

Doug Wead Taught Us to Find Hope in This Unique Scripture

Note from Stephen Strang: The late Doug Wead was my mentor. When his youngest son, Joshua Wead, shared this tribute at Doug's celebration of life service Jan. 3 in Orlando, Florida, I asked if I could publish it.

By Joshua Wead

I find myself struggling to memorialize the great man my father was. Where do you even begin? What aspect of his life should I focus upon? How should I honor my father? I think I'll start by saying that my father thought of himself as a dog.

Now in most cultures around the world, being referred to as a dog is a grave insult. It's ironic that often when my father was announced to a stadium full of people, in most countries they would mispronounce "Doug Wead" as "Dog Wead."

But this idea of him thinking of himself as a dog comes from one of my father's favorite verses in the Bible. There was one verse in particular that so altered his life that he would never be the same after reading and applying its principle.

"For whoever is joined with all the living, there is hope; surely a live dog is better than a dead lion" (Eccl. 9:4, NASB 1995).

My father resonated with the underdog, for he always viewed himself as an underdog.

In his early life he was an itinerant preacher, going from church to church, often staying at the parish or in a room that was graciously offered by a parishioner. He did this for years, with no real plan or forecast for his life. He loved

history and specifically enjoyed the memories and biographies of history's greatest people.

When comparing his life to theirs, it was easy to feel like he didn't quite stack up. On one particular day, when the feeling of inadequacy became unbearable, this verse ignited to bonfire.

What did it matter if he were a lowly dog compared to these immortalized lions of old? He had a leg up on them; they were dead, and he was alive. He could do something, while their deeds ceased at their passing.

This hope of life transferred into everything he did and would end up doing. The lions would lie dead and buried; he would take on life running, tongue out like a dog!

This was his message to all who could hear: a message of hope. For if you still draw breath, you can do something!

The greatest principle my father taught me was to offer something up to God. More often than not, we come to church and hear sermons with the expectation of God giving something to us. This is fine, God is a good Father and has much to offer us.

Yet my father really resonated with the story of the boy with the fish and loaves found in John 6. A crowd follows Jesus; He heals them and ministers to them, yet the crowd becomes hungry.

A boy approaches the disciples and offers his five loaves of bread and two fish. With this offering, Jesus preforms a miracle and multiplies the offering to feed 5,000 people!

Here, a boy, an unnamed boy, an underdog, becomes the catalyst to something amazing. My father would ask of himself, "What can I offer up to God?" He would ask you, "What can you offer God?"

What are your loaves and fishes?

Are they your time, your mind, your body, your spirit, your gifts and talents? By themselves they are only of temporal value, but partnered with Jesus, they can have an eternal legacy.

The second aspect of this verse is the “whoever is joined with the living.” Dad viewed everyone else as dogs too! And inasmuch as he advanced through life, he was most dedicated to bringing others along with him.

He was a great encourager and a master at edifying others.

These principles served as the bedrock of his humble and encouraging life.

One of my father’s greatest achievements and stresses was the Charity Awards Dinners he would host. These dinners hosted many a president and prominent celebrities. Many, many hours of planning would go into these dinners. And at each dinner’s conclusion, many would line up to shake dad’s hand and congratulate him on such a great event.

I remember one particular Charity Awards Dinner. The dinner had ended; it was late into the cold night in Washington, D.C., and we were heading home. Not five minutes passed before my father pulled the car to the curb, stopped and got out. I looked out the window and saw a homeless man lying out on a bench.

Days before the dinner, my sister Chloe had asked our dad why there were so many homeless people in Washington, D.C. He explained that when he worked in White House, President George H. W. Bush asked the very same question to Dad and tasked him to research the issue.

Dad had found that most of those who were homeless at the time in our nation’s capital in fact had homes and families to go

back to but were mired in drug abuse or suffered from psychological afflictions that prevented them from returning to their homes and families.

To us naive and innocent children, these excuses didn't really add up. If you had a family or home to go back to, go back to it. My father knew better—that there were those out there who needed the compassionate touch of their fellow man.

My father approached him, took off his long wool trench coat and draped it over the sleeping man. No celebrity, politician or personal friend was there to witness this. This was no performative act of philanthropy, no switch to turn on. Just a dog who saw an opportunity to lift up another dog.

I think, if my dad had to reminisce on Ecclesiastes 9:4, he would make the following observation: A dog's life isn't really so bad. A dog can live in a huge mansion surrounded by people who dote on them. Dogs even have hotels where their every need is catered to. Most of the time, if you see an animal on TV, it's a dog. Dogs have written books. Every year, thousands of people pack out stadiums to see a dog paraded in a dog show. Even in the White House, there lives a dog.

In life, my dad may have thought of himself as a dog and lived as one, but today I honor the lion who masqueraded as a dog, my father, Roy Douglas Wead.

For those who knew Doug Wead and want to see the tribute videos presented, here is the link from the entire memorial service, plus tributes from dignitaries and finally, a heartwarming video relaying his life story:

Memorial Service in Full

Tributes From Dignitaries

Doug Wead's Life Story

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