

INTRODUCTION

Well, 2010 has finally arrived and as you know, this is not just the beginning of a new year; it's actually a new decade. In case you slept through the past ten years, let me take a couple of minutes and review some of the important events.

The year 2000 started with the Y2K threat actually a big yawn. That year we had the closest presidential election in history. Neither George Bush nor Al Gore had an electoral majority until the votes were counted and recounted in Florida. Do you remember all the hanging chads? After 36 days of recounts the Supreme Court ruled Bush won the election...And not long after that Gore won an Oscar!

In 2001 Apple unveiled the iPod, and on September 11, Muslim extremists attacked America killing nearly 3,000 people. After that Americans united and there were flags everywhere. US troops head to Afghanistan to find Osama Ben Laden, but he's still at large. The stock market crashed not long after and the first Harry Potter movie was released.

In 2002, American Idol premiered, and the Space Shuttle Columbia burned up over East Texas. In 2003 the U.S. invaded Iraq and Baghdad quickly fell. Iraqis pulled down a statue of Sadaam Hussein. President Bush declared "Mission Accomplished," but we're still working on finishing the job. Martha Stewart went to jail and the Terminator was elected the Governor of California.

2004 began with a wardrobe malfunction at the Superbowl, Facebook and MySpace were launched. John Kerry was nominated as the Democratic presidential candidate and a relatively unknown Barack Obama delivered the keynote address. President Bush was re-elected with no recounted needed. The year ended with a killer tsunami that drowned thousands of people.

2005 was the year Hurricane Katrina changed the coast and the culture of Louisiana forever. Iran elects Ahmadenejad as president and he said he wanted peace—but nobody believed him.

In 2006 YouTube explodes, creating a new kind of overnight celebrity like Jud Laipply's evolution of dance that has been viewed 132 million times. After the shoe-bomber's attempt, liquids are banned from carry-ons, and millions of bottled waters are tossed in the trash at airports. After a public trial, Sadaam Hussein was executed in Iraq.

In 2007 Nancy Pelosi became the first female Speaker of the House, but not much else happened after that.

In 2008, Michael Phelps won a record 8 gold medals swimming in Beijing, and not long after his fame went up in smoke. Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy and the stock market crashed—again. In the Presidential election, John McCain and Sarah Palin were defeated by Barack Obama and what's-his-name.

And last year an airplane landed on the Hudson River and everyone survived. Obama was inaugurated and swine flu broke out. Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and the world responded with a collective, "Huh?" And then just a little over a week ago on the day we

celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ another Muslim terrorist, the undie-bomber tried to kill more Americans. And that's the way it was!

It's pretty amazing to see how God has blessed our church over the past decade. Ten years ago we were meeting in what is now the chapel—none of this was here. Our average attendance was 2,750 and our annual budget was \$6 million. This past year we averaged over 4,800 in attendance and our budget is \$13.5 million. By the way, you might have noticed that Pastor Rick Warren had to make an appeal to the members of Saddleback Church to make up almost a million dollar deficit. I'm happy to report that God has blessed us so richly that we are ending 2009 with a budget surplus!

If God has done all of this in the past ten years can you imagine what our church will be like in 2020 if Jesus tarries? I predict the attendance will be almost 10,000 and some new young pastor will be preaching in another building and this will be called the chapel!

During the month of January I'm teaching a series called "iFocus Apps to Win in 2010." I was a Blackberry (Crackberry) user for years, but Jenni and Jason gave me the new 3G iPhone for my birthday last January, and it's pretty amazing. Along with all the other kinds of smart phones, this is actually a small powerful computer that is faster and has more memory than my desktop computer five years ago. This iPhone keeps up with my calendar, all my contacts, I can read and send emails—I can even take pictures and movies with it. But probably the most amazing feature are the different iPhone apps. Apps is an abbreviation for "applications." There are over 50,000 apps that can be downloaded to a smart phone—many of them free—and most of the others cost about a dollar. I have the entire Bible in many translations, and an app that shows me the radar weather in motion.

