

Let's Do Difficult

Run with the Horses

World Outreach Church
Sermon Discussion Guide
Sunday Sermon: **February 04, 2024**



God's people have become significantly addicted to comfort and convenience, but our faith was never intended to be easy. So, we are deciding that we "did easy" yesterday. Now we're ready to "do difficult"—to accept assignments others don't want, to go places where others don't want to go, to pray through difficult places. We want to join that great chorus of men and women who, through the ages, have said, "Here I am, Lord. Send me." We are receiving the invitation to consider what it means to be the people of God, willing to face difficult decisions—because doing difficult things today will help strengthen us so we can flourish in what is ahead.

If you could kick the person in the pants responsible for most of your trouble, you wouldn't sit for a month.

—Theodore Roosevelt

John 4:24 *God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*"

1. **What does it mean to worship in Spirit and in truth? How does worshiping the Lord increase your dependence on Him?**

I. LET'S DO DIFFICULT

Jeremiah 12:5 *"If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan?"*

2. **This analogy points out the different intensity required to race against men versus running to beat the horses. How does this analogy apply to your own life? In what ways are you currently "running with the horses?"**

A. Remember *The Lord of Hosts*

Psalm 46:7 (NASB®) *The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold.*

Isaiah 2:12 (NASB®) *For the Lord of hosts will have a day of reckoning. Against everyone who is proud and lofty And against everyone who is lifted up, That he may be abased.*

Revelation 5:11–14 *Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, **numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand.** They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" ¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" ¹⁴ The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

B. Accept or Reject God's Purposes

Luke 7:29–30 ²⁹ *(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. ³⁰ But the Pharisees and experts in the law **rejected God's purpose for themselves**, because they had not been baptized by John.)*

Luke 18:9–14 *To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' ¹³ "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' ¹⁴ "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

3. **We have naively ignored the powerful influences of evil, expecting government, armies, and/or first responders to be our resistance to it. What has been your response to the evils in our culture today?**

C. Catalysts for Embracing Difficult

- Humility
- Committed to honor the Lord
- Repentant attitude
- Listening heart
- Bias towards action (servant)

4. See the “Catalysts for Embracing Difficult” list above. Is there an area(s) where you have struggled in the past? What was holding you back from embracing the difficult? How did you overcome it?

D. Enemies of Doing the Difficult

- Entitlement vs Requirement
- Indulgence & Trying
- Failure & Fatigue
- Self-righteousness & Criticism
- Tyranny of comfort & convenience

5. See the “Enemies of Doing the Difficult” list above. Is there an area(s) where you are currently struggling? How can you be more disciplined in that area(s)?

II. THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Acts 16:9–10 *During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”*¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, **concluding** that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Acts 16:13–15 *On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.*¹⁴ One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.¹⁵ When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.

Acts 16:16–28¹⁶ *Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.*¹⁷ This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.”¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!” At that moment the spirit left her.

¹⁹ *When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.*²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar²¹ by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.”

6. What are some new and practical ways that you can demonstrate the character of God this week?

PROCLAMATION

I praise the Most High; I honor and glorify Him who lives forever.

His dominion is an eternal dominion; His Kingdom endures from generation to generation.

All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing.

He does as He pleases with the powers of Heaven and the peoples of the earth.

No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: “What have you done?” (adapted from Daniel 4:34–35)