

Introduction

Many years ago, I met a wife whose husband had just left their two children and her for another woman. She was devastated of course and in the agony of the moment declared, **"I'll never be happy again."**

Notice the word she used, **"never."** **"Never"** is an absolute word. The *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines it this way: **"1. Not ever: at no time 2. Not in any degree: not under any condition."** In the 1997 world series, Jose Mesa blew a 7th game save and the Marlins defeated the Indians, whereupon my frustrated father-in-law moaned, **"The Indians will never win another World Series."**

All of us have used that word, but we need to be thoughtful before we do again. There was a James Bond movie titled *Never Say Never Again*. I don't know what it was about but the title gives us a principle by which to live. With exceptions here and there, we should never say **"never"** again and that's what I'm going to preach about today.

"Never"

This passage is about Abraham and his wife Sarah. In Genesis 12, God promised Abraham that He would create a great nation from his offspring. But in Genesis 18, Sarah and he are still childless. God appears to them, however, and announces she'll bear a son the next year.

Notice Sarah's response in verses 11-13. She laughs at the very idea of it. After all, she's 90 years old and well past the age of child-bearing. You ladies over 60, what would you say if God told you that you'd bear a son next year. It'd be the same thing Sarah says, **"Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?"** (minus **"when I am so old"**). It's a rhetorical question, the implied answer to which is, **"No."** In her case though, she desperately wants to have a son but believes she can't.

All of us have been where she was or perhaps are there now. We're facing what seems to be an unsolvable problem and say **"never."** An abandoned wife says, **"I'll never be happy again."** A football player

with a broken neck says, **"I'll never walk again."** A Christian mother of a long rebellious sons says, **"He'll never get saved."** A terminated 52 year-old says, **"I'll never find a good job."** A struggling student says, **"I'll never get good grades."** And on it goes.

The problem is that **"never"** is a defeating word (attitude). It robs us of motivation and drains the drive from our lives. That in turn restrains us from doing the things we need to do most in our situations. The injured person quits taking therapy. The frustrated mother quits praying. The jobless person quits filling out applications. The struggling student quits studying. You get the idea. **"Never"** is defeating.

Maybe that's where you are today. Maybe you're saying **"never"** and aren't motivated anymore. Consequently, you aren't doing the things you need to do. If so, you (and I) need to know and live by four fundamental truths of our existence. Let's examine each one.

Nothing Is Totally Impossible

First, nothing is totally impossible. No matter how bad our situation is, there's always something constructive we can do about some aspect of it. So, we pray, examine, analyze, and figure out what that something is. Then, we do it. We do what we can about those aspects of the situation that are possible and leave the rest in God's hands. Using an old analogy, we may not be able to save the entire ship, but we can save a life or two, and so, that's what we do.

And that sometimes is a lot. Dealing with even one insignificant aspect of a situation sometimes turns the tide. Doing what we can sometimes causes an unexpected breakthrough or stimulates outside forces to assist us. And the impossible sometimes becomes the possible when it does.

Back in the early 1970's, a six year-old boy in the Bronx promised his distraught single mother, a waitress, that he'd pay off her \$35,000 medical bill. Could he pay off the entire bill? Of course he couldn't. But he could pay off a tiny portion of it and so that's what he did. He walked

the streets of the Bronx collecting newspapers, pop bottles, and aluminum cans and cashing them in. After a year of doing that, he had made \$1000. At that point, a reporter for a New York newspaper got wind of his story and wrote an article about it. Soon, people all over the city were saving their newspapers, bottles, and cans for this little boy. To make a long story short, after eight years of that, the boy, now 14 years old, had made \$17,000. Several individuals, inspired by his grit, then matched what he had made, allowing him to pay off the entire bill.

He illustrates that almost no situation is totally impossible. There is almost always something constructive we can do about some aspect of it. So we do that something and put the rest in God's hands.

What Is Impossible Today May Be Possible Tomorrow

You and I need to know and live by a second truth. What is impossible today may be possible tomorrow.

Technology certainly has a part to play in that. I read about a man named John Barr who was blind for six years as a result of ARMD (age related macular degeneration). But a brand new surgical technique was developed that restored his sight. For six years, it was impossible that he would see. But then, a new technology made it possible.

But it isn't just technologies. It's the very nature of life itself. Life isn't static. It's dynamic. Circumstances aren't fixed. They're in flux. The factors and forces in our lives are constantly shifting and altering. The people and pressures in them are constantly moving and changing. Maybe it's a person's change of mind and heart, a new company moving into town, a life converting crisis, unexpected support from an unlikely source, the passing or repealing of a law, and so on. Whatever the "it" is, the change it brings sometimes makes what was impossible possible.

The abandoned wife I mentioned earlier knows what I mean. I ran into one of her daughters several years after I talked with her. I asked how her mother was doing and she replied: "**Oh, she's doing great. She's happier now than she's ever been.**" Her ex-husband leaving her

forced her to get a job, at which she met a wonderful man. She thinks he's the best person she's ever met and they're engaged.