But this series is not about an iPhone, or iTunes, or iPods, it's all about iFocus. If you want to be a winner in terms of your faith in 2010, there are several important issues that require your total focus. I'm always saying that we must APPLY God's Word to our daily lives, so I'm going to talk about four iFocus apps this month. Today I'm going to talk about the importance of focusing on faith. Next Sunday I'll talk about focusing on opportunities for 2010. In two weeks I'll talk about focusing on worship, and then I'll talk about focusing on giving. Over the final weekend of this month we're even hosting a Life Focus Conference.

For this first iFocus message, I want us to focus on one simple verse that contains only ten words in English. Nine of the ten words contain only a single syllable. This is a verse you can easily memorize. If you haven't already selected a verse for the year, why don't you join me in choosing this one? It's found in Philippians 4:13. I want to read it in context. Paul is suffering in prison, but he has learned the secret of faith.

Philippians 4:12-13, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."

And here's the verse that I suggest you claim as your verse for 2010:

“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

I don't know about you, but I'm glad to put 2009 behind me! Until this past year I had never been in the hospital, and I was in the hospital twice, for kidney stones and minor surgery. One of my goals for the New Year is to ONLY visit the hospitals to pray for people! That's a good thing about a new year. We really do feel that each year we get to turn the page and start writing a new chapter of our lives.

As you stand at the beginning of a new year and a new decade, what are some of the things you would really like to happen in your life over the next 12 months? What would you love to see God do in your life? It won't happen without faith, because the Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God...” (Hebrews 11:6) Using Philippians 4:13 I want to share three spiritual principles that will show you HOW you can exercise the faith necessary to make 2010 the very best year of your life.

1. DESIRE: I CAN DO IT IF I WANT TO

Focus on the first three words of our verse: “I can do.” How many of you have already made some New Year's resolutions? Maybe you want to start exercising regularly, or stop smoking, or start saving money, or start having a daily quiet time. That's good. It all starts with a personal desire. I think it's better to set a goal, even if you fail, than to never have any goals at all. Some people don't set goals because they've tried before and failed. They have convinced themselves that they *can't* change.

If you want to live according to Philippians 4:13, you've got to start believing “I can” instead of “I can't.” The word “can't” is the most destructive word in the English language. It kills dreams, and destroys motivation, it denies the power of faith. If you want to see changes in your life, I suggest you take your dictionary and cut the word “can't” out of it. You may say, “I can't because I don't have a dictionary.” I'm sorry, I don't understand what you said because “can't” isn't in my vocabulary!

Let me share with you three powerful quotes about the power of “I can.” “Success begins with “I can”; failure begins with “I can't.” So instead of saying, “I can't” start saying, “I can!”

A few weeks ago I heard two-time Heavyweight boxing champ, George Foreman speak at TJC. More than once he said, “I can” will take you further in life than “I.Q.” George talked about how he didn't do well in school, and how he hated it. But God got George's attention and now he has attained more success than any other former boxer in history.

“My potential is limited only by what I think I can't do.” Read that again. What do you think you could do this year if you only removed the word, “can't” from your mind? Instead of saying, “I can't lose weight.” Make a specific goal and say instead, “I CAN lose 20 pounds...through Christ who gives me strength.” Instead of saying, “I can't get out of debt,” start saying, “I CAN get out of debt before next Christmas ...through Christ who gives me strength.” It starts with wanting it to happen. You can do what you want to do.

If you're like me, you've been watching some college bowl games over the past few weeks. There have been some good games. I'm an Auburn fan, so I really enjoyed watching the Outback Bowl which Auburn won in overtime. And Tim Tebow and Florida dismantled previously undefeated Cincinnati in the Sugar Bowl Friday night. But all these games are like consolation games, because the only game that *really* matters is the BCS Championship Game between Texas and Alabama this Thursday night. By the way, guys, when you watch that game remember that we resume Men's Fraternity the next morning at 6:30 a.m. in the Student Center. A lot of people are going to be watching this game. I promise I can predict which team will win Thursday night. You can write it down and I guarantee that my prediction is correct. Ready? The team that will win Thursday night is...the team that wants it the most. Now, that might be Texas or it might be Bama. But you can watch the commentary after the game, and those announcers are going to say something like, "Texas wanted to win, but Bama just wanted it more." Or "Alabama wanted to win, but Texas just wanted it more."

