

Welcome to the ServingLeaders Podcast, where we talk about health and ministry leadership. On this episode, Dave Wiedis talks with missionary Jim Rhodes as he shares invaluable spiritual lessons he has learned about finding strength in the power and grace of Christ while battling metastatic cancer. After listening, please be sure to subscribe to our podcast and rate it five stars if you liked it. You can also go to www.servingleaders.org for more gospel-centered resources and to sign up for a newsletter to always stay up to date with ServingLeaders.

Dave Wiedis

Well, Jim, it's a real pleasure to have you back on our podcast. Thank you for coming.

Jim Rhodes

It's a pleasure to be back.

Dave Wiedis

You know, we've done a few podcasts together and I actually interviewed you back in October, almost a year ago, about your experience with cancer. We entitled that podcast, "Facing Down Terminal Illness in the Grace and Power of Christ," and I encourage our listeners to go back to that podcast to listen to that because there's so much gold in the wisdom that you gave. It's really beautiful. And now, a year later, Jim, I wanted to talk with you about how you continue to handle the roller coaster of health challenges that you've had on a daily basis. And I think we're going to title this, "Making Sense out of Suffering," if that makes sense. Before I get started just introducing you, how are you doing? Because in the last year, you've been through battle after battle.

Jim Rhodes

Yeah, and I really am grateful for this opportunity that you've provided again, Dave, to share, because one of the challenges that I'm currently facing is I've noticed a reduction in my memory capacity. It's harder to keep my thoughts together than it used to be, which is a little discouraging.

Dave Wiedis

It is discouraging, and yet I haven't noticed that with you. I've always been amazed at your memory. And of course, having had 15 brain tumors, I think that would be understandable.

Dave Wiedis

So, for those who don't know, Jim, you served as a missionary staff with Cru for 40 years and really shared the gospel with thousands, actually, tens of thousands of students. And you've initiated ministries

all over the world, including the former Soviet Union, Japan, and a number of countries in North Africa and the Middle East. And then, of course, in 2010, you were diagnosed with thyroid cancer. You had that treated and then, much to your surprise, and everyone's surprise, in 2015, you were given a terminal diagnosis because that thyroid cancer had metastasized in a way that spread actually to your lungs, where surprised doctors looked at the X-rays and said, "You've got hundreds of tumors in your lungs." You and I were talking at that time. And then over the last five or seven years, you've actually learned that the cancer has spread to your brain, to your liver, and other parts of your body. And of course, you've battled these tumors with an experimental drug that has caused all kinds of horrendous side effects that I think many of us would just turn over and give up if we had to face.

Dave Wiedis

But you face them with lots of dignity and courage and strength. So I just want to ask you some hard questions, actually, kinds of questions that I think people might not want to ask, or maybe if they ask, they wouldn't. They feel impolite at asking. But you've given me permission, so let's just start with this. You've received bad news over many years, many times from doctors. Each time you receive the bad news, how do you deal with it? How do you internally deal with it? What's the process?

Jim Rhodes

Well, I think when suffering or affliction or tragedy comes, there are some things we need to get a perspective on. Otherwise, it's possible I think you can move into doubt, or even possibly defiant rebellion. It's easy, when those things happen in our lives, to give in and to lift a clenched fist towards God or in defiant rebellion or accuse Him of unfairness at that point.

Dave Wiedis

Sure, that's sort that's sort of the first thing that comes to my mind, is, "Gosh, this is unfair."

Jim Rhodes

Or we might question His love for us. We might even be filled with doubt and question whether He exists at all in light of these sorts of things. So I think in direct answer to your question, I would say that there was something that a dear friend, Adrian Rogers, shared with me a while back. There are three words that come to my mind as I process through suffering and pain, which I spent the better part of my life trying to avoid. And the three words are all out of Romans 8. They are Curse, Liberty (or Freedom), and Hope. And the first thing that I recall is that I remember that there's a curse on this world, that the suffering that I'm experiencing and the affliction that I'm experiencing, that God is aware of it and that He's not the cause of it. Those things come about as a result of the Fall of Man in the Garden and the curses that resulted as a result of that. The earth was cursed, the animal kingdom was cursed, people were cursed, and we've lived under that curse and live under that curse every day. And just because I'm a believer doesn't exempt me from having to live through that.

