

Chapter 26: Ordinary vs. Extraordinary

Life Application Verses:

Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” End with **Revelation 22: 21**, “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”

I was on my way to work the other day when I heard a song on the radio. I leave it on our local Christian station, K-LOVE. The song, *Thrive*, by Casting Crowns, is the Theme Song for this book. As I listened to the lyrics (reprinted on the next page), there is a line in the song that truly says what we are as Christians in this secular world: “Just to know You and, To make You known, We lift Your name on High; Shine like the sun, make darkness run and hide; We know we were made for so much more than ordinary lives, It's time for us to more than just survive; We were made to thrive!” Let me repeat that line: **We Were Made For So Much More Than Ordinary Lives!** What does ordinary mean? Does it include being brash against those who don't see the world as we see it? Not hardly. Webster defines ordinary as, “the regular or customary condition or course of things —usually used in the phrase *out of the ordinary*.”

So, by this definition, Christians are just regular folks who follow the customary condition or course of things? Is that what the Bible says? Before getting to Scripture, let's investigate something. Carl Sagan (1934-1996), a well-known astronomer and author, said: "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence." This statement, at face-value, may seem simple and self-explanatory. However, “if someone makes an extraordinary claim, there better be extraordinary evidence to back it up¹.” Whoa! You know what this brings to mind: Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good: Ordinary Christians Living Ordinary [Extraordinary] Lives. Whoa, again! I feel the need to yell: “Oh, Lord, Help me make this crystal clear!”

Thus, what is extraordinary? Webster defines it as: “going beyond what is usual, regular, or customary.” Okay, let's combine Sagan and Webster, then add Scripture: “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence because it requires going beyond what is usual, regular, or customary.” What is the extraordinary evidence that I offer? Start with Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” End with Revelation 22: 21, “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.” For me, this is extraordinary evidence. The Heavens and the

¹ <http://carm.org/extraordinary-claims-require-extraordinary-evidence>

Earth do exist. The stars shine, planets are readily visible, the complexity of the human body, Love, and so forth. Are not these things extraordinary evidence of what we see and experience all around us each day? Read the song verses below and reconsider the purpose of whether Christians live ordinary or extraordinary lives, i.e., Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good.

CASTING CROWNS LYRICS

"Thrive"²

Here in this worn and weary land, Where many a dream has died
Like a tree planted by the water, We never will run dry
Living water flowing through, God we thirst for more of You
Fill our hearts and flood our souls, With one desire

Just to know You and, To make You known, We lift Your name on High
Shine like the sun make darkness run and hide
We know we were made for so much more
Than ordinary lives, It's time for us to more than just survive
We were made to thrive

Into Your word we're digging deep, To know our Father's heart
Into the world we're reaching out, To show them who You are

So living water flowing through, God we thirst for more of You
Fill our hearts and flood our souls, With one desire

Just to know You and, To make You known, We lift Your name on High
Shine like the sun make darkness run and hide
We know we were made for so much more
Than ordinary lives, It's time for us to more than just survive
We were made to thrive

Joy Unspeakable, Faith Unsinkable, Love Unstoppable, Anything is possible
Joy Unspeakable, Faith Unsinkable, Love Unstoppable, Anything is possible
Joy Unspeakable, Faith Unsinkable, Love Unstoppable, Anything is possible
Joy Unspeakable, Faith Unsinkable, Love Unstoppable, Anything is possible

Just to know You and, To make You known, We lift Your name on High
Shine like the sun make darkness run and hide
We know we were made for so much more
Than ordinary lives, It's time for us to more than just survive
We were made to thrive

Hey!

We were made to Thrive!

We were made to Thrive!

We were made to Thrive!

We were made to Thrive!

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Is extraordinary living to be boastful? Or an 'in your face' attitude? No, it means that we were made for so much more than ordinary lives. What does the word 'made' mean in this last statement? There is a saying in Christendom: "If you are born once, you will die twice. If you are born twice, you will die once. Being born once refers to the physical birth, whereas being born twice, applies to the physical birth (first birth) and the spiritual birth (second birth) in which you are born again, spiritually putting your faith in Christ Jesus." Therefore, the word 'made' in the statement, 'we were made for so much more than ordinary lives', means that when we are Born Again in Christ Jesus, we are made a new creation and that new creation is no longer ordinary in this world, but extraordinary for living our lives for God in Christ. For in God, we are fulfilling the following: "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence because it requires going beyond what is usual, regular, or customary." We are the extraordinary evidence for God's extraordinary claim that when we are Born Again, we are no longer just ordinary in this world, but extraordinary and it becomes our mantra to fulfill the following claim: "We know we were made for so much more than ordinary lives; It's time for us to more than just survive; We were made to thrive." Thrive = Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good.

You might ask, "What about all those who thrive in terms of being Rich, Famous, Beautiful, and so forth?" What is Rich, Famous, and Beautiful apart from Jesus? Hear and heed the words of God: "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away" (James 4:14, NASB). I think the idea here is thriving in the Will of God, not thriving in the Will of Self. But, let me move on to the point of this diatribe.

When we are Born Again, we are not Born Again to be pushy, stuck-up, bitter, or annoying! We are Born Again to thrive for God in this life as Earthly Good. When we become New as an outcome of Born Again, we are Heavenly Minded to be Earthly Good—not just as ordinary Christians living ordinary lives, but to live extraordinary lives, or as we learn in earning our PhD's, "to make a significant difference!" Have you ever heard stories of someone who was a hard drinking, cussing, carousing individual and once they were Born Again, that transformation created an extraordinary Life for God? Let's return to: "Extraordinary claims

require extraordinary evidence because it requires going beyond what is usual, regular, or customary.”

