

Battle Ready Faith

Fully Prepared to Win Every Time

Ty Austin

Battle Ready Faith

Battle Ready Faith: Fully Prepared to Win Every Time

Copyright © 2026 by Ty Austin

All rights reserved.

Published by Austin Publishers

ISBN 979-8-234-10008-5 (paperback)

ISBN 979-8-234-10009-2 (e-book)

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means — electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other — except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

To Lilia —

No one has shown me what the love of God looks like in action like you. You are truly worth more than all the riches in this world and are the epitome of a virtuous woman. Thank you for loving me and our children unconditionally. I love you.

To Faith, Jude, Jewel —

You guys make me so proud to be your dad. You each love the Lord and serve our church so well. This book is for you, as a testimony to remember and pass down to your future family.

Foreword

I'll never forget the first time I heard teaching like this. It was forty years ago — still the darkest period of my life. Though I had been raised in a Christian home and believed I was staying separated from the world, its perversity still found its way into my heart, and my soul became bound with lust. I had just graduated from high school with no clear sense of purpose, and I desperately needed to be delivered from the spirits that had gripped me. I saw promises in the Bible that seemed to apply to my situation, but I needed to know whether I could count on them. Was God truly committed to them — or had He offered them merely as a best-case scenario, subject to His discretion?

After seeking the Lord earnestly for deliverance and direction, an eight-part cassette series divinely found its way into my hands. I had been raised in church and taught well, but I had never heard anything like this. The teacher proclaimed the promises of God as though God meant every word — and was fully committed to fulfilling them all. Almost instantly, a bright beam of hope pierced through the darkness. As I continued listening and meditating on the Scriptures being taught, the water level of faith rose steadily in my heart. I became convinced that God not only could fulfill His promises — He wanted to. And soon, I was completely delivered from the spirits of lust.

There is a profound difference between the message that Caleb and Joshua preached and that of the other ten spies Moses sent to the Promised Land. All twelve reported that the land God had promised was everything He said it would be — but only Caleb and Joshua declared boldly that God would bring His people into it. The other ten mixed their contrary experiences and unbelief into their report, and in doing so, they discouraged an entire generation and cost them their inheritance. God distinguished the message of the two from the compromised message of the ten — and then

singled out Caleb further, saying he possessed “a different spirit” (Numbers 14:24).

There is a popular preacher who proclaimed God’s faithfulness to His promises more boldly and accurately than anyone else. His name is Jesus Christ. Every time He spoke about prayer, He pressed upon us the certainty that God would answer us. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives” (Matthew 7:7–8a). Preaching like this may sound hard to believe at first, but when we receive it, it builds our faith and gives us the spiritual and emotional strength we need to stand on God’s promises until they are fulfilled.

I have been listening to Ty Austin preach and teach the Word of God for over fifteen years, and I can say with confidence: Ty is not only a member of the “two-spy club” — he preaches with the spirit of faith, like Caleb. Furthermore, Ty shares numerous supernatural testimonies to prove that God means exactly what He said.

Whether you have heard bold, Scripture-grounded teaching like this before, or are encountering it for the first time, I pray that you open your heart and eyes to see that this is how the Scriptures speak — and how Jesus Himself taught — because God longs to fulfill His promises.

As I read this book, my faith was stirred to revisit God’s promises and to boldly ask for them. I pray this book has the same effect on you.

Jerry Dirmann, D.Min. (hon.)
Senior Pastor, The Rock Network
President, Jesus Disciple

Praise for

Battle Ready Faith

...

“Battle Ready Faith: Prepared to Win Every Time is a powerful and timely message for anyone determined to live with unshakable confidence in God. Ty writes not from theory, but from experience—as someone who has fought and won many battles—giving this book both authority and authenticity. His biblical insight and practical application equip readers to grow in faith, stand firm, and walk in victory no matter the challenge. This book will strengthen you and prepare you to win, every time.”

— Kimberly Dirmann

Co-Pastor, The Rock, Anaheim, CA

“It is with great joy and heartfelt appreciation that I endorse the book Battle Ready Faith by my dear friend, Ty Austin. This book is a powerful encouragement to all who desire to stand firm in faith amid life’s challenges and spiritual battles. Ty shares timeless truths that inspire courage, perseverance, and a deeper trust in God.

As someone who knows Ty personally, I have witnessed a genuine passion for God and a sincere desire to encourage others in their spiritual journey. Battle Ready Faith is not only inspiring but also equips readers to strengthen their walk with Christ and remain steadfast in every season.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone seeking renewed faith, spiritual strength, and practical encouragement to live victoriously through Christ.”

— Dr. Leslie Keegel

*Former President of Foursquare Sri Lanka &
Former Chair of the Foursquare Global Council*



“How often do we learn lessons following life’s battles, wishing our souls would have been better prepared ahead of time? Pastor Ty Austin’s book, Battle Ready Faith, gives us a hunger and desire to understand scriptural callings that prepare us for the ruggedness of many levels of battles.

It’s the simplicities of living in the small obediences that Ty calls muscle builders that prepare us to endure the difficult hardships, not escape them.

Thank you, Ty, for our conversations that abound with your fresh thoughts. Now I love reading them!”

— Harriet Mouer

Lifeforming Leadership Coach

“In a time when many believers are questioning the events unfolding around them and the challenges they face personally, Pastor Ty’s powerful new book, Battle Ready Faith, offers a much-needed course correction. It reminds us of the faith, courage, and unwavering trust in God that distinguished the great heroes of Scripture.

Battle Ready Faith is a turbo boost for every believer, inspiring us to follow Jesus wholeheartedly and trust the God who faithfully intervenes, leads, and directs the paths of those who place their confidence in Him. This timely message will strengthen your faith and equip you to stand firm in every season.”

— Dr. Jerry M. Stott

FMI Global Associate Director, South Pacific & Southeast Asia

Contents

Foreword by Jerry Dirmann.....	5
Introduction: Why “Battle Ready Faith”	10
Chapter One Have Faith in God.....	13
Chapter Two The Fight for Your Faith.....	31
Chapter Three Faith Speaks	47
Chapter Four Your Faith Heritage Is Waiting	65
Chapter Five Strengthened in Faith	85
Chapter Six Costly Faith.....	99
Chapter Seven How to Increase Your Faith	117
Chapter Eight Faith to Repossess	133
Chapter Nine Faith That Heals.....	149
Chapter Ten Battle Ready Faith.....	163
Discussion Guide for Individuals and Small Groups	177
A Final Word	187
Acknowledgments.....	190
Scripture Index	192
About the Author	195

Why “Battle Ready Faith”

In the middle of teaching these messages to our church, my wife found herself in Israel as the USA and Israel attacked Iran. Missiles started flying, airports shut down, and we were in the middle of a crisis. From there, this book title was finalized.

I have noticed that whenever I begin to teach on faith, the room shifts. Some find their hearts catching fire. Others find themselves increasingly uncomfortable. There is something about genuine faith — the faith Jesus actually taught — that confronts the way most of us have been living, including many believers. It does not always go down easy. Some could call it offensive.

There are two senses of the word *offensive*. The first is the kind we associate with sports and warfare: a posture of taking ground rather than only defending it. Believers are called to that kind of faith. We are not in this for damage control. We are in this for the advancement of the kingdom of God in our lives, our families, our neighborhoods, our cities, and our generations. That is offensive faith in the first sense — *on the offense*, moving forward, taking territory the Lord has offered us.

