

“To Be Determined”
Isaiah 42:10-16 (The Message)
Genesis 12:1-3 (The Message)

www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=isaiah+42:10-16
www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=genesis+12:1-3

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Star Trek episodes would always begin with “Space, the final frontier” and the intro would end with “...to boldly go where no one has gone before.” It was the draw for millions of people - to go boldly go with courage, focus and determination into the unknown frontier of life. Episodes would have Captain Kirk and his crew exploring uncharted worlds with unknown life forms and often battling unknown aliens bringing justice to the universe. It is no wonder why we are drawn to such a story. It epitomizes the courage that we desire for our lives. We want to be bold like Captain Kirk as he discovered these foreign places and dealt with the unknown. However, when it comes down to doing that sort of exploration of the unknown ourselves, we often shrink back into fear. We give way to a rationalization that justifies staying in a safe and comfortable place that is more predictable. After all, it is dangerous “out there”. Who knows what you might run into.

We actually face the unknown every day we wake up. We like to pretend that our lives are in control and predictable, but they really are not. Even for those of who have well planned and predictable lives with 9-5 schedules, still they face the unknown, because life is not completely controllable. The question isn't whether we will face the unknown, but HOW we will face the unknown. That part is truly up to us.

The economic conditions in the past several years have brought attention to the unpredictable nature of life. You could say that our lives are “TO BE DETERMINED” based on a number of factors out of our control. In response we often deal with life in the balance of fear.

What are those circumstances that you are facing in your life that have you responding in fear today? (Response from the congregation.) The economy, fear of safety in unknown places, divorce and threats of divorce, expectations of family and friends, political policies, oil leaks in the gulf, illnesses of all sorts, terrorism. There is the fear of heights, fear of flying, fear of the dark, fear of being alone, .. and we could go on. If we look for reasons to be fearful we will find them everywhere we turn. They will seem to follow us like the plague and consume us. But there is an alternative. If we look through the eyes of faith and hope, we will find it in the middle of any situation no matter how bleak it may seem. After all FEAR may really only be “False Evidence Appearing Real”.

Nick Vujicic was born without arms or legs in Australia about 30 years ago. His parents grieved that loss after his birth. Nick had suicidal thoughts at age eight feeling that he was a burden to all those around him, and he had a heightened concern for his unknown future - if he would get married or have children, how he might care for himself after his parents couldn't any longer. As he got older, Nick prayed fervently that God would heal him by giving him arms and legs. He hasn't been healed physically, but he was healed in another way as he was encouraged by scripture. He came to a new life perspective that was empowering for him, giving him a vision of meaning and purpose for his life.

From www.LifeWithoutLimbs.org:

“I came to realize that He (God) could use my condition and circumstances, for His glory. That gave me a fresh perspective. I still believe that God has the ability to heal me, and from time to time, I still do pray for this. But, I am content, whether He chooses to heal me or not.” - Nick

Not only did Nick go to college and earn a double Bachelor's Degree, but he began speaking and encouraging people. Today, Nick travels the world and speaks to groups of people with power and courage and conviction as what he calls “an ambassador of hope to my community and the world.” He considers his life a miracle.

“What I do with this life that has been given to me is what ultimately matters. I am humbled by the fact that my life is most likely making a bigger impact because I don't have arms and legs than if I did.” - Nick

Nick has discovered how to face his unknown future with hope in his heart and God by his side and as a result has been an inspiration for countless thousands.

A prominent arena that triggers fear for people today is **The Economy**... A 2007 article from MarketWatch was written about the possible, anticipated, unknown economic challenges facing our country at that time:

“Bernanke heads into the unknown: Fed chairman may have to throw out his beloved rule book”

By Rex Nutting, March 2, 2007

WASHINGTON (MarketWatch) -- *Ben Bernanke, the Federal Reserve chairman who's made a career out following the rules, may have to throw the rule book out this year.*

Bernanke, who would like to set monetary policy based on a rigorous economic model of the business cycle, may find that the old relationships between growth, jobs, interest rates and inflation have broken down.

He may have to fly by the seat of his pants in the new world where the fickle emotions of financial investors play a larger role than the coldly rational economic forces of the past.

To keep the economy from being dashed on the rocks of recession or swept into the maelstrom of inflation will require all of Bernanke's knowledge of theoretical economics, as well as a strong intuition about how the world works in practice.

* A friend of mine who is a financial planner watched as emotions of people in the US and the world dropped Boeing stock to record lows after the World Trade Center disaster of 9/11. Understanding the emotional connection to the market, he bucked the trend and while everyone else was selling he chose to look at the situation differently and bought Boeing stock on the next morning that the market opened. He made out very well, but this was in many ways a leap of faith -- an example of stepping into the unknown with courage. He didn't, but he could have lost everything he invested.

