

Finding The Extraordinary

Dr Lois Dodds (Part 4 of 7)



Hello again. I hope you have had a good day. I hope that you have been able to see God in the ordinary. God's called you to an extraordinary life. You have an extraordinary passion, an extraordinary purpose, and probably, if you are listening to this, you are in a very extraordinary place: it is not like home at all. Maybe you want to go home. Maybe this is a hard time for you.

I want to encourage you to think about how God is in the ordinary. When you live for a lofty purpose, sometimes it is easy to lose sight of the value of the ordinary. One of things I love to do when we travel to other countries is see how people make their hand crafts. Pottery is one of my favourites and where we lived in the Amazon people around us made and used pottery every day. It made me think about God making us, as the account in Jeremiah says.

*He created us for his purpose.
Handmade pot of earthen clay,
though made of common element
your worth is measured not by dust and water mixed
but by the wealth that fills you
and by the hand that made you.
Through the fiery furnace drawn,
not to break or char you.
The fire refining made you strong
to give you more capacity to hold.
Suppose your strengthening had been denied,
that precious life in weaker vessel dissipated,
lost to its holy use.
Mystery – the vessel: earthen, fragile, cracked.
The treasure - perfect.
Essence of God.*

Why does God choose to work through me? Maybe this is a time in your life when you feel life is so ordinary it is just made of mud and water mixed. Maybe it is a time when you feel like you are going through the fire. Life is very hard. You have this lofty purpose but it is thwarted by obstacles and adversities. Think about how God may be strengthening you in the fire. People used to call it affliction: nowadays we call it stress or something else. But God may be strengthening you in the fire so that later on you are durable. You have a capacity to hold, and when you are fired as a pot you have a lot more capacity for endurance than you would have had before. A pot could be beautiful without being fired but it is not durable. It breaks and it cracks much too easily.

Another time God spoke to me through the ordinary was when I was riding a horse. Now you might say, what in the world has that have to do with God? But on this occasion God spoke to me while I was riding horseback. We were going up in the Andes.

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Maybe you have the Himalayas around you, which would be even more rugged, or some other mountains nearby. As I was riding this horse I began to have an aching shoulder. And on my shoulder I was carrying a bag which had a canteen and a flashlight and I had my machete on my belt. I had all these things which we were taught never to do without if we were in a situation that might require survival.

But my shoulder began to ache and I heard God speak to me. He said, 'Lois, who is carrying you?' I said, 'Well, the horse.' 'Would it weigh any more to the horse if you took that bag off your shoulder and put in on the saddle horn? Would it weigh any more to the horse?' And I laughed and said, 'Well, Of course not. It is not going to weigh any more for the horse because the horse is carrying me.' And then God said, 'Well see there, all these burdens that you are carrying as you listen to the needs and hurts and pains of other people: Lois, who is carrying you? Will it weigh any more to me if you lay those directly on my shoulders?' And of course I had to say, 'Lord, you're right. You're carrying me, and it won't weigh any more to you, but it will certainly keep my shoulder from aching.'

Maybe you need to lay some of your burdens directly on Jesus today, whatever it is you are carrying. Maybe you are distressed about your children. Life is hard for them away from Grandpa and Grandma. Maybe they don't have a regular school to go to. It is hard to school them at home. Maybe you haven't been able to get provisions and somebody's birthday is coming up. And what will you do for that special day? Maybe the car has broken down again. Maybe the coffee machine which cost so much to take still won't work. Maybe the computer isn't working properly again and you can't even send your email. Can you lay those burdens on Jesus? Because he is carrying you and it won't weigh any more to him?

Another ordinary way in which God speaks to me is baking bread. Maybe you are in a place where you bake your own bread or maybe you are fortunate to be in a place where you can run down to the corner and get it fresh made. Even in the ordinariness of the bread, God can speak. He reminded me that I am born to reproduce, when I was baking bread one day.

*A golden shaft of pregnant wheat
dances and nods with the weight of its seed.
It gives more than I at birth.
More than an umbilical cord is severed
when that heavy head falls
to become my bread.*

A beam of light is another way God speaks to me, where the ordinary takes on an extraordinary significance. A laser beam or in Spanish you get a double meaning – el ray.

*Just one small ray,
one tiny glimmer of light
was born that night
cracking the darkness of this tough world.*

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*Once having breached that crusty shell
the light split it
and reached to every part
giving new hope to the waiting faithful.
From one small ray to total penetration.
He will come again some day
in flashing flame
that every eye will see.*

*Lord, let me walk in your light.
Don't let me step into a shadow
even for a moment.
You are the light of the world
and in your radiance is full joy.*

As you think about the ordinary and you are in an extraordinary place - perhaps you are in culture shock - it helps to be reminded that Jesus went through culture shock too: interplanetary. It wasn't just intercontinental: it was a long way from home.

*Coming home after 4 years or 33.
I wonder, after the culture shock
of poverty and sin and selfishness and death,
Lord, did you feel overwhelmed
when you were catapulted back to heaven?
Your flight that day was more than intercontinental.*

I want to encourage you tonight, today, to again commit your ordinary daily tasks to Jesus and ask you to exemplify through his Spirit in you what real life is. Real life isn't just the big hallmarks, it's not just the big milestones. Real life is varied daily and God's love is best portrayed in us and best conveyed through us through the ordinary things of life - having tea, having coffee, inviting a friend in for a cold drink, sitting down to read a story, doing the dishes with a good attitude. God is mostly seen in us in these ordinary things. So remember that with your extraordinary passion to love Jesus for God's sake, to love people for God's sake, your extraordinary purpose of making God visible, that the pathway God will use more often than not it is the pathway of the ordinary. So live your ordinary life today with its highest purpose - Jesus in you.