The second sense is more uncomfortable. The faith Jesus taught was offensive to the religious people of His own day, and it is still offensive to a great deal of contemporary religious thinking. It cuts across our excuses. It refuses to let us trade the substance for a polite imitation. It calls us to obey when obedience is costly. It exposes the unbelief we have

been quietly tolerating. The believer who reads through these pages and walks away vaguely irritated has, in many cases, simply met faith on its actual terms. The Bible does not soften the demands of faith for our comfort. It calls us higher. *Offensive faith* in this way is faith that confronts us honestly. It radically challenges any hint of unbelief.

The chapters that follow began as a series of sermons preached to our congregation at Arise Church across the early months of 2026. The Lord placed faith on my heart for that season, and as I prepared and preached, He kept stretching what I thought I knew. The series ran for several weeks and set the stage for miraculous answers to prayer.

Chapter One sets the foundation: faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the believer is to have faith in God — not in church, not in pastors, not in himself. Chapter Two takes up the picture of spiritual warfare and the six disciplines that keep our faith intact in a fight. Chapter Three works through the verbal dimension of faith — the way real faith inevitably speaks, prophesies what is not yet there, and sings over what has not yet come. Chapter Four walks through the great Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11 and shows that we are part of a long lineage that passes the baton to us. Chapter Five draws the line between unbelief and the human imperfection that looks like unbelief but is not — and unpacks the most freeing sentence I know on this subject: your job is not to waver; the timing is God’s job. Chapter Six is honest about the cost of obedience and the price of disobedience, and names the small obediences that often unlock the large ones. Chapter Seven moves into the practical question of how faith grows, walks through the levels of faith Jesus identifies across the Gospels, and closes with the example of Reinhard Bonnke’s “Africa shall be saved.” Chapter Eight walks through the story of Jephthah and

the call to repossess what the enemy has taken from us — peace, calling, family wholeness, ground we used to occupy. Chapter Nine takes the consistent Gospel pattern of “your faith has made you well” and applies faith specifically to healing — for ourselves, for those we love, and for those we lead. Chapter Ten, the closing chapter, draws the whole book together with the question of what battle-ready faith actually looks like in real time.

A note on how to read this book. Each chapter ends with a brief section called *For Reflection*, with five questions designed for personal journaling, conversation with a spouse or trusted friend, or use in a small group. At the back of the book, you will find a *Discussion Guide* with suggested formats for a ten-week study using these chapters as the foundation. The book is intended for both private reading and shared discussion; some readers will get the most out of it alone with a notebook, while others will get the most out of it by inviting friends to walk through it together over a couple of months. Either way, do not just read it. Pray over the questions. Apply what is asked of you. Faith is something to be exercised, not merely admired.

My prayer for you, as you read, is the prayer Paul prayed for the believers under his care: that the eyes of your understanding would be enlightened (Ephesians 1:18), that your faith would not waver, and that what God has promised you would come to pass in your life. We are part of a generation that desperately needs people who truly believe. May this book put you among them.

Chapter One

Have Faith in God

As a second grader at Nathaniel Greene Elementary, I was practically fearless. Raised in a godly home, I remember having childlike faith that caused me to be uninhibited to pray and believe that God would answer my prayers. In fact, my second-grade teacher broke her arm sometime during our school year, and I asked her if she'd like prayer so that God would heal her broken arm. I don't remember what happened, but I do remember having a wonderfully naïve faith. Life has a way of trying to interrupt the purity of that faith, which we must intentionally resist.

Jesus' teachings give us courage and comfort to hold on to this kind of belief. In one instance, the Son of God approached a fig tree, found no fruit on it, and spoke to it directly. The next morning, His disciples passed the same tree and stopped cold. It was withered from the roots. Peter — generally the loudmouth of the group — broke the silence: “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away” (Mark 11:21).

The disciples expected an explanation, perhaps a comment on agriculture. They received a teaching that, if true, ought to reorder the way every believer lives. *“Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them”* (Mark 11:22–24).

Read those verses again as if a modern preacher had not written them. Strip out every televangelist who has ever misused them. Forget the bumper-sticker version. The Lord Jesus Christ, in red letters in many of our Bibles, is laying down a teaching that is meant to ground the entire Christian life. We just need to slow down enough to fully hear it.

The instruction begins with the object of our faith. Not faith in a church, not faith in a leadership team, not faith in a pastor, not faith in a particular denomination. *Have faith in God.* This is where most people’s faith first takes a hit. They place their faith in a person; the person fails them — because every person eventually does — and they conclude that faith itself does not work. That is not a faith problem. It is a target problem. The faith was aimed at the wrong object. Move it back to where Jesus told us to put it. In God.

When Faith Has Been Misdirected

I want to linger here for a moment because I have watched this pattern injure more believers than almost any other. A person grows up in a particular church, under a particular leader, and quietly attaches the entire weight of their belief to that person or that institution. The person fails. The institution disappoints. Sometimes the fall is dramatic; more often it

is quiet. And the believer, never having distinguished the *target* of their faith from the *source* of their faith, walks away from the whole thing.

If that has been your story, hear me carefully. The person who failed you was never supposed to carry the weight you placed on them. The institution that disappointed you was never going to bear the load of your salvation. Neither were ever meant to be the object of your faith. They were only ever supposed to point you to the One who is. The disappointment is real; the diagnosis is not that faith does not work. The diagnosis is that your faith was aimed at the wrong target. Your part in healing from that is to do what Jesus said — *have faith in God* — and to let the people and institutions in your life recede to their proper, supporting role.

You Are The Whoever

After establishing the object of our faith, Jesus widens the circle. “*For assuredly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain...*” The word *whoever* deserves attention. It does not say *the pastors*. It does not say *people who have completed enough discipleship*. It does not say *people with a degree in biblical studies*. It does not say *people who have earned this through years of service*. It says *whoever*. Which means the teaching applies to the believer who walked into church for the first time on any given Sunday and to the saint who has been at it for fifty years. Faith is not the privilege of the credentialed. It is the inheritance of the redeemed.

*“Real, undivided faith in God carries a kind of
authority that mountains must listen to.”*



Do Not Doubt

Jesus then chooses the most extreme illustration available. Speak to a literal mountain, do not doubt in your heart, and the mountain will do exactly what you said. Most of us are not called to relocate any mountain peaks in the Rockies, and Jesus is not commissioning His people to uproot geological formations. The mountains in question are usually figurative — real-life problems, diagnoses, addictions, financial pressures, family ruptures, fears that have outlived their welcome. Many believers have stopped *talking* to those mountains. We have worked around them. We have decorated them. Some of us have unintentionally added to them. The teaching of Mark 11 is that we do not have to tolerate them. Real, undivided faith in God carries an authority that even mountains must heed.

Ask Bigger

There is a Greek word in this passage that has gotten people into trouble whenever it has been read carelessly. The word translated as “*whatever* in “whatever things you ask when you pray” does not refer to a random catalog of items one might list off in prayer. It is a word of *quantity*. It means *as much as, to the degree that, to the extent of*. The verse, read literally, runs something like this: *as much as you ask for when you pray, believing, you will have*. Which is to say that if we ask for pennies and we believe, we will receive pennies. That is not a punishment. It is the arithmetic of the promise.

For most of us, this is good news because most of us have been praying small. We have been asking for traffic to clear when we should

have been asking for the Lord to bring our prodigals home. We have been asking for parking spots when we should have been asking for healing in our marriages. Jesus is not rebuking the small prayers; He is offering the freedom to ask bigger ones.