Jim Rhodes

And cancer is a part of that, and drug treatments are a part of that. Oftentimes, when I'm talking with folks, they'll say, "Well, why doesn't God just heal you or destroy (the cancer)?" The deeper question there, I think, is, "Why does God allow evil and suffering?" And "Why doesn't He just destroy, if He's all powerful, why doesn't He just destroy it?" And of course, the answer to that is and this is one of the things that I think, as believers, we need to form a better idea of what it means to suffer in your faith. And the fact that, like I said, just being a Christian doesn't mean that I'm not going to suffer or that somehow being a Christian will exempt me from experiencing the things that are going on.

Dave Wiedis

And there is an underlying assumption on that part of many people that sort of says that.

Jim Rhodes

Yeah, right. I mean, which pastor or missionary that we both know hasn't had to stand at the graveside of a person who has just put their spouse of 65 years, put the body of their spouse into the ground? And what do you say to that person as he or she walks away for the first time alone in 60 or 65 years? Or, as I've experienced, to the parents of a little 18-month-old who got run over in the driveway of her own home by a car? Just absolutely tragic. What do you begin to say to someone like that? And I think that's what draws me back to these three words of Curse, Liberty and Hope. There is a curse on the world, and as much as I would like Him to, God is not going to destroy evil and suffering, He's going to defeat it. And there are two gardens in the Bible, the Garden of Eden and then the Garden of Gethsemane. Ultimately, the message of the two gardens is that God triumphs over all of it. Yesterday's curse is on everything, but there's a better day coming. There's a freedom coming. Romans 8 talks about it—one of the things I really enjoy about our faith, Dave, is that our faith does not deny hardship or suffering, and it does not run away from hard circumstances, but it deals head-on with it.

Dave Wiedis

It (faith) deals with it in reality.

Jim Rhodes

Yes. And that's what I like about Romans chapter 8, because that's where the Apostle Paul really squares this up. I mean, he gets it square in his site and deals it up, and he talks about that there's all kinds of affliction and suffering and pain and evil and war and things that go on in the world.

Dave Wiedis

Creation itself is groaning.

Jim Rhodes

He talks about that, but the creation groans under the curse, and that's the ecological stuff as well. But then he goes on to say, but it groans awaiting the freedom or the liberty that is about to come. And that, of course, comes when Christ returns. There's a better day coming for all of us who know Christ. It talks in Romans 8, Paul, too, talks about three different types of groaning. It talks about the creation groaning, he talks about Christians groaning because we're not yet who we're going to be and we still have to deal with sin. And then he talks about the Holy Spirit groaning on our behalf in prayer. And so this is the time where groaning is the norm. And somehow, as Christians, I think in today's culture, especially in America, we forget that. We forget that suffering is the norm, not the abnorm, and we treat it like it's the abnorm. Getting it back again to your original question. Part of dealing with this is developing a biblical thinking about what I'm going through, which involves the curse, the freedom that's coming from all of this, the liberty.

Jim Rhodes

The groaning that we endure right now from cancer or the death of a loved one or whatever is temporary for those of us who know Christ, and the glory that we expect is eternal. He (Paul) goes on in Romans 8 to say we're predestined in, Romans 8:29, we're predestined for that glory. In Romans 8:32, he says, we're preserved for that glory. And again, the idea that God has predestined us, what Paul, I think was driving at there is that before the foundations of the world, God predestined those of us who know Christ for glory, and no power, no hellish power, no suffering, no evil, it's been predetermined in heaven, that no power is going to change that.

Dave Wiedis

Right, and he even says, "Nothing can separate us from the love of God."

Jim Rhodes

And he names afflictions, several of them. And he says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" And so I come back to those things. He says, no fault can condemn us and no foe can destroy us.

Dave Wiedis

Right. So can I take you back to the groaning piece? Because you talked about the groaning of creation, the groaning of Christians, and the groaning of the Holy Spirit. I think we get the first two very easily because there's suffering in the world, and we all have afflictions. The groaning of the Holy Spirit—talk a little bit more about that.

Jim Rhodes

Well, if I understand the passage correctly, it says that the Holy Spirit, the really encouraging thing about that passage is that, or what I take from it, is that the Holy Spirit sees me in my suffering. And even when I can't pray about my suffering or pain, or I don't know how to, He prays, it says, and He prays with groans too deep for words. There are not words in the human experience to give air to what He says in prayer to His Father on my behalf.

