

# The Capacity to Fulfill

Wayne Waibel – 02/02/2025

I don't think any of us is fond of being told how we feel or how we're going to behave prior to any action on our part. So why do you imagine Jesus chose to get His hometown folk so fired up in the first place with His inflammatory admonitions?

His "Way" was often mysterious – much as God's ways can be hard to understand. But His way was decidedly perfect and genuinely steeped in – based on - and motivated by – love. There is much about the way of Jesus that defies understanding and yet – there is at least as much that is clear. It is through the living of a life of love that we find some of the more elusive explanations.

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Jesus knows these people better than they know themselves, and He has already moved beyond them. His way and His methods are going to confound and dismay. But ultimately, they will illuminate and clarify. He reminds them that God has sent Him to preach the good news to the poor and His mission is to serve all people – especially the marginalized and specifically the Gentile – the non-Jew.

Jesus was just taking a page out of His Father's playbook. God sent His prophets of the Old Testament into foreign lands to prophesy and minister to those who were not considered to be the chosen of God. Inclusive behavior was a part of Jesus' birthright. There's a reason His ministry fell mainly to the impoverished – the stranger – the outcast. God wants them all in His kingdom. Every last one of them.

We hear the phrase God-fearing all the time. The primal response in all human beings to any kind of change is fear, but the expression that we hear often in both the New and Old Testament is, "Fear not," as an offer of salvation and a promise of protection - nothing to be afraid of.

It's interesting to note that Jeremiah, as with each of the other prophets, has about the same reluctance to accept God's calling. It goes with the territory when you're called to be a prophet – you feel unworthy or inadequate. That is probably item one on the list of qualifications – unworthy of the office.

But the thing is, we do not choose God; God somehow mysteriously and even against our will – chooses us. And God still calls, His mission is not yet accomplished. We just need to remember that both the calling to serve AND the capacity to fulfill that calling come from God Almighty.

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We're all familiar with what is often called the love chapter in the Bible – today's Epistle reading of I Corinthians 13. It is used quite often at some point in many wedding ceremonies, and it's just a splendid read on its own.

It precisely defines the word love. It's intentional, but if you put it in the context of the entire letter to the Corinthians, it's at once the definition of love and an admonishment to the Corinthians who are guilty of every example Paul lays out on what love is not.

Those who think they have gained everything by standing on principle, dominating others, or by being right, have lost it all. There are some things more important than being right or powerful or honored. And the greatest of these is love.

To be followers of the way we need to take a critical look at ourselves – our doctrines and our world – and find our place. That's a moving target, but God does not quietly accept our well-worn narratives.

It's a good thing that this community of faith has the ability to think on its feet. The Corinthians had a fundamental problem with that, and the hometown people of Jesus had a rough time of it as well.

All we have to guard against really, is excessive fear. What I mean by that is when you allow the avoidance of evil to trump the pursuit of good.

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And so we return to Corinthians repeatedly to immerse ourselves in what life in Christ means and why it matters. To prepare ourselves to live a life of love. To be not just hearers, but doers of the Word. Love is not a spiritual gift, but it is the way in which God intends us to practice all of our gifts.

If you are of the world – you are destined to live according to the ways of the world, and the world is on a very predictable cycle. The way our world works is civilizations rise and fall; but in God’s kingdom it is always fall, and only then rise.

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I was looking for a football analogy since we are approaching Championship Sunday, and I didn’t have to go far to find one. I’m sure you’ll remember the 1998 NFC Championship game.

Gary Anderson had just completed a perfect season. He made every field goal and extra point attempted in the regular season, and with the Vikings ahead 27 - 20, he trotted out for a 39-yard field goal attempt that would’ve put the Vikings up by two scores with only 2:11 left in the game. For him this was a chip shot.

Mike Morris delivered the ball to Mitch Burger with the laces facing away from the kicker, so he was able to place the ball perfectly with no adjustment. Anderson's leg swept through the kick just like every other time that season.

Gary's kicks always started left and curled right. When this kick started banking it just stopped all of a sudden and kept on going straight, sailing wide left by inches. The single most devastating moment in his life – by his own admission. A supreme fall.

And where is Mr. Anderson today? He and his family live in a town of 12,000 in the Canadian Rockies about fifty miles west of Calgary. One of the most beautiful places on the planet. He also hosts a website called [garyandersonperfectseason.com](http://garyandersonperfectseason.com) - a very clever way of incorporating his NFL career with his fishing endorsements. He coaches high school soccer, is heavily involved with philanthropic enterprises, and has been nominated for the NFL Hall of fame, class of 2025. No matter how you measure it – this represents an equally supreme rise.

Each of us in our way, and on our way - experience the same dynamics in this life. Perhaps not as pronounced or celebrated, but certainly within the scope. As we live our life, in the fullness of time, we see the fall and subsequent rise that marks a life well spent. And in the final analysis – we rejoice in knowing what it is to live a life of love. Amen.