You Will Have It

The other word that matters in the passage is *will*. “You *will* have them.” Not *might*. Not *possibly*. Not *if your timing is fortunate*. Now, *will* does not always mean *immediately*. The fig tree withered overnight, and on occasion an answer to prayer arrives that quickly. More often, we live in the *will* — the gap between the asking and the having — and that gap is where unbelief tries to crawl in. If there is one thing worth saying clearly in this opening chapter, it is this. The gap will tempt us to renegotiate. Discouragement, delay, and embarrassment over things we have prayed for will whisper to us that the prayer was not real, the faith was not real, and God was not listening. We must not surrender our faith in the gap. The promise is for those who *believe and do not doubt*. The *will* is on the other side.

Faith is a substance. It has weight. It has effect.

I would be lying if I said that keeping faith in the *will* gap of life is easy. I have talked to many spouses who believed in God for decades before their loved one came to salvation. In our family, we prayed for my brother-in-law (we prefer to just say brother) for years. In fact, for many years, he had a strong atheistic position. Through prayer and the loving pursuit of the Lord, he and his wife are born again Christians, trained in pastoral ministry, and serving faithfully at our former church in California. Faith will move mountains, even though it may take time.

A Definition of Faith

The cleanest definition of faith available in the Bible is, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” (Hebrews 11:1) Faith is not a vague hope. It is not a politely held opinion. It is not a set of inoffensive personal beliefs to be retrieved at Christmas and Easter and put away again. Faith is a *substance*. It has weight. It has effect.

The entire chapter of Hebrews 11 catalogs what that substance has done in the lives of believers across history. By faith Abel offered. By faith Enoch was taken. By faith Noah built. By faith Abraham went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith Sarah received strength. By faith Moses led a people out of slavery. By faith the walls of Jericho fell. By faith men and women stopped the mouths of lions, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, and saw their dead raised to life again. That is the substance the writer is describing. Real things happened in real time when faith showed up.

He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Faith is not what our culture has reduced it to. When a politician identifies as *a person of faith*, the phrase has come to mean roughly nothing. We must push past the buzzword and ask what is believed. *What is the substance of your faith?* That is the question we must pose to ourselves before the rest of this chapter can take effect.

What Faith Actually Does

It is walking through what Scripture says that faith does.

- By faith we are saved (Ephesians 2:8). The most consequential thing about us — our salvation — was secured by faith.

- By faith we are made righteous (Romans 4:22). I do not wake up most mornings *feeling* like the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus; I wake up wondering what time it is. But by faith I rise, and by faith I move into the day as the righteousness Scripture says I am.
- By faith we obtain the promises of God. They do not fall in our laps, because life circumstances rarely look like the promises God has made. We receive promises by faith — by stubbornly continuing to believe what He said when what is in front of us argues otherwise.
- By faith we are healed. This is a tender claim, and it deserves to be handled with care. We all have stories of someone who was not healed. We must be honest about that without surrendering what God said. Some things we will not understand on this side of eternity, and when we reach the other side, the question will not press on us the way it does now. We will be on our face worshiping Him, and the answer will not matter the way we thought it would. While we are here, we keep contending in faith.
- By faith we are also provided for. Hebrews 11:6 tells us God is *a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*. We will explore that more fully in a later chapter. For now, simply notice that faith reaches into the practical: it is faith that opens the door for God to provide a job, an open contract, a gift, a check that arrives the day the bill was due. Believers in long-standing faith collect these stories the way other people collect mementos. They are not coincidences. They are evidence.

- By faith we move mountains, and — most consequentially — by faith we overcome the world. *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith”* (1 John 5:4). When we feel overwhelmed, when the situation looks immovable, when everyone around us thinks we are foolish to keep believing, we must remember what the victory actually is. It is not our knowledge, our credentials, our wisdom, or our work ethic. It is our faith in God. And no person on this planet can take that from us. We can only give it away. No politician, no government, no economy, no diagnosis, no relative, no enemy can remove it. Believers can surrender it — let it leak out, hand it over — but it cannot be taken. If we have been losing our faith lately, the right diagnosis is that we have been giving it away. The good news is that we can stop.

The number one objective of the enemy is to steal our faith in God.

The Apostle Paul calls this “the good fight of faith” for a reason. The number one objective of the enemy is to steal our faith in God. That is why everything seems to come at once. That is why discouragement keeps showing up at the door. He is not after our patience or our good mood. He is after our faith. We must anchor here: I would rather die believing God than live a life of unbelief. The fight is for what we believe.

The Opposite of Faith

If we are going to take faith seriously, we must take its opposite seriously as well. I would contend that the opposite of faith is NOT fear. The opposite of faith is unbelief. Unbelief is not a neutral state; it is an active force. In Mark 6, Jesus returns to His own town. He begins to teach in the synagogue, and the people there are at first astonished at His wisdom. Then they remember Him as a child and are *offended* by Him. (Hold onto that word — *offense*, we will return to it.) Then comes a sentence that ought to stop every one of us in our tracks. “*Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief*” (Mark 6:5–6).

Read it twice. *Jesus could do no mighty work there.* The Son of God. The anointed One. The same Jesus who had cursed a fig tree and watched it die overnight. In an environment of unbelief, He was reduced to laying hands on a few sick people. The text says *He marveled* at their unbelief. He was astonished. The will of God was unchanged. The power of God was unchanged. What had changed was the spiritual atmosphere around Him. Most of us in the church world today have not even seen what Jesus calls *a few good works*. A handful of healings is rare to us, and we would call it a mighty work. In Jesus’ own vocabulary, that was not a mighty work — that was Him being limited. May the Lord help us not to settle for a few good works when there is a mighty work left to be done.

I have seen this in many church services, conferences, and camps. The expectation of the group gathered can greatly impact what will or will not happen during the gatherings. It is imperative that we address our unbelief by allowing the truth of God’s word to continually build our courage and faith.

The Language of Unbelief

The same scene is recorded in Matthew 13:58 with one word that is worth investigating. The Greek word for *unbelief* is **apistia**. It is the negation of *pistis*, the ordinary word for faith. The lexicon definitions push past mere doubt and say, *to refuse to trust, to be a non-believer*, and ultimately *treachery*. Treason. Unbelief, in other words, is not a passive shrug. It is a posture, and it has a vocabulary that is easy to recognize once you know what to listen for. *You never know what is going to happen. We will see. I hope so. I am not sure. Well, my situation is different.* That is the language of unbelief. When believers live in that land, everything we see is what we can do in our own strength. If we have been feeling burned out and worn thin, there is a good chance unbelief is somewhere in the equation. Unbelief whispers, *if I do not do it, it will not get done*. It demands a Plan B, Plan C and Plan D, all running concurrently, in case God does not come through.

There is a different way to live. Step by step by faith, believers begin to see things in their lives that they know — for a fact — they could never have done in their own strength. The promotion they were not technically qualified for. The meeting they did not earn. The healing the doctors did not predict.

Our church in Anaheim had a large sanctuary that seated a couple thousand people and needed a new paint job. My role at the time caused me to begin researching the logistics and costs. I had not been given a budget, and I was not sure how it would get done, but I felt the Lord put this in my heart to do. By faith, I called a man in our church who owned a painting business to come and give a quote for the job. He came and quoted me approximately \$75,000 to get it done. I thanked him and told him I would get back to him; again, I had no plan of how this would

happen. Before we left our meeting, the owner stepped aside to speak with his son, returned back to our meeting and let me know they wanted to complete the entire job on their dime. These types of stories have become part of my journey with God.

When we arrived at Arise Church the parking lot was in poor condition and needed to be recovered and restriped. One day I was walking the property and whispered to the Lord that I would like to have the lot recovered and restriped. Within days, a brother in the church asked if I had considered getting the parking lot improved; I told him I had just prayed about it. He quickly told me it would be taken care of and that he would take care of it. It was an approximately \$22,000 project completed by simply asking in faith.