Faith starts with a personal desire: If you want it badly enough, it can happen. But if you think, "I can't" then you are defeated even before you start. Unless you really want it—that involves personal desire—it won't happen.

2. DIRECTION: I CAN DO IT IF GOD IS IN IT

Then look at the fourth word in our verse, "I can do EVERYTHING..." What does "everything" mean? This isn't a magic formula or a blank check to be used for selfish purposes. This doesn't give you the right to say, "Everything? Okay, I believe I can make a billion dollars this year..." or "Everything? I believe I can jump across the Atlantic Ocean..." No, this promise encompasses what GOD wants for you. But that's great because God wants you to be healthy, happy, and holy. He wants to bless you beyond your ability to imagine.

It's all about the direction of your life. If you are following Jesus, then you're going in God's direction and you will find blessings and promises along the way. But if you are going in your own direction, then you can't claim this promise.

We live in an age of GPS, but some people have gotten in trouble following the directions given by the GPS. There was an article in last Saturday's paper about a family driving to visit relatives in Oregon for Christmas. Instead of taking the way they had always driven they followed the GPS suggestion for short-cut that would save them 20 minutes. They ended up stuck in the snow and had to be rescued. Global Positioning System is nice, but the only GPS you can follow without question is God's Plan for Salvation!

So, this verse gives you the right to step out in faith when God gives you direction. Here is another important faith principle to follow: When God points I must proceed by faith. Whenever God gives you direction, you should start walking by faith in that direction, even if you don't see the destination. But sometimes we want to see where we're headed before we start—that's not faith, that's sight. And the Bible says, "We walk by faith; not by sight." In other words, you should get going without knowing!

This principle is found throughout the Bible. God told Abraham to leave his home in Ur, and

start walking, and He would just let him know when he got there. In other words, Abraham had no idea of his destination; he just started walking by faith.

When Joshua was leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land, they had to cross the Jordan River and it was at flood stage. God told them to walk into the water by faith. The Bible says, "Now the Jordan was at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing." (Joshua 3:15-16)

Did you notice the sequence? If they had stopped on dry land and waited for the water to stop, they would probably still be standing there! But they stepped INTO the water, and that's when God's power was released.

So, for us, when God directs us, we must step out in faith and start obeying Him, and then He will give us the power. God wants you to share your faith with others and you think you're too shy. If you're asking God to give you courage, you may be waiting a long time. Just start talking to someone about your faith, and watch how much courage God gives you. God wants you to tithe, and if you are saying, "I'm waiting until I can afford to tithe..." guess what? That's the wrong sequence. Start obeying God and watch His power fill your life.

3. DEPENDENCE: I CAN DO IT IF I RELY ON JESUS' POWER

Our verse says, "I can do" that involves personal desire, then it involves divine direction, "I can do everything..." But the key is found in the last part of the verse, "through Him who gives me strength." That means we must depend utterly and completely on the power of Jesus. The other side of the coin from Philippians 4:13 is John 15:5 where Jesus said, "apart from me you can do nothing."

This week I studied the verb that is translated, "gives me strength." It's actually a participle in Greek that literally means, "To keep pouring strength into." At first I thought it was like pouring coffee into an empty cup but that's not the best image, because the coffee pot is an outside source and Jesus lives IN us. A better picture is an empty well that is filled up from an invisible spring. Jesus said, "If anyone will come unto me, out of his innermost being shall flow RIVERS of living water!" (John 7:37 NASB) That image reflects the reality of a follower of Jesus Christ facing the challenges of life, and in that situation, Jesus Christ keeps pouring His strength into us.

Here's my final faith principle: When you say, "I can't," you mean, "I won't let Jesus do this in me." Is there someone who has hurt you, and you are thinking, "I can't forgive them?" What you're saying is, "I won't let Jesus give me the strength to forgive them." Maybe there is someone in your life that frustrates you and you've thought, "I just can't love that person!" Do you believe Jesus loves that person? What you're actually saying is, "I won't let Jesus love that person through me."

That's what makes Philippians 4:13 totally different from secular PMA (Positive Mental Attitude). PMA says things like, "If I can dream it, I can do it!" PMA has you look in the mirror

every day and say, "Every day and in every way I'm getting better and better." Those may be helpful techniques, but PMA is a far cry from this verse. How far will Positive Thinking take you when you lose your job, or when your spouse leaves you, or when your daughter has just decided to get an abortion? Where can you find hope for the tough times of life? How can you find strength? It takes more than positive thinking, it takes having Jesus Christ living on the inside filling your life with strength.

