

**A Different Perspective**  
**Having Faith That Moves Mountains (4)**  
**09-25-1**  
**Actually I Can Do This**

The most vulnerable moment of my life is one that I recall as though it were yesterday. It was when I, with thirty or so other young men, pulled up in a bus at the Royal Military College Duntroon in Canberra (Australia's Capital). It was the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 1977 at about three o'clock in the afternoon.

Over seven thousand candidates had applied for entry into the four year degree course to train as an officer in the Australian Army. One hundred and forty eight were accepted. Four years later, sixty two of us graduated.

But this day we arrived at a place that we had all dreamed of. It was an exciting day. The beginning of a new life. But when the bus pulled in by the parade ground and the white HQ building with the red roof, a severe looking man in a uniform boarded the bus. The three stripes on his arm told us that he was a Sergeant. He wore a red sash and carried an oversized pace stick under his arm. I was later to discover that he was one of the six drill sergeants.

He cast his eyes around the fresh faces of the seventeen and eighteen year olds on the bus in a superior sort of way, clearly looking at us with contempt. And this is what he said to us. Word for word – I shall never forget it: "My name is Sergeant Shlaney. And you're going to learn to hate me." And you know something? He was right!

It was at that point that it struck home. Not only was I starting something new and exciting, but I had voluntarily laid down many of my freedoms in order to follow my dream of becoming a commissioned Officer in the Australian Army. From the day I "marched in" I was subject to a tough code of discipline.

And as I lay in my bed that night I, like I suspect many of my other colleagues, quietly wept at the realisation that this was a scary place. What ensued over the next four years was an incredibly difficult time. Tough discipline. Physical training that left us bruised, bleeding and exhausted. Incredibly long hours. Carefully applied psychological pressures. All a deliberate process to sort the wheat from the chaff.

The first hint that we had that this process was of any benefit at all, was when during the university holiday breaks, we each travelled home to our parents and caught up with our old school friends. We would come back to Duntroon after the break and marvel at the immaturity of our old school mates. It turned out that we were growing up. Fast.

Looking back on it, I can see what it was all about. They sawed us all off at the knees. Put us all in the same uniforms. Made us all the same. And then, they developed us into the young leaders they wanted us to be.

As the months and years went by, something strange happened. We developed an *esprit de corps*. A quiet sense of confidence that we could do anything. It was something that set us apart from other people our age. A strength of character. A quiet resolve to get the job done. A knowledge that one day, we may have to put ourselves in harm's way for our country.

And whether it was rappelling out of helicopters, or going for a run dragging a five tonne truck on the end of a thick rope, or going hungry on survival training, or practicing eight hours a day on a scorching parade ground for a special parade, whatever it was, we just knew that we could make it through.

It became an unshakeable confidence. One born not out of arrogance or self importance, but out of a knowledge of self that had been forged in the furnace of one of the toughest training regimes on the planet.

Each of the sixty two young men that graduated as young Officers on that hot Tuesday in December 1980 walked out of that place with that same knowledge. That come what may, they would make it through. I wouldn't wish those four years on my worst enemy. And yet, I wouldn't swap them for the world.

It's time to start talking about faith. Real faith. Living out the sort of faith that moves mountains. But as we look back at stories of Abraham, and the lepers and other stories that we've looked at over these last few weeks on the program, it would be so easy at this point to pull over and say, "You know something, I look Abraham's life, I look at what those lepers went through, I look at what I'm going through in my life. It's just too hard. I don't want to go on".

And yet, life is life. The journey is the journey. We all travel over mountain tops and all go through swamps. We all revel in the cool

fresh water of a stream. And then we wander hungry through the parching wilderness. These experiences are universal. Male or female. Young or old. Black or white. Rich or poor. We all travel through those places. Isn't it crazy. We think sometimes it's just us. Let me tell you. Get a revelation today. It is everyone!

And our choice is either to travel through them either with faith or with a sense of hopelessness. Our choice is to wallow in self pity or to use the journey we've been given to live a life worth living. It's a choice.

Of the one hundred and forty eight young men that arrived at Duntroon in January 1977, fully eighty six walked away during the four year course. That's over half. Not only did they miss out on the prize at the end, but they missed out on the development of a character that would have carried them through a life time.

So many people begin walking with Jesus and one day, they realise that it's hard going. One day it becomes intensely uncomfortable, uncertain, uninviting, un-everything. And they decide to give up. It's something that Jesus talked about:

*Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13,14)*

But just like military training, there's a point to it all. Suffering isn't pointless. There is a clear purpose that God has for taking us through the difficult places of life:

*And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, (writes Paul) knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)*

Can you believe it. The Apostle Paul here isn't writing about grumbling or complaining or weeping because of suffering. He's writing about **boasting in our sufferings**. Boasting! Because he knows that there's a point.

Suffering produces endurance. Any athlete will tell us that. They train tirelessly. Their bodies scream at them to stop. They keep going. And before long they can run the marathon.

Endurance produces character. As we discovered as young men in a military college, the longer this went on, the more it brought out the best in our characters. That long four years produced young leaders. And it is an amazing thing – that character begins to hope in the quiet confidence of knowing that we can make it through the gloom and doom. Hopelessness is replaced by a certain hope in a certain future.

Now we were hoping in ourselves back then and in a military system and in all sorts of other things. But what Paul is writing about here is that when we hope in God it will never be misplaced. And just to seal the deal, we'll know that we know that we know that we know, because the Holy Spirit – God Himself, has been poured into our hearts.

Jesus came my friend to set you free. And when He has set you free you are free indeed. (John 8:36). The heart that grumbles at the hand that it's been dealt in life isn't free at all. It is diseased. It is a heart that yearns constantly for better circumstances, not seeing that the sickness lies within.

The heart that embraces the journey, with all it's suffering, with all it's character development, and yet with the knowledge that there is a purpose to it all, this is the heart that's been set free.