Dave Wiedis

So it's interesting that as we suffer and the Holy Spirit understands and knows our suffering, He's actually praying to the Father in groans too deep for words because He understands. So rather than seeing God as this distant, far off, mean-spirited person who is afflicting us, we can say, "No, He is with us, and He is praying on our behalf."

Jim Rhodes

Not only is He with us, but based on that passage and several others throughout the Bible, I would say not only is He with us, but more importantly, He sees us. And this is where I start my day or try to start my day each day. He sees us. He knows me. He sees me. He knows my day. He knows my pain. He knows my suffering, and He's redeemed me, and He calls me by name. You know, with the enemy, the scripture says at the end, you get a number, but God gives you a name. And that's the difference. When you know Jesus, you follow someone who calls you by name; the other, evil entity simply gives you a number. So one way of thinking about it is, at the end of time, you could ask yourself, "Will you hear your name called, or will your number be up?"

Dave Wiedis

That's beautiful. That's so beautiful. It's such a different perspective.

Jim Rhodes

It is. Isn't that so like the scripture? And so like our God, because the world He created and the kingdom that we inherit is so not like what we experience. It's not the world He created. The world He created has been marred by the curse. And so, we're leaving that and going back to a kingdom that's been made for us that is perfect again without all of this stuff.

Dave Wiedis

So, you talked about the first word, the Curse. Second word was Liberty, (and Freedom), and the third word was Hope. Talk a little bit more about that.

Jim Rhodes

Well, the freedom is tomorrow's conquest. It's talking about the return of Christ. That's the gist of it. Basically, it just means that I remember that there's a better day coming. By the way, that's what you say to that person at the gravesite or the person with the death of a child. You sorrow, because it is sorrowful, but then you can remind them that it isn't always going to be like this, that this is not the end of the story. There's a better day coming, and we have hope. Today's comfort is the hope that we have, that we know we're going to be a part of that.

Dave Wiedis

So I think about one of the experiences that you had. I remember you calling me almost immediately after this happened. It was back in 2018. Your father had passed away, and you had gotten, I guess, a phone call about that. And then within an hour of getting a phone call that said your dad has died, they called you to tell you that the cancer had spread to your brain and you needed brain surgery. So there is a moment in a slice of your life, and we're sitting here smiling as we look back on that. But in the moment that had to...

Jim Rhodes

Oh, in the moment I sat there on the sofa with my wife Barbara, and I looked at her and I said, "Who do we know that this happens to? Who gets those two calls within an hour of each other?" Because my dad was, you and I never really talked much about my dad, but he was my hero. And so his passing was incredibly hard for me to work through. He was my hero. There's just no other way to say it.

Dave Wiedis

Such grief that you're facing.

Jim Rhodes

In the midst of dealing with that, within the hour of learning of that and dealing with that, they call from downtown to say, "Oh, by the way, you've got brain cancer. The cancer spread to your brain and we're going to have to operate to get rid of it." And it was like, "Wow." And I remembered my good friend, Dr. Bill Bright, I once asked him, "What you do in situations like that when you don't know what to do? It's just overwhelming and you don't know what to do, what do you do, Bill?" And he goes, "Well," he said, "the first thing you do is you thank God that He sees you, and you remember that what's happened that's surprising to you has not come as a surprise to God and that you acknowledge and thank Him that He is sovereign and in control of this."

Jim Rhodes

Just to put an add-on to that story, when I called the funeral home within the hour after learning that I had cancer, because I was in charge of arranging the funeral, and I had to tell them that this was on a Tuesday and I had to be back on Monday for brain surgery. The gal that was helping us arrange the

funeral said that because dad was being buried at Fort Logan, which is sort of the Arlington Cemetery of the west, that oftentimes it takes up to two months to get a funeral time, like at Arlington. Which I realized is true. And she said, "But let me work on it for you." And she called back at 1:00PM on Tuesday in the afternoon and said, "You won't believe what happened!" I said, "You'd be surprised what I would believe." And she said, "They have a time available at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday. (This is Tuesday, so on that Thursday.) Can you get here?" I said "Yes, I can get there." And so God opened up the door and we had a wonderful celebration of my dad. He was an American hero as well as my hero.

