***“NEW NORMAL”***

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ife, I’ve been as slow as a turtle to learn, is unceasingly confronting us with “new normals.” We’re forever surprised by what we suddenly *can* do, *must* do or can *no longer* do.

In the twilight of his All-Star career, Mariner DH, Edgar Martinez, could still hit, but ran the bases like I did in my *prime*! To stroke his patented doubles, he was forced to hit triples.

Being mugged by Parkinson’s was for me like diving into Lake Michigan’s icy waters with the Polar Bear Club. All my life I’d been able to type or play piano easily, to stampede up and down stairs toting packages stacked above eye level, to snake through gridlock traffic, totally relaxed. Words came effortlessly just nanoseconds after being birthed in my brain. But no longer.

Was my former agility who I *normally* am, making me “less of me” as P.D. erodes my faculties? How should I deal with this?

Life sweeps us along new stretches of whitewater – some fun, others fearful – bringing us to today’s BIG QUESTION:

Currently, what is your new normal? Describe how your way of handling is –- or isn’t -- working for you.

**(DISCUSSION)**

Seventy-five miles north of Jerusalem lies Lake Genessaret, AKA Sea of Galilee. There, near His boyhood ‘hood, Jesus enlisted His 12 “peeps.” Circling this 6x12 mile, inland sea, He rolled out news of the kingdom of heaven, authenticating it with miracles. The locals had never seen or heard a rabbi like this before. Swelling crowds dogged His every step, eager to get more of Him.

That brings us to Luke 5 where Jesus’ homeboys find themselves in over their heads. **Let’s read the story:**

**1 Once when he was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd was pushing in on him to better hear the Word of God. 2 He noticed two boats tied up. The fishermen had just left them and were out scrubbing their nets. 3 He climbed into the boat that was Simon's and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Sitting there, using the boat for a pulpit, he taught the crowd.**

**4 When he finished teaching, he said to Simon, "Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch."**

**5 Simon said, "Master, we've been fishing hard all night and haven't caught even a minnow. But if you say so, I'll let out the nets." 6 It was no sooner said than done--a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. 7 They waved to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch.**

8 Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell to his knees before Jesus. "Master, leave. I'm a sinner and can't handle this holiness. Leave me to myself." 9 When they pulled in that catch of fish, awe overwhelmed Simon and everyone with him.

10 It was the same with James and John, Zebedee's sons, coworkers with Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "There is nothing to fear. From now on you'll be fishing for men and women." 11 They pulled their boats up on the beach, left them, nets and all, and followed him. (DISCUSSION)

What can we take home from this?

1. It’s not about fishing, career or hobbies. It’s about people. They’re God’s passion. Until we know how much He loves us, and what He’s done to prove it, we’ll be our own god.
2. Jesus was a carpenter, but was just as expert on where the big fish are. He knows everything. So why do we wait until we’re in deep water before we’re willing to acknowledge that? Without Him, what are our nets filled with?
3. Jesus honors our obedience. Peter balked at Jesus’ tip to head offshore, making alibis for his all-night shutout. Yet He swallowed his pride and did as Jesus said.
4. When we follow Jesus, not only are *we* blessed; *others* are.
5. Staying close to Jesus reminds us how much we need Him as our Savior, Mentor, Friend -- not as a buddy or a hobby.
6. Why are we shocked at what God can do in our lives? After all, He created us. Only God’s Son would ditch heaven’s comforts to throw Himself in front of sin’s bus for us?
7. All that we have are tools God gives us to use not just for obvious reasons, but for a higher purpose. Others around us desperately need to know that Jesus loves them unconditionally, that His death on the cross allowed His Father to forgive all people of all their sins, and that by making that fact the foundation of our life, God welcomes us into His family forever, living ultimately with Him in heaven, not languishing in perpetual, fiery darkness, endlessly isolated from light, love and God.
8. When we see Christ for who He is, and embrace Him as our Savior, we have the awesome privilege of walking with the God of the universe! In luring Pepsi CEO John Scully to become Apple’s new chief, Steve Jobs posed a pivotal question: “John, would you rather make brown pop the rest of your life, or come change the world?”

Ordinary men, with ordinary jobs, met the only Son of the only God. In the dailyness of life they accepted His call to dedicate their vocation and themselves to venturing out into a “new deep,” beyond their comfort zones, using new nets to navigate a new normal as followers of Christ and fishers of men. And look what’s happened!

Okay, so how should we tackle our job *tomorrow*? **Let’s read Colossians 3:23-24:**

23 Work hard and cheerfully at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. 24 Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and the Master you are serving is Christ.

Our issue is not about what we DO or CAN’T do – because that drifts as we age; it’s about who we ARE *with* or *without* Christ. Each of us was born with a sin problem, thanks to our first parents who gave Paradise - and all mankind -- an unwanted extreme makeover. **So, what’s the one-time, permanent Solution?**

**“Sin pays off with death. But God's gift is eternal life given by Jesus Christ our Lord.”** (Romans 6:23)

**“Eternal life is to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, the one you sent.”** (John 17:3)

His Deal

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