

Finding The Extraordinary

Dr Lois Dodds (Part 6 of 7)



Hello again. We're going to talk more about how the extraordinary is wrapped up in the ordinary. You're in a far away place, it's a long way from home, probably everything's different - the language, the culture. You have a lofty purpose and it may be very hard to fulfil because the everyday things of life can just consume you and eat up so much time - getting around, finding the things you need, doing the daily work - and yet you have a lofty purpose and God has called you there because you have something special to give. Another thing I've learned to value in the ordinariness of life is that it actually forms a matrix. It's almost like a glue that holds our lives together. The *dailyness* of life - though we often regret it or resent it and, depending on our personality, to a greater or lesser degree, we don't really like the ordinary, we don't like the *dailyness* - and yet that is the very thing that forms: you could think of it as a matrix or a glue or a fabric. It's what weaves life together.

One day Larry's plane was lost in the Amazon. It actually was found in the river broken up and torn apart and upside down. I had to wait all day with the wife of the pilot to find out whether our husbands were dead or alive. Nobody knew, and it would take all day to send out another plane to find out. On that day especially, I recognised the beauty of routine because it gave me something to hold on to during that long, long day of waiting.

Routine

*We say that we despise you - humble hum-drumming.
We grumble for free schedules, less everydayness.
A routine - you are our rescue when crisis comes,
disguising our emptiness, dulling our despair.
Your very presence cheers us.
We cling to your bosom, hold tightly to your hand,
for you let us hide in your ordinary, everydayness
until we are composed, and our brittle selves are mended with your glue.*

On this particular day, I remember how grateful I was just to make sandwiches for my children - to have a piece of ordinary life while I waited to know whether my husband was dead or alive. So ordinary life has many benefits, and as we live it with God's spirit in us expressing his love with his attitudes, he actually does form it into a lifestyle. My early longings to be a sort of L'Abri came true in recent years as God has led us into a ministry built around hospitality and caring for people in distress. It's our full-time work now in Heartstream Resources but it grew over years - three decades - from our living daily life in a way in which we try to please God and to live out his purpose.

Another way that ordinariness helps us is that we discover God's promises in a very precious way through the ordinary of life. Psalm 139 is one of my favourites - you might want to review that today. Whenever Larry and I fly, which we've done to many, many countries, many places, many times, I always quote Psalm 139 to myself. 'If I rise with the wings of the dawn, and settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me; your hand will hold me fast.' I love that promise.

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When do we need the promises of God? Well, it's when things are ordinary or they become difficult. I think of every promise as having a flipside. On one occasion we had ten extra people to feed; seven we had invited and three who dropped in for a number of days and at that time our account had plunged into the red due to other circumstances, and so we had ten extra people and no money. And I thought this is the time I really need to claim the promise David wrote, 'I've never seen the children of the righteous begging bread,' and I took up God's promises those two weeks of feeding ten extra people in our home. I said God you have promised that out of your resources you would supply what we need, and God did supply. Over and over again we have experienced it. It's our need that's the flipside of the promise. Without the flipside of the promise which we experience as need we would never find out that God's promises are true.

In my early years in Peru and our early years in this ministry, life was very hard and I felt like I could never keep up. There was always too much needed, too much demanded, too much to do, too many people to care for, never enough of me. I began to claim the promise of 2 Peter 1:3 'God has given us everything we need for life and godliness.' Through what? How? Through his great and precious promises. You see God promises us so much and in the ordinary needs of life we discover that those promises are true. As we think about the flipside of the promise, we know that we need God's strength to turn the ordinary for his extraordinary purpose.

Another thought in my diary that relates to this:

*Lord, uphold me with your hand
for I lack other way to stand.
Express your strength
existing in my weakness.
Hide my sin,
reveal yourself within.*

So today for yourself think about what weakness of yours presents an opportunity for you to experience one of God's promises. Maybe you feel left alone or abandoned. You can claim his promise, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.' Maybe you are short on material goods or finances. You can claim his promises. We have a wonderful little book – 'A Thousand and One Promises'. Go through God's word and begin to claim every promise. You'll notice that when you have a need, the more intensively you feel the need, the more real his promise will become. It's your opportunity to experience that he has in fact given you everything you need for life and godliness.