Jim Rhodes

My point in sharing that is that when you look to Him [God] in those crazy circumstances, He shows up and does incredible things on our behalf. The next week, I wound up coming home (flying home), having the brain surgery. And the Saturday after that, which was less than two weeks from these phone calls, I was performing a wedding of a dear friend. People were coming up to Barbara at the wedding going, "Hey, I heard Jim is going to have to have brain surgery. What do you guys think about that?" And she said, "Well, he already had it!"

Dave Wiedis

Yeah, it's amazing.

Jim Rhodes

It is.

Dave Wiedis

But see, you look at that, and you see God's hand in it.

Jim Rhodes

Yes.

Dave Wiedis

And you see God's provision for you and has taken care of you. And others would say, "Yeah, but wait a minute, He orchestrates all things. He's in control of all things, and He knew that your dad passed and then allows a phone call within that hour. What kind of God does that? Do you believe there's purpose in these kinds of things?"

Jim Rhodes

Yeah, well, of course, that gets back to the core issue here is, as a believer, what do I believe about suffering? Because as much as I would like it to be, and we've talked about this before, I would like for life to be all about me. But the scriptures are pretty clear that it's not about me, it's about Jesus and His kingdom, and sometimes suffering is a part of that. And I don't like that message per se, but it's reality. We've talked in the past, too, about how suffering for Jesus is an honor and a privilege. Different people at different times have asked me, "Why don't you just quit?" The medical team is asking that from time to time. I had a doctor three months ago when I got COVID, say, "Well, Jim, you've had a good run and why don't you just quit?" And it's like, in those moments, tempting as that thought is, I'm glad that Jesus didn't quit. And I was reminded of something He said when He got to the Garden of Gethsemane. The night before He died, He was trying to tell His disciples about all the things that He was about to suffer, which when I'm talking to Jesus, I'm talking to somebody who understands what suffering is, in a way that I probably never will. Because again, when you want to make the world all about you, it's easy to focus on your suffering. But I follow one who suffered for me and suffered unimaginable things. I mean, it wasn't just the cross, although that was horrid, but it was the beating that He took before that where they literally ripped huge chunks of Him off his body with that scourge whip. In trying to explain it to His men the night before, He said in John chapter twelve, He says, "Now my soul has become troubled, and what shall I say? Father saved me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name." And that has become my prayer, too, because it's a reminder that it's not about me. In the same way that Jesus was saying, this isn't about Me, this is about my Father and my Father's kingdom, I say, this isn't about me, this is about Jesus and His kingdom.

Dave Wiedis

In there, also, it explicitly says my purpose, the purpose (I came)...

Jim Rhodes

The reason I came to this hour.

Dave Wiedis

And so I think that it's a difficult thing to talk about purpose because it depends what side you're looking at it.

Jim Rhodes

Yeah.

Dave Wiedis

Sometimes we get to see purpose in suffering and sometimes we don't.

Jim Rhodes

Right.

Dave Wiedis

Let me share a story. I don't know if I've shared this with you. Many years ago, my mother collapsed in my arms with a brain hemorrhage.

Jim Rhodes

Wow.

Dave Wiedis

I was a young Christian, I think I've been a Christian maybe three or four years, and she collapsed in my arms. I laid her down, and I had to give her mouth to mouth. And when they got her to the hospital, they said, this is pretty dire. She's in intensive care. We had to wait for a month before she had surgery for her brain swelling to go down. And during that time, I prayed, "Oh, God, what are you doing?" But I had learned, can you praise God in the midst of circumstances? In any event, what ended up happening is my mother had a what the doctors called a brain stem spasm in which she had a vision of Jesus Christ.

Jim Rhodes

Wow.

Dave Wiedis

And my Jewish mother, she said later, she said, "I was conscious of being unconscious, and it was terrifying. And then a light came to me and I saw the face of Christ." And then many years later, she actually came to become a Christian. She put her faith in Christ. So here's an example where I got to see purpose, and I learned early on, I don't need to question God, "Why are you doing this?" You (God) have your purpose. And maybe I get to see it.

Jim Rhodes

Maybe I get to see it. That's right. But we can trust that suffering is never, the Scripture lays out that we do suffer but that it's never, without purpose. Although, like you say, we don't always get to see what that purpose is. But there's so many things. We were talking this morning with another group of men, but there's so many things that we don't get to see, that we won't see until we're in glory with Jesus.