That woman knows it by firsthand experience. The factors and forces, the people and pressures, in our lives are constantly changing. That means that every new day brings new possibilities. That is one of the most important lessons I've learned in life. Every new day brings new possibilities. What is impossible today may be possible tomorrow.

Impossibilities Are Often Deficiencies

There's a third truth you and I need to know and by which we need to live. Impossibilities are sometimes deficiencies. Sometime, more often than we probably realize, it isn't the circumstances and facts themselves that make something impossible. It's the people involved that do. The problem isn't that some *thing* is impossible. It's that some *one* is deficient. We need to start seeing some impossibilities for what they really are. They're nothing more than deficiencies on our part. When that is the case, we need to change.

Maybe it isn't impossible. I'm just stubborn. What I need to do is compromise some of my preferences, opinions, or rights. I need to let some of my demands go.

Maybe it isn't impossible. I'm just lethargic. What I need to do is to develop some initiative and drive, get off my duff as we say it, and do something.

Maybe it isn't impossible. I'm just cowardly. What I need to do is get some nerve, risk some embarrassments or failures, and go for it.

Maybe it isn't impossible. I'm just proud. What I need to do is grow in humility, swallow my pride, and ask for help.

Maybe it isn't impossible. I'm just rigid and stiff. What I need to do is be more creative and get out of the rut I'm in. I need to rearrange the priorities, redesign the strategies, and recheck the answers to which I'm accustomed.

Maybe it isn't impossible. I'm just spoiled. What I need to do is

embrace simplicity and be happy with less.

I once counseled a husband and wife in Akron who were head over heels in debt. They didn't know what to do, they said, and asked if I had any suggestions. They asked and so I gave one. Down size by selling their 4500 square foot home and moving into a 1200 square foot one. Doing so would have reduced their mortgage payment and property tax enough to solve their financial problem. But they wouldn't hear of it. It was their dream house, they argued, and there was no way they were going to give it up.

Here's what I want you to see. The impossibility was in the people not the facts. Impossibilities are sometimes nothing more than deficiencies. Sometimes, we think something is impossible but it isn't. We just need to change.

Nothing Is Impossible with God

You and I need to know and live by a fourth truth, the most important of all. Nothing is impossible with God. Think of it this way.

There are regularities in physical events, that is, in nature, and those regularities are rarely if ever interrupted. Virgins regularly don't give birth to babies. Dead people regularly stay dead. And water regularly refuses to turn into wine even when spoken to. There are regularities in nature that are rarely if ever interrupted.

One of those regularities is that 90 year-old women don't give birth to babies. On November 28, 2008, 70 year-old Rajo Devi, after 50 years of a childless marriage, gave birth to a baby (a girl). That's noteworthy because she is the oldest woman in recorded secular history to do so. That implies that 90 year-old women regularly don't give birth to babies.

But Sarah did. In her case, the regularity in this physical event was interrupted. It was a miracle, in other words – a miracle of God.

Dallas Willard explains it this way in his book *Knowing Christ Today*. The regularities of nature depend upon certain conditions that lie deeper in reality. If those conditions are modified, then the regularities are

interrupted. Iron, for instance, regularly sinks in water. But if it's modified, hollowed out and given a certain shape, it floats.

Now, all the conditions upon which the regularities of nature depend lie under the control of their creator – God. It's possible, therefore, for Him to modify those conditions and thus interrupt the regularities. His rhetorical question in verse 14 teaches us just that, **"Is anything too difficult for the LORD?"** The implied answer is a resounding, **"No!"** God, who created and controls the regularities of nature, can and sometimes does interrupt them.

When He does, what we call miracles occur. A 90-year old gives birth to a baby. Cancerous tissue heals. A hardened skeptic becomes a child in his belief. An addict is set free. Or a barren woman conceives.

Christian friends of mine named Ken and Wanda tried to have a baby for five years but to no avail. Subsequent medical tests showed that Wanda was barren. **"You aren't capable of conceiving,"** her physicians said. Shortly thereafter, Ken and Wanda gathered a group of Christian friends to pray for her. Three months later, she discovered she was pregnant and today has three children. God interrupted the regularities of her reproductive system and a miracle occurred.

It's true. Nothing is impossible with God. As followers of Jesus, we're wise, therefore, to go to Him first of all when we're facing one of those **"never"** situations in our lives. He invites us to come to Him and ask for the miracle we need. We can count on Him of course to do what is best. And when it's best, when the person, time, and idea of our prayer are right, He gives us the miracle we need.

Conclusion

I wonder in closing how many times we've said **"never."** I'll never do this or that. This or that will never happen. But let's think before we say it again. Nothing is totally impossible. What is impossible today may be possible tomorrow. Impossibilities are sometimes deficiencies. And nothing is impossible with God. So, never say **"never"** again.