
The Writer's Inkhorn

Volume 12, Issue 6

Continuing Reflections on the Word for Your Personal Growth in Christ

Final 2019

MOMENTUM 2020: Gather Up the Fragments of Your Life and Press On!

Scripture References: John 6:1-12

(See also Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 6:32-44;
Luke 9:12-17)

The title and concept for this issue of *The Writer's Inkhorn* are seeds from two of the most recent tasks I had the opportunity to perform: a devotional lesson for the Tabitha House women and a workshop for the monthly jurisdictional fellowship meeting, women's session, both in early December.

In the first section I revisit a time-honored story in Scripture and some biblical examples so that we might encourage ourselves (face it, we do not always get the encouragement from the outside that we crave or desire) to make the best of who we are, what we have done or experienced, good or bad, and press on to fulfill our God-ordained destinies.

In the second section, I encourage you to do some reflection by answering the questions. Think deeply to plan strategically and to act intentionally for 2020 and beyond.

Gather the Fragments

One of my all-time favorite stories in the Bible is the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Incidentally, it is the only miracle that is recorded in all four gospels. There is a second miracle of the feeding of 4,000 but the first miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 has a few things that are unique about it as recorded in John's gospel as opposed to the other three.



I like John's account best. He is the only one of the four writers that mentioned **the boy** whose lunch they brought to Jesus to use. When Jesus told the disciples there was no need to send

the people away, but to give them something to eat, Matthew says they responded, "*We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.*" Mark and Luke make similar statements. But John says that Andrew, Simon Peter's brother says, "***There is a lad here, who has five barley loaves and two small fishes.***"

In a crowd of 5,000 men, that the boy was the only one with something Jesus could use as the basis for that miracle is a detail to which I want to give attention, especially if speaking to small children or youth, to encourage **all** of them that they each have **something** that Jesus can use. Clearly, the miracle was not in the size of the gift – the amount of food the boy had to offer – but in what Jesus can do with what we give to Him. Somehow God can use our smallest gift to feed multitudes, as it were.

As I studied each account more closely, I also discovered that only John's account stated it as **Jesus speaking directly** to His disciples, telling them to "*Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.*" (John 6:12). The other accounts simply state how much was gathered up at the end. In the first miracle twelve baskets of fragments and in the second miracle seven baskets of leftovers were collected. And, since John records **Jesus** as giving the directives, John's account includes the phrase "**that nothing be lost.**"

For several years I kept encountering this notion of "*gathering up the fragments*" at various times when I would pick up my Bible

to read. I kept running into this miracle and being confronted by this notion, so much so until that became the title of my fifth book, a yearlong devotional journal with writing prompts for responding to each entry. It was nearly three years before that book was published that the Lord spoke to me as I was nearing retirement and let me know that I have enough “leftovers” in me from all of the work that I have already done in various venues, and in the ways that I have prepared myself, that many more can still be fed, as it were.

The phrase “**gather up the fragments that nothing be lost**” has remained with me. But



from this point on I want you to think about this in another way. I think so much of what happens in our

lives just passes without much notice or serious reflection, so that lessons we could have learned often fall by the wayside. But we have to come to understand that it is not just experience that makes the best teacher but **evaluated** experience – what you **learn** from what you experience.

In the *15 Invaluable Laws of Growth*, John Maxwell (2011) further explains in the Law of Pain, which simply states: “**Good** management of **bad** experiences leads to **great** growth” (emphases mine). Do not let what you have experienced in life up until this point be wasted. Gather up the fragments of your life. Do not let what has happened to you, *with* or *without* your consent, be for naught.

We have **all** known pain of some sort or another. We are **all** more broken in some places and more whole in others, but we need to embrace our brokenness just as we embrace our wholeness. It is **God** who heals all of our brokenness and uses it for His own will and glory as we continue to



move **forward** in life. Do not just **go** through life; rather, become intentional about **growing** through whatever life brings.

Do not let the enemy burden you down with the guilt of your failures. You are where you are now *precisely* because you are **more than** the sum total of your failures. You are a miracle in the making. What the enemy meant for evil, God has turned it around for your good. And it can happen in the most unlikely ways. Consider this brief vignette:

Just a few days ago, my cousin, Candies, reminded me of a miracle that happened to our cousin, David, a number of years ago. He had been having some real problems with his knees. They would ache so badly that he would sometimes cry. But one day he was walking to the store and fell outside on the concrete – onto his knees. And strangely enough, when he got up, his knees did not ache anymore. God had given him a miracle of healing just like that in that most unusual way. What the enemy had meant for evil, God turned it around for his good, just like that!

Do you believe that God is still in the miracle business? Surely He is or we would not be here today. **We are all miracles in the making**. He is the Potter; we are the clay. Only He can mold, make, and remake us into vessels that He can use. When we are bruised, when we are broken, then we are most reminded of our loving heavenly Father who does not just abandon us and leave us to our own devices. Instead, He perfects that which concerns us (Psalm 138:8). He will **never** forsake the work of His hands.

To further confirm this point, consider some biblical examples. You do remember Simon Peter, don’t you? Jesus, the most excellent Teacher in all of time and eternity, poured Himself **daily** into the lives of the others *and* Peter, teaching them for three

years, living with them, praying with them, training them to take over the work that they would soon have to spearhead and carry on, without His *physical* presence.