Dave Wiedis

That God is doing.

Jim Rhodes

That God is doing. And God is at work, and we don't know what He's doing a lot of times. And that's why the Scripture talks about faith being things hoped for but not necessarily seen.

Dave Wiedis

Right.

Jim Rhodes

And that's what we do. We believe and we trust God even when we can't see it.

Dave Wiedis

Yes, and that's the hard part.

Jim Rhodes

Yes.

Dave Wiedis

And it's sort of like living in the kingdom of heaven is different than living in the kingdom of this world, where what we see is what we get.

Jim Rhodes

There is the key, because the hard part of that is if I try to deal with whatever my suffering and affliction is within myself and within who I am and my resources, I don't know how people do that. Well, I do. They drink or take drugs and they medicate for pain, which I totally get. Without Jesus, I have no doubt I would do the same. But when you know Jesus and you follow Him, you are following one who, again, sees you and calls you by name. The way to grow your faith, because all of us are in the process of seeing our faith grow, is to know Him more. And the more we see Him for who He is, the easier it is to trust Him.

Dave Wiedis

To trust Him even when you don't see purpose.

Jim Rhodes

That's right. And the proof of that, too, is in Philippians, chapter three. I think it begins about verse ten, where the Apostle Paul writes, and he says, "I want to know Christ." He's talking about all the things that were his before he came to know Christ and how they counted as dung. But then he goes on, he says, "But I want to press on to know Christ." And everybody goes, "Amen." "To know the power of his resurrection." "Amen." "And to know the fellowship of His sufferings." And you get crickets on that one. All three of those things have been given to us as believers. But when you choose Jesus, who chose to do His Father's will, not his own will. As a result, He inherited a whole batch of problems and suffering and affliction that He could have avoided if He had simply gone His own way. And so when we choose to make the same choice (and it doesn't have to be in a big thing like cancer, it could be in a small thing) when we choose to follow Jesus and trust Him, we will run into a whole new set of issues that we could have avoided had we made a different choice.

Jim Rhodes

But when you do that, the Scripture says right there that we experience a fellowship with Christ that you can't achieve any other way. And I would want to tell your listeners today, Dave, and just testify that that's true. In my life, I've seen that to be true. Where in my walk with Him, I wouldn't have chosen the suffering, but I know Him better and differently now for having walked this path with Him. And it only causes me to love Him more and trust Him more, because the more you know Jesus... I mean...

Dave Wiedis

I wish our listeners could see your face when you talk about this.

Jim Rhodes

Well, we were talking about this this morning with that other group of men where what other God (would work this way)? In 1 Corinthians chapter three, it talks about how all of us who know Christ are going to be presented before Him to give an account at the judgment seat of Christ, where not our salvation will be judged, but our works will be judged.

Dave Wiedis

Whether you built with wood, hay, stubble, or fine, precious gold.

Jim Rhodes

Yes. And the gist of that passage is the things I do in my own power and my own strength are the wood, grain, and stubble. The things that Jesus does are the gold, silver, and gems. And it talks about how at that judgment, the fire of the judgment of Jesus is going to hit not me, that's the difference between that judgment and the great white throne judgment is the object of the fire. The object of the fire here is the works. What happens is when you hit fire or when fire hits wood, hay, or straw, what do you have when it's left? Ashes. And after the wind blows? Nothing. When it hits gold, silver and gems, it refines them and

makes them more precious. It burns away the dross, again being, any part of us. And what's left is what Jesus did through us. And then this is where it gets really crazy, because it says that He takes whatever's left that He did, through us, and He gives it to us as a reward. That's crazy. Who follows a king like that? And if that wasn't enough, (I think honestly, Dave, I've envisioned this because the scripture says this day will come just like today did) and I've envisioned me standing there, and I think, honestly, I'll just be happy that I'm there. But it's not enough for this Jesus, who we follow, for Him, He wants to reward us for things He did through us. And then it says in 1 Corinthians 4, verse five, "and then each man's praise will come to him from God." The fun part about that verse is the word praise. When you look at the Greek word that gets translated, praise, its actual meaning is "thunderous standing ovation." And you just got to get the imagery here. So I'm glad to be there, but that's not enough. Jesus rewards me with the reward of what He did through me. And then as I'm walking off and letting the next person, perhaps you, take your turn, as I'm walking off, I hear this thunderous ovation. And I look back and Jesus is standing and applauding me. That is just unbelievable. I think it's one of the best pictures of what the grace of God is and the love of God for us. And going back to Romans 8 where we started at the end of that chapter, Paul says, "What can separate us from the love of God?" I mean, nothing!