I saw a newspaper picture once that appeared to show a man demonstrating super-human strength. He was a mover and he was lifting a grand piano over his head toward a second story window. But upon closer examination of the photo, you can see a thin, steel cable attached to a crane not in the picture. He was only guiding the piano not lifting it. Do you ever wonder how some people can face the pain and suffering of life and maintain supernatural strength? They aren't doing it themselves. There is another source of strength that they are depending upon and it may be invisible to most people. But we know that the only way we can face life is by relying on the amazing strength of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

Are you willing to install God's faith app into your life this year? Oswald Chambers, who wrote the classic devotional book, *My Utmost for His Highest*, understood faith. He wrote: "When facing a challenge, a person with small faith might say, 'I know he can, but I am not sure he will.' We all begin unsure about many things—yet we are sure enough to take the first step. However, God wants us to continue past that point to a place of great faith where we say, 'I know he can, and I know he will.'"

Remember, Paul was in prison when he wrote these words. He was flat broke and didn't know if the next sound of footsteps would be a Roman soldier coming to carry him to his execution. Yet in spite of this, he wrote these words. So, as you face trouble in the coming year, you CAN face it with faith if you memorize and claim, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."

So, what is it that you really want to do in 2010? What is it that God wants you to do? Restore a broken friendship? Start having a quiet time? Start tithing? Be a better parent? Stop smoking? Start exercising? Lose weight? Whatever it is, you can only do it by depending on the power of Jesus Christ. So these last blanks are for you to fill in.

WITH THE HELP OF JESUS, IN 2010 I CAN _____

I'm going to silently pray for you to fill in these blanks as I tell you this story.

A few months ago, I had the privilege of hearing Coach Gene Stallings speak at a Men's Breakfast at Breckenridge Village. He didn't talk much about himself or his accomplishments. He mostly talked about his son, Johnny. When Johnny was born in Tuscaloosa in 1962, the doctor told Gene his son had been born a Mongoloid, the term used then for Downs Syndrome. When Gene heard that he fainted on the spot. When he woke up the doctors told them John Mark probably wouldn't live past the age of four. He said over the next few months, he and his wife

cried bushels of tears. He said they couldn't face this on their own, but through the strength of Jesus, they could do anything. Johnny became a great blessing to them. Gene said he had lost plenty of football games, but when he came home, Johnny always greeted him with a smile and a hug and said, "You'll get 'em next time, Pop!"

Johnny proved the doctors wrong. He lived for 46 years and he possessed a powerful, positive, faith. Coach Stallings said Johnny's two loves were attending church and Alabama Football. Johnny passed away in August of 2008 and as Coach Stallings talked about him you could see the tears trickling down that strong, masculine face. He talked about how Johnny touched so many lives. He had been photographed with three Presidents, thousands of people attended a memorial service for him in the Bear Bryant Athletic Complex, and today the huge equipment room for the Alabama Crimson Tide is named, "The John Mark Stallings Equipment Room." And then he said something that brought tears to the eyes of most of us there. He said, "What seemed to be the worst thing to ever happen in my life has become the greatest thing that has ever happened to me."

That kind of blessing only comes when a person says, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."

OUTLINE

1. DESIRE: I CAN DO IT IF I WANT TO

- Success begins with "I can"
- Failure begins with "I can't"
- "I can" will take you further in life than "I.Q."
- "My potential is limited only by what I think I can't do"

2. DIRECTION: I CAN DO IT IF GOD IS IN IT

- When God points I must proceed by faith

"Now the Jordan was at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing." *Joshua 3:15-16*

3. DEPENDENCE: I CAN DO IT IF I RELY ON JESUS' POWER

"Apart from me you can do nothing." *John 15:5*

When you say, "I can't," you mean, "I won't let Jesus do this in me."

WITH THE HELP OF JESUS, IN 2010 I CAN:

— MESSAGE DISCLAIMER —



David O. Dykes
Pastor, Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas

These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David***

Dykes in Texas.” This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes