

I. Abraham Lincoln

A. Picture of "Young Abe" by Norman Rockwell

1. Young Abraham Lincoln grew up on the frontier of Indiana. Completely self-educated, and by all accounts an avid reader.
2. Did a lot of wood cutting, but always had book with him, which many teased him for
3. One day, young man walked by and caught Abe reading on his wood cutting break. Called out, "Hello, Abe! What? Studying law? Do you expect to be president someday?"
4. "**Don't know,**" said Abe, "**but I am going to get ready for anything that God may have for me to do.**"

II. Wrapping up our series on **Calling**, based on the work of Dr. Bobby Clinton.

- A. From this point of view, life gains meaning as we connect with a living God and partner with that God to see other people in God, to become a lifelong leader in service to God and to other people, blessing the world around us. Clearly, Abraham Lincoln did this, and we as a nation have long been shaped by that.
- B. The goal of Clinton's process has been **convergence** with the hope of afterglow. Convergence is Clinton's version of success. He calls it "finishing well".
- C. We've talked about the phases you go through to get to that point.
 1. Sovereign Foundations
 2. Inner Life Growth
 3. Ministry Maturing
 4. Life Maturing
- D. **Small percentage make it to convergence**, and an even fewer afterwards make it through convergence and are still alive, and so they get to experience afterglow.
 1. **We won't talk much about afterglow.** It's the dividends enjoyed on a life well invested. if you've been faithful through the other stages, afterglow will likely happen. But first there's convergence.
 2. So **how do you know if you're in convergence?** How do you know if you're on track to finish well? All of Clinton's material is based on **studying the lives of actual people** who have been trying this project of partnering with God throughout life to see others in God and be useful in service to others. These come both from sources like the Bible and real life

III. Story of Daniel.

A. Backstory -

1. **In the era of Israel divided and under judgement for persistent idolatry and rejection of Yahweh as their only God.** The Northern kingdom has been wiped out, the southern kingdom comes under the rule of the Babylonians and over a period of time, they are taken into captivity. First, the occupying power takes a handful of the young men who seem to be the best and brightest and brings them to Babylon for education, to see whom they can groom. Eventually, about 50 years later, Jerusalem will be destroyed altogether, and most people will be resettled, but it begins with a crew of the brains and talent, and Daniel was one of those. He was taken as a young man to Babylon. Trained up for service in the royal court. Rose to the top of the pack.
2. Throughout his life, Daniel demonstrates all of Clinton's phases
 - a) High integrity - passed all the character tests from inner life growth through life maturing
 - b) Real gifting - wisdom, prophetic capacity, ability to interpret dreams, administrative capacity (ministry maturing)
3. By the time we get to our story, he's now believed to be in his 80s. Babylon has just followed to Persia and a Persian king has just taken over.

B. Read Daniel 6 (make notes as needed)

5:31 And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of sixty-two.

6:1 Darius the Mede decided to divide the kingdom into 120 provinces, and he appointed a high officer to rule over each province. 2 The king also chose Daniel and two others as administrators to supervise the high officers and protect the king's interests. 3 Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and high officers. Because of Daniel's great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire.

4 Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy. 5 So they concluded, "Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the rules of his religion."

6 So the administrators and high officers went to the king and said, "Long live King Darius! 7 We are all in agreement—we administrators, officials, high officers, advisers, and governors—that the king should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions. 8 And now, Your Majesty, issue and sign this law so it cannot be changed, an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked." 9 So King Darius signed the law.

10 But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God. 11 Then the officials went together to Daniel's house and found him praying and asking for God's help. 12 So they went straight to the king and reminded him about his law. "Did you not sign a law that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions?"

"Yes," the king replied, "that decision stands; it is an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked."

13 Then they told the king, "That man Daniel, one of the captives from Judah, is ignoring you and your law. He still prays to his God three times a day."

14 Hearing this, the king was deeply troubled, and he tried to think of a way to save Daniel. He spent the rest of the day looking for a way to get Daniel out of this predicament.

15 In the evening the men went together to the king and said, "Your Majesty, you know that according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, no law that the king signs can be changed."

16 So at last the king gave orders for Daniel to be arrested and thrown into the den of lions. The king said to him, "May your God, whom you serve so faithfully, rescue you."

17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed the stone with his own royal seal and the seals of his nobles, so that no one could rescue Daniel. 18 Then the

king returned to his palace and spent the night fasting. He refused his usual entertainment and couldn't sleep at all that night.

19 Very early the next morning, the king got up and hurried out to the lions' den. 20 When he got there, he called out in anguish, "Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you serve so faithfully, able to rescue you from the lions?"

21 Daniel answered, "Long live the king! 22 My God sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, for I have been found innocent in his sight. And I have not wronged you, Your Majesty."

23 The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den. Not a scratch was found on him, for he had trusted in his God.

24 Then the king gave orders to arrest the men who had maliciously accused Daniel. He had them thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. The lions leaped on them and tore them apart before they even hit the floor of the den.

25 Then King Darius sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world:

"Peace and prosperity to you!

26 "I decree that everyone throughout my kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel.

For he is the living God,
and he will endure forever.
His kingdom will never be destroyed,
and his rule will never end.

27 He rescues and saves his people;
he performs miraculous signs and wonders
in the heavens and on earth.

He has rescued Daniel
from the power of the lions."

28 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

1. first glance, doesn't sound like a very fun experience.
2. how Daniel handles even the challenging things that come his way demonstrates where he's at.

IV. For Clinton, one of the key indicators of a person who reaches convergence and is finishing well is they develop a personal "ministry philosophy." For convergence to take place, you need to have a strong understanding of who you are and why you do what you do. You need to **find your own story within God's bigger story.**

- A. **Convergence takes place when a particular person** - their story, their combination of years of journeying with God, the gifts they've developed, the challenges they've faced - **is uniquely suited to a need that arises in real time in their day.** The person is perfectly suited for the

task before them. **The story of the individual is connected to the story of the bigger thing that God is doing throughout that person's lifetime.**

1. You are a part of something bigger than yourself. **Can't be a narcissist.**
2. Daniel's story was bigger than Daniel.
 - a) Daniel was the representative of an oppressed, occupied people, places in a position of privilege and responsibility. How he met the challenge before him had implications for the rest of the Hebrew people.
 - b) King was impressed with Daniel, invested in his survival and vindication
 - c) **Story ends with King proclaiming Yahweh to entire empire.** Pretty powerful message to an oppressed people who feel like in many ways they've been punished and disappointed by God. But he demonstrates here that He is still God, He is still in control, and his commitment to Daniel and others like him, and hope for the future.
 - d) Not long after this, **likely the same king is moved to let the Hebrew people return to Jerusalem**, resettle and begin to rebuild their temple, so they can live and worship again
 - e) Lots of fruit born out from Daniel's faithfulness, even through this kind of challenge. He's the right person in the right place to meet the right challenge of his time. **Story connected to God's bigger story.**

B. How do you connect your story to God's big story? (Develop ministry philosophy)

1. **Know God's Story.** (Clinton "Biblical values").
 - a) At this point leader should have an identity that has been shaped by walking with Jesus for decades, and drawing considerable understanding about how that works from the Bible.
 - b) This is why the Bible still matters. It tells us the bigger story we are a part of. A story of creation long frustrated by evil in its midst. A story of children separated from their creator. A story of a God who is committed to liberating his children and freeing them from the shackles of evil's bondage. A story of a God who demonstrates love by walking in their shoes, by taking their suffering on himself, and by introducing a new way to live, a life after death, a redemption of all that has been frustrated. A new creation birthed in the midst of the old. A God who chooses to come through ordinary flawed mortals like you and me to do extraordinary things in our day.
 - c) This is the story our Bible tells. We need to read it. We need to hear it. We need to preach it. We need to teach it to our children, so that when the frustration of evil has its particular way in our day, when our leaders disappoint us, when our politics let us down, when the stock market crashes, when cancer is diagnosed, we remember who we are. What the bigger story is we are connected to.
 - d) Lincoln, "In regard to this Great book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it."
 - e) Daniel knew that the core of the judgement his people had faced had been idolatry, a turning from worship of God. Daniel put his trust in his God above his own safety; he knew ultimately to die would be better than to turn from Yahweh. He knew the story he was a part of.
2. **Know Yourself** - personal unique gifts and story
 - a) this is what the phases have been about, inner life growth, ministry maturing, life maturing - getting you in touch with your own journey.

b) Daniel wasn't such a capable leader out of nowhere, it was through decades of education, preparation, training. Same with Lincoln.