Dave Wiedis

Nothing.

Jim Rhodes

Not persecution, not trial, not affliction, not suffering, not cancer, not the death of loved ones. Nothing will prevent us from being loved by the Savior. It's too wonderful for words! Who wouldn't follow this person if they really knew Him the way we are coming to know Him? And like I said, that's the answer to the faith question, is faith is a response. It's a response to understanding who Jesus is. The more I understand who He is and how much He loves me. And I think of the Word, the scripture that says how much the Father loves us in that, "How shall He who gave His own Son for us, not freely give us all things?" That's how much He loves us—He allowed His Son to suffer. I was talking to Barb on the way here this afternoon about could I allow my children to suffer? And it's like, I don't think I could make that choice. But God did, and He did it for you and for me. That's how much He loves us. So when we ask ourselves, in that time of suffering or affliction, "Does God love me?" The answer is "Yes, in Jesus" is where the answer is.

Dave Wiedis

And is He good?

Jim Rhodes

And is He good? And again, and again, yes, He's very good. It's who He is.

Dave Wiedis

So one of the takeaways here is that when we're in the midst of the suffering and closed-in by all those details and horror, we have to zoom out and see truthfully, see through a lens of who God is, how He loves us, how good He is, and how He will freely give us all things.

Jim Rhodes

And what His purpose is for suffering. And there is purpose and meaning in suffering. You're suffering in Christ. The purpose of that, Paul writes, or even Jesus gives us the model of, "What shall I say? Lord, save me from this hour? But for this reason came." I just thought, Father glorify your name. That's the purpose. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4, he said that he's rehearsing a lot of the afflictions that he went through. And he says all of these things have happened, that the grace of God, which is spreading to more and more people, might spread all the more and result in the giving of thanks to God and the glorifying of His name. So Paul picks up on that very theme. That's the purpose again, and it's not about me. And I think that's at the crux of it; if I want to see it (life) as being all about me, it's going to be really hard.

Dave Wiedis

Yes, so let me shift gears with you a little bit, because we've been talking about the impact of physical suffering and how you have processed it. One of the things I've said is, what do you do? You wake up at three in the morning and you're thinking about these things. So we have a sort of an insight as to where your mind goes. I want to ask you about the impact of this on your life and ministry. One of the things I imagine is most difficult for you is that you've spent most of your life being, "useful" to the kingdom of God. And now, I've heard you say, sometimes you feel sidelined.

Jim Rhodes

Yeah.

Dave Wiedis

So what's that like? How do you deal with that? And what's the real truth behind the appearance of uselessness?

Jim Rhodes

I have felt that way. And where God led me as I talked with Him about it in those morning hours, is He led me back to the story of John the Baptist, who, as you know, Jesus himself said that there has never been anyone as great in the human race as John the Baptist. And where did it land him? It landed him in a hellhole of King Herod's prison. I suspect, well, even the Scripture records, that John struggled with feeling like he was sidelined. You want to talk about being sidelined, but it's interesting how that ends. That story ends with John the Baptist saying, "He must increase and I must decrease." And I'm still working that through. But I really think that's where the answer is, that it's about I don't get to choose

where I bloom. Jesus plants me where He wants me to bloom, and my job is just to bloom there. And so when you have a ministry that is large and you're seeing incredible things happen, that's a privilege to be given that it's a stewardship that we're given to care for.

Dave Wiedis

Right, and you had that.

Jim Rhodes

I did. And it was wonderful. I wouldn't trade a minute of it. I wouldn't lie. It was wonderful.

Dave Wiedis

Can I just interject, just so our listeners understand some of the crazy, amazing things that you've done? There was a time period where you would actually go to the Soviet Union in secret, at great cost to your life. Had you been caught, you'd have been executed or sent off to the Gulag somewhere, and you went there memorizing people's contacts, because (it was) before the days of cell phones, and even if we had cell phones, you probably wouldn't have carried it because they would have found that. And you set up ministries. You planted seeds so that ministries could bloom after the Soviet Union fell. And you did the same kinds of things in Egypt and other places as well. I know that you would not probably put a number to how many people have come to know Christ through your ministry, but my guess would be in the hundreds of thousands. So that's a large ministry. So when I talk about I ask you about being sidelined. We're really talking about it's a much.

