

Beyond the Shark Attack

Bethany Hamilton began surfing as a child, and she believed that God was calling her to a career as a professional surfer.

And there was no doubt she had the talent. At one time, she was ranked as the No. 1 amateur teen surfer in Hawaii, where they know a thing or two about surfing.

But in 2003, at age 13, Bethany was attacked by a tiger shark while on her surfboard. She survived the attack, but lost her left arm just below the shoulder.



Most of us would be devastated if we suffered a disabling injury – one that could end our life’s dream. But Bethany did not lose her faith. She believed God could work through her pain and disability. Instead of looking inward and letting her fear dominate her thoughts, Bethany decided to look for ways to help others.

For example, soon after the shark attack, she began raising money to restore a man’s eyesight. While visiting New York City, she gave her ski coat to a homeless girl. When asked about the gift, she said she had more than she needed in life.

Bethany’s pastor said, “She’s looking forward to the future. She’s asking herself, ‘How can I show the world I still have a life, that I enjoy my life, and that my life is filled with joy?’ She has an underlying trust that God is taking care of her.”

Notice that. She has an underlying trust that God is taking care of her. That’s the first instruction for walking the path to joy. Stop worrying. God is taking care of you. Trust Him.

Bethany ultimately returned to professional surfing. She wrote about her experience in the 2004 autobiography *Soul Surfer: A True Story of Faith, Family, and Fighting to Get Back on the Board*. In April 2011, the feature film *Soul Surfer* was released. She also has a 2019 movie, *Unstoppable*, where she shows the struggles and happiness of her family.

(more)

In early 2012, Bethany met youth minister Adam Dirks through mutual friends. The couple was married on Aug. 18, 2013, at an estate on Kauai's north shore, near where she grew up. The couple has two sons, Tobias and Wesley.



Her love of surfing continues. In 2016 alone, Bethany's capacity to inspire reached new heights as she beat a six-time world champion and the top-ranked surfer in the world at a major competition. In 2017, she was inducted into the Surfers Hall of Fame.

The question that naturally arises from Bethany's story is this: What's holding you back from achieving your dream? Is it fear, a sense of unworthiness, a lack of self-esteem, some disability, a lack of faith in yourself and in God to accomplish what He has in store for you?

Consider the talents God has given you. In all likelihood, He has equipped you for a dream that aligns with His purposes for you. Trust Him.

I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the Lord; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope (Jeremiah 29:11 CEB).

– Beecher Hunter