

Hurdling with Grace

Have you been to a track meet? What is your favorite event? One of my favorites is the hurdles. The runners shoot out of the starting blocks, run full speed to the first hurdle, then leap with grace over this upright frame standing in front of them. Only a short distance lies to the next one and again they conquer it. After repeating this cycle several times, the runner leaps one final hurdle, then makes a hard sprint to the finish line!

Imagine with me for a moment that one of the runners reaches the first hurdle, stops dead in his tracks and says, “Hey! What is this thing in the way?! I don’t want to jump over this!” Then he looks for a way around it. Sound ridiculous? It is! Why? Because the hurdles are part of the race. There is no way around them, other than to jump and land on the other side.

Do you ever face life in your small church like this fictitious runner? You’re going full speed ahead into worship and ministry when you see some obstacle in your way. Maybe the obstacle is opposition, lack of volunteers and other resources, or apathy in the congregation. You say to yourself, “This isn’t fair! I don’t want to face this.” So, you look for a way around the hurdle in front of you, but there is none. Then you realize that you have to face it. You may have been able to avoid others by making wise choices and having foresight, but you simply cannot avoid obstacles completely. They are just part of the race in small church life.

So what should you do when the “hurdles” come? First, realize that God may have allowed them for a purpose. “A purpose?! I can think of easier ways to see Him fulfill His purposes,” you might say. The Bible sets a precedent of God putting His people in tremendously difficult situations. He does not do this to make them miserable, but to bring them to a point of realizing how much they need Him. Truly realizing to our core how much we need God is the best thing we can do in our small churches.

Next, tap into His power and see Him move! Face the hurdles head-on in God’s ability and see them as opportunities. The Apostle Paul wrote, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). What better way to glorify the One and only awesome God? Paul even boasted in his own weakness because he knew that his lack is where God’s fullness is beautifully displayed. The hurdle may be too big for you and may overwhelm you, but you can conquer it in the strength of Christ!

A challenge lies in the way we navigate the above. We see the hurdle, become overwhelmed, and conclude we cannot conquer it. We talk about God’s ability, study it in Scripture, and discuss other churches who successfully made the leap. Sometimes, however, we stop there and do not actually tap into His power. We may need to carve out time for worship and prayer, repentance, and fasting. We may need to retune our hearts to His and reconnect with the gentle breeze of His Holy Spirit. Whatever it takes.

What hurdles are you and your church facing right now? As much as you would like to find a way around them, has God allowed them for a purpose? I encourage you to take some time to tap into the power of God and face the hurdles head-on. Then watch Him move in His way and time.