Jim Rhodes

It's a much smaller world here now.

Dave Wiedis

It's a smaller world.

Jim Rhodes

It's the world of Penn and Jefferson Medicine *chuckles*.

Dave Wiedis

And a few friends.

Jim Rhodes

And a few friends, yeah, and my family, and my children—my three kids. I think, again, it's the issue of God wants in 1 Corinthians 4, at the very beginning, Paul is talking about (it might be three, whatever) in one of the headings of those two chapters, Paul is talking about what it means to be called (it is 1 Corinthians 4). The first couple of verses, he's talked about how the Corinthians were struggling with worshipping Paul and Apollos and Peter. And some piously said they followed Christ (I'm not sure they were any better than the rest). But he goes, what are we? And he says, "We are servants of Christ." Which can sound lofty, except when you dig, again, into the Greek, which the word "servant" there is the same word that's used of the galley slave that rode the Roman galleys chained to his oar. I mean, that galley slave—you want to talk about hidden and unseen and small—you're in a hold of a ship until you die. And we are servants of Christ, meaning we don't determine where the boat goes, we just help row. And we're stewards of the secret things of God.

Jim Rhodes

We've been trusted, like Joseph of old, with caring for the secret things of God. He said that's who we are. And then in the next verse, in verse two, he says moreover, he said it is important that a steward be found faithful or trustworthy, not successful. It's interesting, Paul didn't say that God is looking for you to be successful. He said He's looking for you to be trustworthy. And so that's sort of the issue; am I willing to let Him decide where the boat goes? And it was at one time into a wide ocean. Now we're in a very small tributary. Am I willing to let Him decide that and to be trustworthy at handling what He's given me?

Dave Wiedis

And for Him to be in charge of the results?

Jim Rhodes

Yes.

Dave Wiedis

Even though you feel like you're sidelined, so to speak, or your world is much smaller?

Jim Rhodes

Yes.

Dave Wiedis

It doesn't mean the results are any less significant.

Jim Rhodes

Interestingly, that is so, isn't it? Yes, it is. And you never know what God, the Holy Spirit, is going to do with the smallest little thing that you don't even notice.

Dave Wiedis

What did He do with a few fish and loaves?

Jim Rhodes

Yes, exactly.

Dave Wiedis

So He multiplies.

Jim Rhodes

Yeah. And I often think when we get to glory, we'll be amazed at some small thing that we didn't even hardly notice, but that the Holy Spirit did through us and multiplied vastly. Like He did the fishes and the loaves. And we had no idea that He did that. We won't know that until the judgment seat of Christ. When He'll reward us for what He did. It still just blows my mind.

Dave Wiedis

Thunderous applause.

Jim Rhodes

Yes, unbelievable.

Dave Wiedis

So, Jim, I want to thank you again for being here. I know that our audience is going to be blessed by listening to your words. You are in the process of writing a book, and you have a website. Tell us about that.

Jim Rhodes

I am. It is Comeandseebook.com. And the book is titled "Come and See." We are going to release it online first, which is different because normally you publish first. My co-author and I, John Biddle, are going to release it. We've agreed to release it online, hopefully a chapter a month beginning this month. There's already the first chapter up on the website. We're hoping to put the next two chapters up in the

next couple of weeks and then a chapter a month after that. It's already written. We just need to put the final editing in and post it.

Dave Wiedis

So comeandseebook.com, and I was just looking at it. It's a great website. And if people wanted to get a hold of you, wanted to communicate with you, how would they do that?

Jim Rhodes

They can communicate through the website, actually that is the best way to do it. Or through the ServingLeaders website. Yes, I can be reached that way as well.

Dave Wiedis

Right, Jim is on the Board of ServingLeaders. He's been serving here and is just an invaluable resource for us as well. So, Jim, thank you so much. God bless you as you walk with Christ, and thank you again for being here.

Jim Rhodes

Thanks.

Thanks so much for listening. And we hope you'll join us for our next episode at ServingLeaders Ministries Podcast. If you liked this podcast, please take a moment to subscribe and rate it five stars. For additional resources or to find out more about our counseling services, you can go to www.servingleaders.org.