

Stories: Discovering New Life
Sermon 1-28-18
By Pastor Curtis Dehmey

Ephesians 2:1-10

You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.

⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— ⁹not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Message:

To start out today, I'll be reading a story about Bruce Campbell and his Boeing 727 written by Megan Willett on [businessinsider.com](http://www.businessinsider.com/engineer-lives-in-a-boeing-airplane-2016-2) (See <http://www.businessinsider.com/engineer-lives-in-a-boeing-airplane-2016-2>) "Most people might dread spending their entire lives on an airplane, but not Bruce Campbell. That's because his airplane, which stays on the ground, is his home. The former electrical engineer turned a Boeing 727 he bought in 1999 into a home in Portland, Oregon. After modifications, 65-year-old Campbell's aircraft dream home cost him \$220,000. He spends six months out of the year living there, alternating between Portland and Japan. In addition to his current home, Campbell is hoping to buy a bigger Boeing 747-400 to convert into his home in Miyazaki, Japan. 'I don't mean to offend, but wood is in my view a terrible building material,' Campbell wrote on his website. 'But retired airliners can withstand 575 mph winds ... are highly fire-resistant, and provide superior security. They're among the finest structures that mankind has ever built.' The plane sits on 10 acres of land that Campbell paid \$23,000 for in his early 20s. He says he's had relatively few problems with zoning and building codes. In total, the cabin and cockpit provide about 1,066 square feet of living space. Campbell removed nearly

all of the passenger seats for more space. Here's Campbell relaxing on his futon, where he also sleeps. Beside him are his slippers—Campbell requires all guests to wear slippers or socks to avoid tracking dirt inside the airplane. Campbell has converted the plane to have a washing machine, sink, and makeshift shower. He makes most of his food in a toaster or microwave and eats mostly canned foods and cereal. Meanwhile, the cockpit serves as a 'cyber office,' according to Campbell. Campbell kept one of the three bathrooms on the plane as is, saying that he found it comfortable. 'It's a great toy,' Campbell says about his airplane home. 'Trick doors, trick floors. Hatches here, latches there, clever gadgets everywhere.' Campbell spends half of his year in Japan, and is now hoping to buy a Boeing 747-400—roughly three times as big as his 727—to make a new home in Miyazaki, Japan. 'Nothing compares to the exhilaration and satisfaction provided by an aerospace-class home, and many people understand this instinctively,' Campbell said on his website.”

What a great example of turning something that was deemed old and worthless, something former, and turning it into something that still serves a purpose. Something that is new and exciting to Campbell. Sometimes we think that what is old and former no longer serves a purpose. We fall into this trap of thinking that our story was meaningless. I'm here to tell you that your story does have meaning and your story does have purpose. Campbell's story is the gospel story. When we were born we were born into a sinful world. We sinned before we even knew that it was sinning. But then at some point we heard the good news of Jesus Christ and we decided to follow Christ. “You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else.” For some of us it's going to be more of a jarring experience than for others. For some of us it was really apparent that we were living in sin and that nothing else was going to save us but accepting and receiving the gift of grace that we all have found in Jesus Christ. For others of us, it may have been a gradual process of turning away from the old. It may not have happened in an instant, but each small choice from childhood into adulthood lead you to this point where saying “yes” to Jesus became a no brainer. You already knew the stuff to become a good disciple, but there was a point where you decided to make the commitment to be a follower of Jesus. You decided to turn away from what was old, bad and sinful, accept Jesus Christ into your heart and do the work of building a relationship with Jesus. Both paths are valid.

Many of us are now seasoned believers. We've faithfully gone to church for many years. We've attended Bible Study on a regular or semi-regular basis. We