In this book, I gave it the title I did for a reason. To remind us what that is, let me repeat it here: “Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good: Ordinary Christians Living Ordinary [Extraordinary] Lives.” This title, in and of itself, is an extraordinary claim! I chose it because we Christians must not live an ordinary life, because when we commit our lives—our Eternities—to God in Christ Jesus, we cannot remain ordinary any longer, we are transformed into the extraordinary. What proof do I offer to address “extraordinary evidence?” My first bit of evidence is the Holy Bible. I could stop right there and the case is won! But, the world sees the Holy Bible as fiction, allegory, make-believe, and all that other pointless stuff. I will return to something very simple: go outside, stand on the ground, and consider ALL that you see. For example, how did dirt and seeds come to the understanding that if you plant a seed in the ground, it grows? Is that not but one extraordinary piece of evidence of Christians living extraordinary lives? And you say...huh???---I think I missed something here?

Scientists and geophysicists and chemists will tell you that there are elements of compounds and nitrates that mix in proportion to chemical reactions that unite to cause the seed to germinate and grow...okay, not bad for starters. But what is missing in all of this is origin. Origin? Yes, from WHERE did the nitrates originate? WHERE did seeds gain intelligence to produce its intended fruit, grass, trees, corn, and so on? WHERE did the Earth originate in its form, rotation, H₂O, and so forth? The air we breathe, WHERE did it originate in the vastness of the vacuum we call Outer Space? Well, if there was a Big Bang, WHERE did *it* come from? Who caused—ORIGINATED—the Big Bang that started all this Universe in motion in the first place? This list of extraordinary evidence could continue from macro-to-micro and I would only begin to scratch the surface of the totality of the evidence—all belonging to God. For those who say there is no God, life must surely be ordinarily mundane and boring!

But what is extraordinary living for Christians? It’s as simple as giving a friend a hug when they need it because our Heart is filled with the Love of God. Ordinary living is doing the same thing, but the act is because one person cares for another out of self-love, not God-love. Oh boy, you are asking right about now, “Hey, Scotty, you are getting too personal now!” Well,

it can't be helped. Unbelievers can love one another deeply, but that is ordinary love and limited to this life and only rises to the level of the individual. Extraordinary living in the life of the Christian is to love one another deeply in the Power of God through the Holy Spirit. In other words, if you have love apart from God in your life, that is limited by what you are capable of here in this Earthly life—ergo, the **sum total** of what you are capable of doing within your **own** power. But as you will remember in James 4: 14, “Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.” Without God, we are ordinary in our own power; we are but a vapor and those things have limited power to achieve. Ordinary is temporal, while extraordinary carries the Hope and Promise of Eternal Blessings. Finally...we are getting to what this really means to us. When we are Born Again, we lose the capacity (but not the free will) to live ordinary lives and we are transformed into extraordinary living in Christ Jesus. Do we have the Free Will to live ordinary lives even when we are Born Again? Yes. But, God in Christ changed us into new creatures, extraordinary creatures, and living ordinary lives after that transformation is like being given a gift that we never open. Jesus said that in John 10: 9-10, ⁹“I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” He gave us life to be extraordinary participants, not ordinary bystanders – let me reiterate—*extraordinary participants*.

Extraordinary living means we find the positive when there is none; we live by the creed of Be Faithful In All Things, even when our friends and family would drag us down to Earthly Minded living; we love those who hate us and would persecute us to our death; we give our best at our jobs, even when our air conditioners are out and we are forced to work in 90 degree temperatures in our offices; we stand up for the unborn even when the world around us chastises us as Holy Rollers; we go beyond the call of ordinary duty in all things. As I write this, I think of two friends that are the very heart and soul of this book, Rick and Vicky. (I mentioned Rick once before). These two people are extraordinary. Rick is a retired Lt. Colonel from the Air Force and Vicky recently finished her PhD. Setting those accolades aside—these two individuals are extraordinary because of what they do beyond ordinary living. They give of themselves,

even when they have personal struggles. As I write this, I offer a Prayer for both of them because this world needs more like these two excellent and Christian individuals.

This old world is in a mess, my brothers and sisters in Christ. There's so much that needs to be done for God and so many battles to be fought and won in the Hearts and Minds of ordinary, lost Souls. We must not be idle and we cannot and must not be of an ordinary mindset. God has work for us to do and He has need of our voice to Speak the name of Christ Jesus across all lines of demarcation—whether race, religion, attitude, income, outcome, and on-and-on. Extraordinary living is not a pipe dream; if you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, it is natural—well, supernatural in the Holy Spirit. You can be extraordinary in your daily routine because when you remember that you are Born Again, you have a Heavenly Home that is mortgage-free (Oh Yeah!!!), and pain and tears and hurt and fear and worry—they gonna get the boot right out the door! Look for and expect God to help you live extraordinary lives! Then get up, get busy, and get to living those 'out of the ordinary' lives for your God, your family, your friends, and, tell those who know not Christ Jesus that life in Him is indeed -- *extraordinary!*

A Question of Curiosity:

Remember this: "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence because it requires going beyond what is usual, regular, or customary." Take a moment and jot down things that you would consider ordinary and extraordinary in your life. Then, reconsider what you listed as ordinary and think about how to make those things extraordinary. Example: "I hugged my child today as usual (ordinary). Tomorrow, I will embrace my child (or husband, wife, father, mother, etc.) so that I might share God's Love in that hug." A hug is just a hug until God is in it; then it becomes an extraordinary act of Love. Extraordinary living in Christ is doing more than what is expected by the world in which we live. And you say...

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"People act what they truly believe." ~ John MacArthur ~

John 10: 9-10, ⁹*"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* ... ***that they may have life, and have it to the full!***

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