How Faith Grows

How do we kill unbelief and grow faith? Romans 10:17 supplies the simplest approach: *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* When we get a word from God, the game is over. If we will receive it by faith, lay hold of it, and refuse to let go, no demonic force, no demonic spirit, no strategy of hell can take it from us. It is ours.

For that reason, we regularly read our Bibles, ideally every day. Not because we are trying to be the goody-two-shoes Christian. It is because we are in a fight. When I get off the Word of God, my faith drains very quickly. I am preaching, I am praying with people, I am walking through hard situations alongside our church, and I am dealing out faith all day long. If I do not refill from the Word, I empty fast. We must stay consistent even when it does not feel like it is working. Some days you will read your Bible, and the clouds will not part. That is fine; pick it up

tomorrow. At some point, you will sit down with a passage you have read a hundred times before, and a sentence will rise off the page like fresh air, and you will realize you can hear Him again. He was not silent. We were the ones who could not hear. And when we hear Him, our confidence is strengthened. We are equipped to function at a faith level that is uncommon. In that place, mountains are told to move.

When You Are New to This

Some readers are coming to this teaching for the first time. You may not have grown up around the kind of language I have been using. The promises of God may feel new — too good to be true, even. If that is you, I want to give you a starting place that is gentler than I might be tempted to give the lifelong churchgoer. Pick one passage. Just one. Choose Mark 11:22–24, or Hebrews 11:1, or Romans 10:17. Read it every day for a week. Out loud. Slowly. Let the words travel from the page through your eyes and into your heart. You do not need to strain to believe it; simply receive. Faith comes by hearing.

At some point during that week, the verse will begin to feel different. There will be a sentence — sometimes a single phrase — that significantly stands out. That is the Holy Spirit doing the work He came to do. Underline it. Write the date in the margin. Tell the Lord, plainly, that you receive it. The promises of God are not hidden treasure available only to a few. They are an inheritance He has given freely to anyone who will simply pick them up. Picking them up begins one verse at a time.

A Building, A Lease, and a Date

A few years ago, I was on staff at The Rock in Anaheim, California. We had grown to five packed services every weekend, and we knew we needed

more room. The leadership decided that a warehouse just down the street from us was to become a several-thousand-seat auditorium. The first miracle was the lease itself; getting that much space at a price that made sense in California is its own kind of miracle. The owner was slow to commit, and our pastor was telling him, in essence, that he would be blessed if he leased the property to us. While they were meeting, an earthquake hit the building. The owner stood up, said he had to go, went to check on his equipment — and we got the lease.

With not a single thing yet done in that warehouse — not one wall framed, not one permit pulled — our pastor stood up on a Sunday morning, held up the lease, and announced that on March 29, 2009, we would have our dedication service in the new sanctuary. It was October. Anyone with experience in construction will recognize the magnitude of that announcement. Less than six months to convert a warehouse into a several-thousand-seat auditorium — in the most permit-heavy state in the country. Lilia and I married that December, and the first four months of our marriage were a building project. I do not recommend it as a pathway for newlyweds, but I remember being a young man on staff watching my pastor lead by faith, and the rest of us rallying around his faith. He had self-imposed a timeline. He would later say he simply blurted it out. Out of his spirit came: that mountain will be moved.

The Friday before the dedication, the inspectors came. Their assessment was short. We were not ready. The contractor pulled some key staff together and asked, plainly, whether we could all just agree that this was not going to happen. Most of the leadership team looked at him and said no, they did not agree. They went down to city hall and returned with permission to work through the night, and we all did. Several nights,

in fact. I am convinced angels helped us. By Saturday, somebody had persuaded the inspectors to come back...on a Saturday — which does not normally happen — and we received a temporary occupancy permit. On Sunday, March 29, 2009, we held our dedication service with a packed auditorium of several thousand people.

The only way that happened was by faith. Any concession from that — any agreement that *this is not going to happen* — and it would not have happened. The testimony is still being told there today, and I am sharing it here because every believer needs their own testimony of faith. You may have some. You may need new ones. You may need your first one. Wherever you are, it is time.

Come

In 2020, the Lord called Lilia and me to move across the country, from California to the East Coast. I am a North Carolina native — I grew up in Greensboro, an hour up the road from where I now Pastor — but I had been on the West Coast since I was eighteen. Going to California at eighteen had not required much faith. Returning, married, with three children, to a denominational role that came with more than a 50% pay cut did. Arise Church was not part of the plan at that point. I did not know any of the people I now pastor. All I knew was that the Lord was saying *go*.

On the morning of the formal interview for that denominational position, I was in my daily Bible reading. Of course, it was the account of the disciple Peter being in the boat. Peter saw Jesus out on the water and called to Him: *Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water*. As I read it, I heard the Lord. *Come*. Faith rose up in me, and I never looked

back. I did not worry about the money. I did not worry about the logistics. I did not have all the pieces. I had not yet had the formal interview, and they had not given me an offer letter. I already knew it was happening. That is not arrogance. That is faith. I had heard Him.

Arise, Take Up Your Bed and Walk

There is a significant instance in which others' faith is the impetus for a friend's miracle. "*So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you'*" (Matthew 9:1–2). Notice what Jesus saw. The man on the bed could not get up on his own. He could not walk, but his friends could. His friends brought him to Jesus, and the text says *Jesus saw THEIR faith*. Something clicked into place when those friends decided that if they could get him to Jesus, something was going to change for their friend. What if your faith was the lynchpin for others? What if you can believe for them what they could not believe for themselves?

Furthermore, I hear the Lord saying it over His Church and over the lives of every reader: *Arise. Take up your bed. Walk*. You may be the one needing friends to carry you and Jesus sees you. He says this with His full power and authority so that you can stand on your own two feet from this day forward.

Friend, I believe by faith, we will see hundreds and thousands of people saved, disciplined, healed, and set free. Every mountain, every obstacle, every delay will be moved in the name of Jesus Christ. By faith, we will each fulfill the ministry God has given us. By faith, we will have everything we need.

As I close this chapter, I want to pose the same question I asked our church, “What will you do with your faith?” For some, God is calling you back into the fight. No more sidelines. No more cheap seats. He wants you back in the only fight that matters — the fight of faith. As you have been reading these pages, He has been opening your eyes. You are hearing Him again. As you hear Him, faith is rising. Discouragement is draining. Unbelief is draining. The dreams you had years ago, the visions, the aspirations God put in you — they will come to pass.

Pray this with me, in your own voice, before you turn the page:

Father God, thank You for speaking to me. I open my ears to hear You, so that my faith will take hold of every promise You have made — to me, to my family, to the generations to follow. By faith, I will step into everything You have for me. I will no longer operate in unbelief. As of today, I am a person of faith, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

For Reflection

Take a few minutes — by yourself, with your spouse, or in a small group — to sit with these questions before turning the page.

1. Where in your life is faith currently aimed? Is the object of your faith God Himself, or has it quietly drifted onto a person, an institution, or your own ability to make things happen?
2. Has there been a season when your faith took a hit because someone you trusted disappointed you? What would it look like to move your faith back to its proper target?
3. What is one *mountain* in your life that you have stopped speaking to, that you have simply learned to live around? What would it mean to begin asking the Lord to move it?

4. Read aloud Mark 11:22–24. What word or phrase in those verses lands on you most heavily? Why?
5. What is one practical step you can take this week to put yourself in a position where faith can grow — through hearing the word, choosing the right inputs, or putting yourself near other believers who actually believe?

Chapter Two

The Fight for Your Faith

If you do not know that you are in a fight, you are already losing. There is good news and bad news. The bad news is this is a real fight. The good news is that by the end of this chapter, you will know where the fight is, and you will have the tools Scripture has placed in your hands to win it. We do not surrender in the kingdom of God. We fight until we win.