get involved in service opportunities. We read our Bible. We pray. Nothing seems new under the sun. We've grown accustomed to this Christian lifestyle to the point of it being normative. Any other culture that isn't Christian seems foreign. And for the most part, this is a good thing. But one of the challenges for seasoned Christians is that they tend to lose their fervor. Their passion for Christ. Their zeal. They're faithful and disciplined, but the work of Christ isn't as apparent in their life because they no longer have this kid-like enthusiasm for Christ. The writer of Ephesians says, "4But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us 5even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ..." Hone-in on that phrase, "...made us alive together with Christ..." It doesn't say, "...made us alive INDIVIDUALLY..." It doesn't say, "...made us alive SEPARATELY..." It says, "...made us alive TOGETHER..." In many different ways, I've heard you Providence Church express a desire and a craving for new life. You've spoken about this new life in ways like, "...if only we could get a few young couples in here..." And it could come in that form, but it could also come in the form of new believers no matter their age. Because here's the thing, new believers come with enthusiasm because their new-found faith is a breath of fresh air. They want to know all they can to expand their knowledge and continue to grow in their new-found faith in Jesus. And their enthusiasm rubs off on others. It rubs off on us seasoned believers as we re-discover that enthusiasm for faith. And us seasoned believers also find an extra gear of passion and life because guess who gets to disciple these new believers? You all. Seasoned believers. You take pleasure in sharing your knowledge and guiding these new believers to maturity in the faith. And so here's the thing, if we don't believe that our story is significant. That God has had no impact on our life. If we don't believe that there has been anything transformative in our life by the grace of Jesus, then we end up not sharing our story. We deny Christ's work in our life. Because testifying isn't about our work, but about God's work in our lives. "8For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— 9not the result of works, so that no one may boast. 10For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life." And so if we decide that our story is insignificant, then we rob ourselves the opportunity of life because no one will have the opportunity to become a believer in Christ because of Christ's story in you. So let me say that more positively. If you acknowledge and own that your story is significant. That Christ's story in you does matter. Then the natural effect is that you will want to share. And when you share or testify, new people will find new life in Christ. This is not because of our work, but because of what Christ has done in us. "10For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life." If we seasoned

believers are unwilling to share our story, to testify of Christ's salvation at work in our lives, then we miss the opportunity to bring new believers into the fold. Not that I encourage you to testify for this reason, but it is to your long-term benefit to share and testify of your story in Jesus Christ. Because you will experience new life in these new believers. Your faith comes alive again.

Witnessing of our faith in Jesus Christ isn't just about the supposed to. Or the should. It isn't just about being obedient to the Great Commission. That all of us should go and make disciples. When the people of the church decide to sit back and wait for something to fall on their lap or to choose to withhold their story, the church dies. Because there is no longer new life. There is no longer new believers. There is no longer new-found enthusiasm for faith and relationship with Jesus Christ. So if you're sitting here today saying, "I want new life. I want to experience new excitement in the faith. I want to experience something that is life-giving." Then the responsibility is first and foremost upon you to share your story. To testify. Because God has given you a story. He's given you the tools and it's right inside you. A story that is worth telling. A story that is worth sharing. It isn't someone else's job. And you can't use the excuse that you're an introvert or don't have the personality or you're not a leader. Those are all lame excuses and can all be refuted. If you want life, you have to be willing to share your life. If you want life, you have to be willing to share your life. It's that simple.

"...by grace you have been saved—⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." God has immeasurable riches for you Providence Church and many of you have already experienced it through your relationship in Jesus Christ. Your salvation is a gift from God. It's a gift. Your story is a gift. God's fingerprints are all over your life. If Christ is alive in you, then you have this grace and gift to share with others. And this is the step of faith and trust. To trust that when you step out on a limb in sharing your story, that God will honor that. That God will bless that. That God will lead others to Him through your story in Him. This is the beautiful part. You have a story. I have story. The others around you have a story. But its part of a grander story. Its part of a Kingdom-sized story. A God-sized story. God could choose not to let us take part in that Kingdom-sized story. But I believe that God wants us to be part of it. I believe God wants Providence Church to be part of that Kingdom-sized story. We might be one small piece, but an important piece nonetheless.

God wants to breath new life into Providence Church. God wants to bless all of us with the gift of new life. I believe you will blessed with new life. But in order to be blessed with new life, you also have to be willing to share life. To share your story. To acknowledge that Christ's story in your life is significant.

You have a significant story Providence Church. God wants to take what might feel like bruised, wounded, damaged, starved and empty and fill-it with great mercy, great love, great grace and great life. His healing power can restore all things for His good. Nothing is impossible when God's hand is upon our lives. We can discover new life Providence Church, but our hearts need to open. We need to risk sharing our story. We need to see and witness the power of God transforming people in darkness into people of life and light. We need to see newness of life in new believers. They play a significant part in the life of the church. I continue to implore you Providence Church to share your story not only with us and those who are of the faith. But to share your story with those who don't know our savior, Jesus Christ. Because I believe you will be pleasantly surprised of the mighty work of God. And the life that he offers to each and everyone of us. May God be glorified as we share of Christ's story in our lives. Amen.