3. **Know Your Moment** - What is God doing in our day? Sense of mission suited to unique time and place

a) responsive to needs of their unique moment in time and their mission demonstrates that

b) **Lifetime learner** - can't finish well if you're not adapting, staying in a learning posture, continually seeking growth.

c) Be connected to the world around you. Plugged in to current events. Engaged in the community.

d) **Haven's mission** is to provide a safe inclusive place for all kinds of folks to connect in a powerful way with God. A unique mission to our place and moment in time. Female leader. LGBT inclusive. Blue Ocean, centered set. In the Bay Area. We need to stay connected to Jesus as we seek to follow him to live out this particular mission in this particular moment. We need to stay adaptive and eager to learn if we want to experience convergence.

V. Story of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., namesake of our new meeting site -

A. In 1944, at **age 15, young African American preachers's son from Atlanta Georgia**

showed great academic promise. He finished high school at 15 and was admitted to Morehouse college, where he studied medicine and law. Although originally, he hadn't wanted to follow his father's footsteps, in college, the young man began to experience his own sense of call to ministry, so when he graduated in 1948, he entered Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. While there he was elected Senior class president by his predominantly white classmates. After seminary the young man enrolled in further graduate studies, from which he would emerge in his mid-twenties as **Doctor Martin Luther King Jr.** In the last years of his studies, King and his young wife Coretta moved to Montgomery Alabama, where King became the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist church.

B. The King family had been in Montgomery less than a year when **their city became the epicenter of what would become the Civil Rights movement, as a local woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white passenger and was arrested.**

In response, local activists coordinated a bus boycott that would last for 381 days placing a severe economic strain on the public transit system and downtown business owners. They chose 25 year old Martin Luther King Jr. as the protest's leader and official spokesman.

C. Success of the boycott led to King becoming president of Southern Christian Leadership Conference, following Gandhi - organizing non-violent protests for racial equality. Several highlights for which he's well known.

D. March on Washington, "I Have A Dream" Speech - Civil Rights Act of 1964, later that year, at 35 he became the youngest person to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

E. March from Selma to Montgomery - Voting Rights Act

F. April 4, 1968, King shot on motel balcony in Memphis at 39.

G. He was the right person at the right time. He prepared, studied, pastored. But he also had the gifts, skills, and adaptability to rise to the need of his moment in time.

1. He knew God's story. Hounded by death threats for years. But his perspective was informed by his Biblical point of view, Jesus saying "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me." King - **"When I took up the cross I recognized it's meaning. The cross is something that you bear, and ultimately, that you die on."**

2. He knew his part to play in his part of the story:

- a) The Civil Rights movement needed a person like King, a man of deep conviction, a man of faith who could galvanize people not just politically but from the pulpit, who could connect their faith and their commitment to Jesus and his cross to their sacrificial responses. King had the perfect combination of gifting, training, experience and understanding of mission to play his part

H. Commit to Being In It for the Long Haul

1. the main reason people don't reach convergence is that they quit. Too hard, too discouraging.
2. "It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer." - Albert Einstein
3. Disillusionment - dealing with it with God

I. Go the journey with others.

1. We're not meant to go it alone. Need community.
2. Especially, invest in others who are developing their own journey. Mentoring. Folks finishing well are continually giving away what they've learned. They find joy and meaning in identifying others and drawing them into the process of leadership development. They benefited from mentorship earlier on, and now they by mentoring others.
3. King and John Lewis. (set up who John Lewis is and Freedom Rides) Scene from Selma. (1:39? - 1:41). John Lewis went on to continue the civil rights work of King in Washington. He has served the US House of Representatives representing the 5th district of Georgia since 1987. Part of the leadership in the house. one of the senior deputy whips.
4. King quote: "In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be...This is the inter-related structure of reality."
5. Hebrews 12: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne."

VI. Pray for God's blessing on each of our journey's and on Haven's journey.