*“If you do not know that you are in a fight, you are
already losing.”*

• • •

Previously we learned that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. That is the foundation everything we are learning continues to be built on. Since faith is a substance — because it accomplishes what God says it accomplishes — there is an enemy who has every interest in stripping it from us. He cannot have it without our

cooperation, but he is cunning, strategic, and exceedingly willing to wait for us to give it away. We must aim to identify the cooperation we have been unknowingly offering and put a stop to it.

The Good Fight

Paul left two letters for his spiritual son Timothy, and the instruction in both comes back to a single image. In the first, he tells Timothy to *“fight the good fight of faith, lay hold of eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses”* (1 Timothy 6:12). The verbs are not passive. *Fight. Lay hold.* Paul is not telling his son to relax into a vague spiritual mood; he is, however, telling him there is something to grip and win.

The longer one walks with the Lord, the more He calls them into the fight. Wins on the record do not signal that the fight is over; they often signal that the next assignment will be heavier. So, if you have been feeling more pressure recently, it may not be evidence that you are losing. It may be evidence that you have been winning enough for the conflict to escalate. Some of those fights are public — the kind everyone sees. More of them are private: a diagnosis no one warned you about, a child who has drifted, a financial pressure you did not see coming, an attack on your peace of mind that nobody at the church small group would have guessed. Every Christian eventually finds themselves in that place. This chapter is for those there now, and for everyone else who one day will be.

In Paul’s second and final letter to Timothy, he looks back over the whole of his life and writes, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”* (2 Timothy 4:7). Consider who is writing this. Paul had been beaten with rods, shipwrecked, imprisoned more than once, and was

in chains again at the time he wrote it. The same man commanded, “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I say, rejoice,” from a Roman prison cell. When he tells us the Christian life is a fight, and that he himself has kept the faith, he is not theorizing. He is reporting from inside the cell. *I have kept the faith.* That is the report card most of us will be evaluated by. Not the size of the platform. Not the polish of the résumé. Not the success of our career. Whether we kept what He gave us to keep, our faith.

The Whole Armor

The most concrete picture of the fight is in Ephesians 6, and I would recommend reading the whole chapter to anyone who is serious about contending for their faith. Paul opens it this way: “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*” (Ephesians 6:10–11).

He does not say *feel* strong. He was writing to persecuted churches, and he could not afford fluffy, empty instructions. For many of his readers, this letter would arrive amid life-and-death pressure. Christians in that era were sometimes faced with the choice between denying Jesus Christ and being executed in the arena. The gladiator spectacles modern films have romanticized were, in many cases, the deaths of our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Imagine receiving a letter from Paul under those conditions and reading, *be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.* You would understand exactly what fight he meant.

One of the keys to fighting for our faith is recognizing that there is a real adversary with real demonic cohorts. They are not few in number, and they are not above working against every person who is trying to fight

the fight of faith. In fact, the kingdom of darkness is well-organized, resourced, and focused. It is imperative to recognize that much of the discouragement we face did not originate within us. These intrusive thoughts are arrows set on fire by hell to war against our faith. Though the medical community may identify it as solely a chemical imbalance, the Holy Spirit may show us it is also spiritual. The two are not always exclusive. Sometimes we need healing. Sometimes we need deliverance. Either way, we are not to be ignorant of the schemes of the enemy.

Paul presses further: *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 6:12). The implications matter. The coworker who has been on your last nerve is not your enemy. The spouse you cannot seem to be at peace with is not your enemy. Politicians are not your enemy. The media is not your enemy. The spiritual forces operating behind those entities — sometimes through them — are the enemy. We do not wrestle against the humans in front of us. We wrestle against what is functioning behind them in the unseen realm.

Social media is flesh and blood. It is not where the fight is. The fight is in the spirit, and engaging with our thumbs is not engaging with the armor of God.

This means that engaging the fight without the whole armor of God is unwise. Many believers attempt it anyway. We post our opinions on social media, exchange insults with strangers who do not know us and never will, and call that engagement. Social media is *flesh and blood*. It is not

where the fight is. The fight is in the spirit, and engaging with our thumbs is not engaging with the armor of God. None of the standard equipment Paul lists in Ephesians 6 includes our keyboards.

Paul says it again, in case anyone has missed it: *“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore...”* (Ephesians 6:13–14). I love the phrase *“that you may be able.”* Once we take hold of the armor, we are *able to stand*. We are not believers shrinking from a devil who lurks around every corner. We are aware of his schemes, but we are clothed in something that knows how to handle him. The full list runs through the rest of the chapter — the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet shod with the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and prayer in the Spirit running through all of it.

The Helmet, the Shield, and the Sword

Three of those pieces deserve more than a passing mention. The breastplate of righteousness guards the heart. The fastest way to give the enemy a kill shot is to leave that area exposed through unholy compromise. This is not because God withdraws His love when we sin; it is because sin is a wide door for the enemy to walk through. We are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. We must also live like it.

The helmet of salvation guards the *mind*. This piece of armor is uniquely under-discussed in our day, and I suspect it is the piece many believers most need. Our adversary preaches an entire counter-gospel directly into our thought life — a counter-gospel that *you are not really saved, God is not really for you, He is disappointed in you, He is going to leave at any moment*. Each of those lies is a fiery dart aimed at the head. The helmet of salvation

is the conviction, settled and renewed daily, that we *are* saved by grace through faith, that our standing with God is secured by the finished work of Jesus Christ, and that nothing in our worst day is going to undo what He has done. A believer with a properly fitted helmet of salvation does not lose ground to those thoughts.

The shield of faith, Paul writes, will quench *all* the fiery darts of the wicked one (Ephesians 6:16). Not most. Not many. *All*. The picture Scripture holds is a believer with a properly raised shield of faith who is, functionally, impenetrable. Most of us are not fully there yet. Yet we should not settle for *that is just life until we get to heaven*, because Paul plainly did not teach that.

The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. The word is the *only* offensive weapon on the list. Notice what that implies. The defense — belt, breastplate, feet, shield, helmet — is intended to keep the enemy from taking ground from us. The offense — the word — is how we take ground from him. Believers who have soaked themselves in Scripture come into spiritual conflict with weapons drawn. Believers who have not, come empty-handed.

I would rather die in faith than live in unbelief.

Paul gives one more portrait of what mature faith looks like in Romans 4. He is describing Abraham. *“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness’”* (Romans 4:20–22). Once we are *fully convinced* that what God has promised He is able to perform, we become

unstoppable. Anything less, and any speed bump on the highway of life can pull us off the road. Any opposition, any relational friction, any delay can become the off-ramp where we conclude *this must not be the will of God after all*. Fully convinced believers stay on the road and refuse to settle for anything less than what God said. I have said many times that I would rather die in faith than live in unbelief.

Six Ways to Fight in Faith

Scripture gives us exactly what to do. There are six disciplines that, taken together, equip a believer for the fight. None of them are mine. All of them are in the text. Our aim is to consolidate them into one place so that we can practice them.

1. Discern the Circumstances

There is a small exchange between Jesus and Peter in Luke 22 that ought to make all of us slow down. “*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren*” (Luke 22:31–32).

Jesus did not say He had rebuked the enemy on Peter’s behalf. He said the enemy had asked for Peter, and that He had prayed Peter’s faith would not fail. The implication is that we are responsible for discerning what is happening in our lives. Sometimes we call something the will of God when it is the enemy. Sometimes we call something the enemy when it is, in fact, the will of God. The only reliable way to tell the difference is to ask the Lord. Fighting against God is a losing fight. So is ignoring an attack we should be standing against. Discernment is the first weapon.

