Son of the Living God."
      - #Matthew 16:16.
  - 2. When Jesus began to show his disciples what it meant for him to be the Christ.
    - a. Suffering.
    - b. Dying.
    - c. Rising.
      - Matthew 16:21.
    - d. Peter was right there like a stumbling block.
      - Greek word:
        - #Skandalon (scandal).
      - "God forbid."
      - "This must never happen to you."
      - #Matthew 16:22.

- e. What Peter:
  - Didn't say.
  - But might have been thinking.
    - #What we might be thinking.
      - \*"God forbid."
      - \*"This must never happen to us."

- 3. Jesus says:
  - a. To Peter.
  - b. To us.
    - “Get behind me, Satan!”
    - #Might mean:
      - \*Stop:
        - +Thinking like that.
        - +Talking like that.
      - \*Fall in line behind me.
        - +Where I'm going.
          - =You're going.
        - +Where things are hard.
        - +Where there is suffering.
        - +Where you might get conned.
- 4. Why is it so hard to live a life of faith?

B. We Don't Like To Lose.

- 1. We don't like to lose anything.
  - a. Face.
  - b. Time.
  - c. Money.
  - d. Security.
  - e. Control.
  - f. Life.
- 2. If the incident of July 31 tells us anything.
  - a. We are losers.
    - Thinking we can never be conned.
      - #We're losers.
    - Thinking we can care without being hurt.
      - #We're losers.
    - Thinking we can be safe/saved by always making the right choices.
      - #We're losers.
  - b. We are losers.
    - Led.
    - Loved.
    - Redeemed.
      - #By the biggest loser of all—Jesus.

- \*Who calls us to hard things.
- +Faith.
- +Discipleship.
- +Take up our cross.
- +Die in order that we might live.

Concl: It's hard.

- We dare not try it alone.
  - #Paul's admonitions in Romans 12:9-21.
    - \*Second person, plural.
    - \*All y'all.
    - \*Community of faith.
      - +We live into these things together.
- We do dare to get help.
  - #Not only from one another.
  - #But from one who does hard things for us.
    - \*Feeding us his own body and blood.
    - \*Losing himself on a cross.
      - +So that losers might be winners.