In the book of Acts, Paul and Silas were arrested and chained to a wall in a dungeon. Their response? Was it despair? Was it cursing god for abandoning them? Was it worry and fear? No! They chose to engage a potentially fearful situation by praising God. Imagine how this situation might have played out differently had they chose a different response to being imprisoned.

- **Acts 16:25-30** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=acts+16:25-30) **(The Message)**

Along about midnight, Paul and Silas were at prayer and singing a robust hymn to God. The other prisoners couldn't believe their ears. Then, without warning, a huge earthquake! The jailhouse tottered, every door flew open, all the prisoners were loose.

Startled from sleep, the jailer saw all the doors swinging loose on their hinges. Assuming that all the prisoners had escaped, he pulled out his sword and was about to do himself in, figuring he was as good as dead anyway, when Paul stopped him: "Don't do that! We're all still here! Nobody's run away!"

The jailer got a torch and ran inside. Badly shaken, he collapsed in front of Paul and Silas. He led them out of the jail and asked, "Sirs, what do I have to do to be saved, to really live?"

What might praising God offer you in the middle of the unknown in your life?

* In **Genesis 12** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=Genesis+12), God said to Abraham, “Go to a place that I will show you and I’ll make you into a great nation” this was at a time when Abraham had no children. It made no logical sense. Was this an opportunity to laugh at God and run the other way? Was it an opportunity to play poor me? How would he become a great nation with no children? No! Abraham chose to follow God into the unknown and God made good on God’s promise.

I have a friend named Chris, whose life is an example of stepping into the unknown by faith like Abraham. One of the things I admire about Chris is his openness and faithfulness to follow where God leads in the face of situations that would have most people not risk. Chris was married about 20 years ago and had four children. Together with his wife they considered a call to the international mission field. As you might imagine it is a major step of faith into

the unknown to travel to a far off place you do not know to live with four young children among people whose culture you do not understand, and carry out a mission that brings with it completely unknown obstacles. This requires something of any individual. In the middle of raising two sons and two daughters, Chris' wife was tragically diagnosed with cancer and passed away. This brought another case of stepping into an unknown future for Chris and his kids. A year and a half later, Chris still experienced the familiar call to international mission work. So, after some research, conversations with his kids, and lots of prayer, he followed as God lead him as a missionary developing community leadership resources in George, South Africa with his four young children in tow. This process had Chris consider the expectations for his life and the impact for his children. Just imagine what he might have had to consider before making that choice. However, there is more to his story of stepping into the unknown as the next chapter unfolded.

Through the course of faithful ministry, Chris met up with another missionary from Mozambique, fell in love and eventually got married, something he did not expect. By the way, she was from Waterford Michigan. So Chris and his four kids, now ages 10-16, took another step of faith into the known this year as they moved to Maputo, Mozambique, where his wife, Kate, had been working in the inner city for 10 years with young girls who have been exploited as prostitutes. So, Chris and his kids are now living in an inner city environment for the first time in their lives which brings with it a whole range of challenges he and his kids have never had to face, and they are expecting a baby (Chris and Kate's first together) in September. Chris and his family are continuing to step into the unknown by faith as they experience being called by God. Who knows what the next chapter will bring. That is TO BE DETERMINED. For Chris it is a close walk with God that makes the difference.

The scripture from **Isaiah 42** (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=isaiah+42): takes place after the Hebrew people have been in exile in a foreign land for many years. There is hope for a new and unfolding freedom and yet the people don't quite see it because they are lost, not knowing where they are going. In the middle of this, Isaiah is caught up in an all-encompassing praise of God. It is clear that God is worthy of praise. This is something new. In fact, he describes how all of creation is joining in praise. Isaiah paints a picture of God not abandoning the people who are in need, the people who are lost, not knowing what tomorrow might bring. God truly leads the people.

Isaiah 42:16 (www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=isaiah+42:16)

*"But I'll take the hand of those who don't know the way,
who can't see where they're going.*

*I'll be a personal guide to them,
directing them through unknown country.*

*I'll be right there to show them what roads to take,
make sure they don't fall into the ditch.*

*These are the things I'll be doing for them—
sticking with them, not leaving them for a minute."*

When you can't see past the nose on your face, who do you want to follow? What is the unknown "to be determined future that you are afraid to face? God will be your personal guide in the middle of that situation. God will never leave you, not even for a minute!