A small example from our own ministry. Early in 2025, I noticed a small wave of departures from our church — most of them for healthy

reasons: family relocations, job changes, the ordinary life events that move people from one place to another. Pastors are still people, and the question naturally rises. *Did I say something? Was it my message? Was it the direction we are going?* As I prayed, the Lord told me clearly, *You are being pruned.* He pointed me to John 15: when the branch bears fruit, the Vinedresser prunes it that it may bear more fruit. If I had taken the moment personally, I could have spiraled into discouragement. I could have started pressuring our team to soften our message, to add programs we did not need, to chase a feeling of comfort instead of fruitfulness. None of which would have stopped His shears. He prunes precisely. He cuts where He needs to cut. Because I asked the question and received discernment, I could remain in faith for the harvest He was clearing space for. That is the difference discernment makes. Later I'll share the tremendous fruit we experienced because we allowed the pruning in faith.

2. Imitate Promise-Getters

The second discipline may be unexpectedly practical. *“And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises”* (Hebrews 6:11–12). The instruction is to imitate those who fully inherit God's promises. It seems basic, but it is amazing how often believers imitate people who never receive anything from the Lord, only to wonder why their own lives reflect the same fruitlessness. James calls this double-mindedness and says a double-minded person should not suppose they will receive anything from the Lord (James 1:7–8).

Choose what you intake deliberately. The preaching I listen to comes from people who inherit promises — people taking territory, raising up disciples, experiencing God do what He said He would do. I am not

interested in filling my ears with doom-and-gloom commentary on the world; for that, the news is sufficient. I am not interested in teachers whose central skill is contorting the text to argue that God did not really mean what He plainly said. My faith is too valuable to leak it out on either of those.

There is also an inventory worth taking, periodically, of the *people* in your life. Not the celebrities you listen to on podcasts, but the actual flesh-and-blood believers whose voices reach you most often. Are they people whose lives are bearing fruit consistent with the Word? Are they people whose faith is alive? Or are they people who, sweetly, drag your faith downward by the slow gravity of their unbelief? You do not have to break friendships. You do have to be honest about which voices are forming you. Hebrews 13:7 says it directly: *“Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.”* Inspect the outcomes. Pick faith models on purpose. Follow them.

3. Hear the Word

Romans 10:17 is the cleanest single answer Scripture gives to the question of how faith grows. *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”* When we walk away from a sermon with *less* faith than we came with, that is purely information. It means we did not hear the Word of God; we heard opinion, a few stories, perhaps a few quotes and jokes. We may have been entertained. No one has time to merely be entertained while a fight rages over our future. We need the uncompromised Word of God.

When I walk the property of our church, I often pray over the four corners. One of those corners is that this would be a *house of the Word of God*, and I pray over the platform, that whoever stands on it would preach the Word — unfiltered, unadulterated, in the name of Jesus Christ. The reason is that I have no confidence in my own polish, my own academic background, or my communication skills. Those tools assist me. But unless what I am preaching is the pure Word of God, I have no confidence at all that anyone will be helped by it. Faith is on the line. A congregation cannot take a preacher's words to spiritual warfare. They can take *God's* words anywhere and every time — and with that sword of the Spirit, battles are fought and won.

To that end, I have often challenged our team to know the Scriptures. If we are going to quote the Word of God, it is important that we do it precisely. If every jot and tittle from the original languages had inspired purpose by the Holy Spirit, then we ought to make sure we pass them on with great care and integrity. This empowers people to know the Word for themselves, which arms them for what they will face during the week.

4. Gather with Believers

The third discipline may bump against current trends and creature comforts. *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:23–25).

The directive is direct and plain. As the day of the Lord approaches, we are to gather *more*, not less. Scripture warns that many will stray —

even the elect. The way we do not stray is by remaining among believers whose faith is alive. The Sunday gathering is one part of that. Smaller settings — small groups, home groups, life lived together — are the part where we let other believers see what is happening in our lives, and where we let their faith carry ours when we are tired. We were not designed to fight this fight in isolation, and the enemy is well aware of it. I am often reminded of the National Geographic videos that show a herd of gazelles or zebras with the one straggling animal wandering from the pack without awareness that a nearby lion is waiting to pounce. So many believers wander into isolation away from the gatherings not knowing that their adversary is also lurking to see whom he may devour.

5. Pray in the Spirit

Jude, a one-chapter book, says, *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.”* Romans 8 explains why: *“We do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”* (Romans 8:26). When we pray in the Spirit, the Spirit Himself is praying through us — and Scripture says we are praying the perfect will of God. Which means as we pray, our faith is being built, even when we lack the words for what we are facing.

There are seasons in which I have no English for what is happening in my life or in our church. So, I pray in the Spirit, and I *pray it through*. The old saints used to say it that way. *Pray it through* means we pray until we are *through*. There is a release that comes — a settling and knowing—that we are done. Sometimes it takes five minutes, sometimes thirty, sometimes an hour. It takes as long as it takes. We do not skip the fight just because we do not yet have words for it.

I once received a text message that one of our precious team members had gone to the doctor to have an eye condition that was worsening assessed. The doctor found a degenerative, irreversible diagnosis for this young father of five. I immediately said, this is the devil, and began praying in the Spirit. As soon as I began to pray in tongues, I knew that a door had been opened to the enemy in their life by talking badly about their leadership, which was not me at that time. I remember the conflict over whether to share this with them for fear of hurting or offending them, but I received pastoral encouragement that love would tell them. I quickly called and humbly shared my sense, prayed with him, and hung up the phone. Some days later, he told me that my insight bore witness with him and his wife. They repented right after we hung up, and soon went back to the doctor, who changed the diagnosis to a simple infection that quickly cleared and healed. Thank God for this gift to pray, to hear God, and to move in faith, even in a very sensitive situation.

6. Strengthen Yourself in the Lord

The last of the six is among the most devastating passages in the Old Testament. 1 Samuel 30 finds David at his lowest point. He has been off fighting the battles of the Lord, and while he is gone, the Amalekites raid his home base of Ziklag, burn it to the ground, and carry off everyone — wives, sons, daughters, everyone. There are few harder pictures in Scripture than a man returning from ministry to find his own home in ashes.

“Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God” (1 Samuel 30:6). Read the last sentence again. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

Everyone else was grieving and blame-shifting. David's own men were ready to kill him. David's response was to retreat — not in defeat, but into the presence of the Rock that was higher than he was. The same God to whom he had written all those psalms about refuge and shelter. He had built that muscle long before the fight came.

Then watch what he does with that strength. *“So David inquired of the LORD, saying, ‘Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake them?’ And He answered him, ‘Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all’”* (1 Samuel 30:8). Most of us in his shoes (actually sandals) would have been running before we asked anything. *We have to chase them. We have to find our families. We have to do something now.* David paused. He inquired. And he received the most beautiful six words a person under attack can hear: *you shall, without fail, recover all.* Not most of it. Not partially. *You shall recover ALL.*

Some of us have not been fighting up to this point. Some of us did not realize the fight we were in was a fight for our faith. The call today is to get back in the fight. Inquire of the Lord. He is no different with us than He was with David. His intent for us is recovery — *all of it*, in the name of Jesus. Every promise, every dream, every territory the enemy has been quietly siphoning off. The fight of faith is not merely a defensive posture. It is the doorway back to territory we thought we had lost.

Why Six and Not Just One

A reader who has tracked with this chapter may be tempted to ask which of the six matters most. The honest answer is that they reinforce each other. Discernment without strength leaves a believer accurate but exhausted. Hearing the word without community leaves a believer

informed but isolated. Praying in the Spirit without imitating promise-getters leaves a believer spiritually intense but lacking models. The six are a system, and that system produces a battle-ready faith.