Yet, even after all of that living and walking with Jesus day in and day out, Peter took out a sword in the Garden of Gethsemane in the presence of Jesus, and tried to cut a man's head off! At least that is what *I* think he was trying to do. I think the man kind of ducked to the side and Peter took off his ear instead. Jesus quickly reprimanded Peter for his actions, told him to put the sword away, picked up Malchus' ear, and just stuck it back on the side of his head. Just like that!

Later on, during Jesus' trial proceedings in the courtyard, someone said something to Peter about being one of Jesus' disciples. On three different instances that night, Peter denied his connection with Jesus, after having been with Him for three years. Peter eventually became so frustrated with those "accusations" that he began **cursing** to prove his point, perhaps, that he was *not* "one of them."

That reminds me of how some children who were raised up in church would swear and curse and act out among their peers in school to "fit in" with everyone else. The funny thing, though, is that somehow some trace of Jesus remained. You cannot just shake Him off so easily like that. Remember Proverbs 22:6? When we are raised right, something always remains. And for Peter, he was told that "his **speech** betrayed him." In other words, just *saying* that he was not one of Jesus' disciples **was not enough to erase the trace** of Jesus on him, even as unseemly as he was acting!

How many times have you been taught a lesson, tempted, fallen into Satan's traps, gotten back up again by the grace of God, and **still** gone and done the same or a different **wrong** thing? Jesus had previously warned Peter what was going to happen, just as He warns us that Satan's only intent as it regards

us is to "steal, kill, and destroy." Matthew said, Peter *remembered* what Jesus had told him was *going* to happen, and he went out and wept bitterly. Our failures can make us **weep sore**, especially when the Lord has warned us through His Spirit. Still God forgives us again.

Our failures show us that our lives are all about process – what God is teaching us, what God is working in us to make us "profitable servants" in His kingdom. So what if we do not all get to the *same* place at the *same* time, our heavenly Father is patient with each one of us individually and allows *us* the time and space *we* need to grow into our *best* selves.

And you remember King David, undoubtedly. He was a warrior-king who exhibited a great character flaw that brought pain and suffering upon his household – pain that remained after his death – because of his murderous plot to cover up his indiscretion with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife. Yet, he was a worshipper and psalmist, writer and musician, and one whom God called a man after His own heart. Even when we do things that are so terrible that they could send us straight to hell if God applied only justice and not mercy to our cases, He still **chooses** to use us. Hear David's words in Psalm 103:10-14 (NIV):

He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust.

As I am writing this, the Spirit reveals that *this* is the divine prerogative. God exercises His divine prerogative to **love** us into obedience rather than to capriciously abandon and punish us when we have done wrong. He remembers

our frame (KJV) – He knows that we are but dust from the beginning. Yet, He so loved us that He gave His Son to restore the broken relationship caused when Adam sinned. And the thing is, this was not an afterthought! God knew **from the beginning** that this would happen and so He had a plan **from the beginning** to restore us. Imagine that kind of love! How do people not respond to that?

There is a place in the kingdom for which **you** have been uniquely created – and a work that only you can fulfill. Do you know what that work is? All of what it seems that life has conspired against you to make you who you are has been divinely purposed and allowed. **This** is the stuff you must use to press on. God does not give up on us because He already knows that He can use us in ways we may never even *begin* to imagine. Have the courage to gather up the fragments of your life so that nothing is lost and so that God may use it to enrich or simply save others' lives.

Momentum 2020

MORE than just closing out one year and heading into another, you are about to embark upon another decade. In what ways have you thought about this?

ASSESS where you have been and what you have done in this past year and decade, in preparation for the upcoming year and decade ahead. Make notes as you remember things.

WHAT, if any, specific goals did you set for 2019? Did you accomplish any or all of them? Do you remember any goals that you had for this past decade? If any, did any of them come to fruition?

I am 65 at this writing and it is conceivable that I might live to age 75. So I, too, need to think about what I want to accomplish.

WHAT goals still remain? How can you reset and start over or continue from where you are, if these goals are still important to you?

IN what areas have you been **most** consistent over this past year? How can you use this consistency as momentum for the year and decade ahead?

IN what areas have you been less consistent this past year? How can a **lack** of consistency in your daily life **sabotage** your momentum and progress for the year and decade ahead?

WHAT changes are you willing to make to become who God wants you to be – someone who is maximizing the potential He has placed within you?

BE purposeful. **SET** your intentionality. Look at the lesson revealed to me from the creation story, about **GOD'S** design for accomplishing great and mighty things:

Goal-setting (goal: creation of heaven and earth)

Scheduling (target time: six days)

Organization (Day 1, Objective 1: light)

Completion (distinction of night and day)

Evaluation ("...and God saw that it was good")

Relaxation ("He rested...")

Restoration ("...and was refreshed.")

IDENTIFY in which of the above areas of God's strategic design for task completion do you lack the most focus? How will you attend to them so that you gain and keep momentum for 2020 and beyond?

ACTION: Get yourself an accountability partner for 2020 if you are serious about doing more and being better. Meet with him or her (virtually or in person) and set up a plan that you can reasonably maintain, to keep focused. Let nothing be wasted as you press on.

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You may read the *Writer's Inkhorn* online at www.marywebstermoore.com/devotional