Most of us will find that one or two of the six are already fairly developed in our lives, and one or two are clearly underdeveloped. The Holy Spirit is gentle in this kind of conviction — He does not embarrass us about our weak spots; He simply invites us to add what is missing. Take a moment, before you turn the page, and ask Him to show you which of the six He would like you to grow in over the next ninety days. Then take a single concrete step in that direction. Faith is not built in dramatic leaps. It is built in small, steady disciplines that compound over time.

Still Standing

I will close with an illustration I heard another minister tell. He was in a fight on every side. He went to the Lord and asked, plainly, *Lord, what do I do?* And the Lord said, *Stand.* He answered, *I have been standing.* The Lord said, *Then keep standing.* He pressed: *Lord, what do I do after that?* The Lord said, *If you knew what I knew, you would be rejoicing.* He asked, *What is it that You know that I do not?* And the Lord said, *What I know that you do not is that the enemy just fired his best shot — and you are still standing.*

The fact that you are still here, still reading this, still capable of being stirred in your faith, is evidence. The enemy has taken his best shot. You are still on your feet. That is grounds for a praise break.

Pray this with me, in your own voice, before you turn the page:

Lord, I am ready to step back into this fight. Strengthen me again. I put on the whole armor of God. I take up the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit. Let every fiery dart of the enemy be quenched. Drain every

drop of unbelief out of me. Make me fully convinced that You are able to perform what You have promised. I would rather die in faith than live in unbelief. I commit myself to this fight, to my last breath, in Jesus' name.
Amen.

For Reflection

Take a few minutes — by yourself, with your spouse, or in a small group — to sit with these questions before turning the page.

1. Where in your life right now do you sense you are in a fight? If you cannot identify one immediately, ask the Holy Spirit to show you what you may have been ignoring or rationalizing.
2. Of the six disciplines in this chapter — discernment, imitation, hearing, gathering, praying in the Spirit, strengthening in the Lord — which one is currently most developed in your life? Which is the least? What would it look like to take a small step in the underdeveloped one this week?
3. Reread Ephesians 6:10–18. Which piece of armor have you been most neglectful of? What does it look like to put it on each morning?
4. Who in your circle is a *promise-getter* — a believer whose life bears fruit consistent with the Word? How could you draw closer to that person? Conversely, are there voices you allow into your life that consistently leave your faith smaller than they found it?
5. Imagine for a moment that, like the minister in the closing story, you have endured the enemy's best shot and are still standing. What does *rejoicing* look like for you in this season, even before the rest of the answer is visible?

Chapter Three

Faith Speaks

Of all the verbs Jesus chose in His teaching on faith in Mark 11, the one we tend to slide past is the most consequential. “*Whoever **says** to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he **says** will be done, he will have whatever he **says**” (Mark 11:23). Jesus did not say *whoever wishes*, or *whoever has a quiet sense of confidence*, or *whoever vaguely hopes*. He said *whoever **says***. Which means faith, at some point, is expected to speak. Faith is not silent and contemplative only. Faith says specific things, and what it says — when the heart truly believes it — comes to pass.*

What is in our hearts eventually comes out of our mouths.

Faith speaks. What is in our hearts eventually comes out of our mouths. We can dress that up however we like, but Jesus is clear: a believer who has hold of something genuinely will speak it. And in Scripture, that

speaking is part of how the substance of faith does its outward work in the world.

What People Actually Believe

I have noticed across years of pastoring that a person's core beliefs are usually visible somewhere other than the prayer meeting. They are visible in the parking lot after the service, at the restaurant later that afternoon, in the living room during a difficult week. What is said in those everyday settings tends to be what is truly believed. The language used at church can be expected; the language used over coffee at home is actual. If we want to know whether we are believing what we say we believe, the most honest evaluation is the latter.

The implication is uncomfortable, and it is meant to be. The disciples in Mark 11 were not commenting on Jesus' volume or His phrasing. They were commenting on a result. The day before, He had walked up to a fig tree, found no fruit on it, and said, *"Let no one eat fruit from you ever again"* (Mark 11:14). The next morning, the tree was withered from the roots. The disciples noticed. Jesus did not need to verify the outcome; He had already said it. Trees do not die that fast. There is no chemistry and no horticulture that produces overnight withering. Yet what He said in faith was done in supernatural timing. This is an example of why so much of Scripture is concerned with what comes out of our mouths.

Death and Life

Proverbs 18:21 puts it plainly: *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit."* There are two streams that can come out of a believer's mouth, and both will produce — one toward death, the other toward life. Either way, we are speaking. Either way, what we are saying

is bearing fruit. The question is not whether words have power. Scripture treats that as settled. The question is which kind of fruit our words are growing.

That sets up an obvious application. We can choose, by faith, to speak life over our marriages. If we believe God placed us inside our marriage covenant, then the faithful response is to speak life over it, even — especially — in the rough seasons. *I bless my spouse. I bless my marriage. I thank You for my spouse. I thank You for my marriage.* That kind of speech adds life. The alternative — *we will see if this works out, I do not know why I got married, I wish I had not* — is a different kind of fruit, and Proverbs warns us we will eat it.

Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

The same dynamic operates over our physical bodies. Faith does not deny pain or pretend a diagnosis is not real. We are honest about what is happening. But after acknowledging the reality, faith adds a second sentence: *Lord, Your word says that by Your stripes I am healed. I ask You to touch my body so that this pain dissolves* (Isaiah 53:5). Both honesty and faith get spoken aloud. Jesus said we would have whatever we ask. Many of us have not asked.

These teachings can sound too simple, too good to be true. They are not extra-biblical. They are not apocrypha. They are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, the revelation of the Father sent from heaven to earth, declaring who God is and what He has prepared for those who believe Him. We are not at liberty to soften Him into something more palatable or socially acceptable.

Out of the Heart

Jesus is described as a pipeline in Luke 6:45 explaining, *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”* What enters the heart eventually exits the mouth. One Scripture describes the mouth as the rudder of a ship turning it with uncanny precision.

This is why hearing the Word of God is not optional in a believer’s daily routine. The Word goes into the ears. From there, it goes into the heart. From there — and only from there — it begins to come out of the mouth as faith, sometimes without the believer realizing it is happening. When we are in the Word of God every day, when we are sitting under preaching that builds faith, when we are filling our hearts with what God has actually said, a kind of fountain of life begins to flow. And when life squeezes us, what is inside comes out. Believers in that posture surprise themselves. Faith starts to surface in moments when, in an earlier season, fear or cynicism could have come out instead.

People around us will sometimes find this strange. Some will be dismissive. Others will hear it and conclude we have drifted into something New Age — manifesting, calling things in, speaking realities into existence. Those are not what we are doing. The crucial difference is that biblical faith *includes God*. New Age teaching very often insists that the speaker is the source of the power. Scripture insists the source is the Father, and that the speaking is an act of trust in what He has said. The two look superficially alike. They are utterly distinct.

Setting the Tone

Faith speaking is not only an internal discipline. It also sets the tone of the rooms we walk into. A common temptation is to slide down to whatever the lowest common denominator of conversation is — the news cycle, anxiety about the economy, fear about a job, exhaustion about a child. We may even feel pious about it: *I am just being honest about what I am facing*. That instinct, taken too far, hands the room over to whoever has the loudest voice in it.

Believers full of the Word of God are supposed to be the ones who reset the atmosphere. We're meant to be thermostats that set the temperature, not thermometers that just react to it.

When others are speaking from fear, we are not obligated to match their tone. We can answer differently. *Yes, there is a lot going on. But I trust the Lord. I know He is my refuge. I know He is my Rock. I am not afraid; I hide under the shadow of His wings*. That is not denial. That is faith speaking. And it is the sound this generation is desperate to hear.

I Will Say of the Lord

David is the prime example of speaking faith. His songs are honest — sometimes raw — but he never stops *saying*. Psalm 91 begins, *"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."* Then immediately, in the second verse: *"I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust'"* (Psalm 91:1–2).

Notice the verb. *I will say*. He is not promising to think it; he is promising to say it. And he is saying it because he believes it. The remarkable result is that the more he says it, the more he believes it. There is a self-reinforcing cycle in faith-filled speech. Belief that is spoken settles

deeper into the heart, which produces more confident belief, which produces more confident speech. Meanwhile — and this is the part we cannot account for naturally — what David says is also coming about in his life.

Some, reading this chapter; are realizing there is some work to do in what comes out of their mouths. Begin to declare what you believe about God. Let the scriptures we have been working through fill your heart so completely that they begin to come out of you in conversation. Let your home, your office, your text threads, hear *I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge*. This is how the muscle gets built.

Speaking Blessing Over the Family

Of all the rooms in which our faith should be speaking, the home is the most consequential. Most of us were not taught to speak blessing over our spouse and our children, and the cost of that vacuum is real. The vacuum tends to be filled with whatever comes out by reflex — frustration, sarcasm, complaint, the catalog of weary observations every household accumulates. Words that do not bless will eventually come to define a household. Words that bless will do the same.

The biblical pattern is plain. Isaac blessed Jacob. Jacob blessed his sons. Numbers 6 records the priestly blessing the priests of Israel were instructed to speak over the people: *The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace* (Numbers 6:24–26). That blessing was not a sentiment. It was a deposit. Words spoken in faith over a person do something inside them, even when the person is too young or too distracted to recognize it.

Try this for thirty days. Speak a blessing aloud over each member of your household before they leave for the day, even if that means putting your hand on their head while they are still half-asleep. *I bless your day. I declare wisdom over your decisions. I declare protection over your body. I declare that you will hear the voice of the Lord clearly today and follow it. In Jesus' name.* You will sometimes feel awkward at first. Keep doing it. The atmosphere of your household will begin to change. Faith spoken over family is one of the most underused inheritances in the believer's toolkit. My wife has been doing this to our family for years. Sometimes we laugh or the kids roll their eyes, but she is undeterred in her conviction to bless our family.

An Era for Faith to Speak

There is a world around us that needs *believers* — people who believe — to speak. Social media, podcasts, twenty-four-hour news, and an endless catalogue of opinion-makers have made everything into noise. Every voice is selling something. The atmosphere this generation is inhaling is fear, cynicism, performance, and contempt. What it has not been hearing — at the volume it needs — is faith.

I sense strongly that this is the era for faith to speak. This is the era when believers find their boldness again in the name of Jesus Christ. This is the era when we are no longer intimidated or silent, but we are rising up to declare, *I will say of the Lord, He is my rock and my refuge, my God, and in Him I will trust. I will not put my trust in the bank. I will not put my trust in government. I will not put my trust in the media. My trust is in You.* As that kind of speaking comes back into our churches, mountains begin to move. The seemingly insurmountable issues in our lives meet the kind of word that does not bend, and instead those issues have to bend.

Notice, too, how Jesus modeled this. He spoke to a fig tree. He told it, in front of His friends, *let no one eat fruit from you ever again*. By any natural standard, that is an audacious thing to say to a tree. He seemed unconcerned with how it might come across — to His disciples, to passersby, to anyone who might find it strange. He was not even the one who noticed the result the next day; the disciples absolutely did. Jesus had already said it. The case, in His mind, was closed. There is something to imitate in that posture. Many of us have spent years monitoring and regulating what we say because of how it might come across. According to Scripture, that has cost us fruit. If we will begin to speak our faith and speak by faith, we will start to see similar results.

You Are the Christ

In Matthew 16, Jesus tests this principle directly with His disciples. He asks, “Who do men say that I am?” They answer — some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, some Jeremiah. Then He sharpens the question: “But who do *you* say that I am?” (Matthew 16:13–15). Peter answers, plainly, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).

Jesus’ response is striking. *“Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:17–18). What came out of Peter’s mouth was not just Peter being Peter. It was revelation directly received by God rising from the heart expressed spontaneously. The whole future of the Church, in some sense, was foreshadowed on a confession of faith spoken out loud in a sidebar conversation.

For some readers, the theology in this chapter is wrestling with something inside that is not yet fully convinced. Ask the Father directly. *Father, help me get this. Help my unbelief. Cause this to settle in me the way it settled in Peter.* He will help you. There will come a day when you are confronted — by a circumstance, by a friend, by a question — about who Jesus is, and what comes out of you will be the same answer Peter gave. *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.* It is on that revelation, spoken in faith, that He is building His Church.

Forced Into Silence

There is a peculiar story in the Gospel of Luke in chapter 1, and it teaches the inverse of everything this chapter has been building. Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth were the parents of John the Baptist. When the angel Gabriel told Zacharias that they would conceive a son in their old age, Zacharias did not believe it. The angel's response was to silence him. He could not speak for the next nine months until the child was born (Luke 1:18–22).

Why? The answer says something profound about how God treats faithless speech in the middle of an unfolding promise. There was a plan in motion that included the Messiah Himself, and John the Baptist was meant to be the voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way. Zacharias' mouth, full of unbelief, could have undermined that plan from inside his own household. So, God zipped it. Zacharias did not regain his speech until his faith caught up to the will and Word of God. On the eighth day, when the family was preparing to circumcise the child and name him after his father, his faith aligned with what God had said. He took a writing tablet and wrote, "*His name is John*" (Luke 1:63). And

immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God.

The lesson is sober. Words spoken from unbelief, in the middle of God's unfolding work, are not neutral. They can interfere with the very plan God is establishing. Speech from faith aligned with what God has said opens the mouth and looses the tongue. Speech from unbelief, persisted in, often does the opposite.

Confession Unto Salvation

The most consequential application of this teaching is the one Paul makes in Romans 10. Our entire salvation hinges on speech meeting belief. Romans 10:8–10: *“But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*

“Faith calls. Faith says. Faith speaks.”

• • •

Read it slowly. *Confess with your mouth. Believe in your heart.* These are not two optional approaches; they are two halves of the same act. Faith in the heart, brought out of the mouth as confession, produces salvation. It is not enough merely to hold a private belief that Jesus Christ is Lord. Scripture makes the case that the moment that belief came up out of the mouth as confession is the moment of new birth. The potency of faith meeting confession is what saved our souls. Speaking faith, then, is not

an optional add-on to the Christian life. It is foundational to our entire relationship with God.

Paul finishes the thought: “For *‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved’*” (Romans 10:13). *Whoever calls*. The same *whoever* we encountered in Mark 11. The instruction is consistent throughout Scripture. Faith calls. Faith says. Faith speaks.

Speaking What Is Not Yet There

There is one more dimension to faith-speech that deserves its own pillar in this chapter. The Bible calls it prophesying. Not the formal ministry office, though that is also real. The plainer New Testament category: hearing what God has said and saying that.

In one instance, the Spirit of the Lord brings the prophet Ezekiel into the middle of a valley filled with dry bones. Not a garden. Not a thriving city. A valley of bones — death so complete that nothing about the scenery suggests resurrection. And the Lord asks Ezekiel one question: “*Son of man, can these bones live?*”

Ezekiel does not answer with a sermon. He answers with a one-line confession of his own limits. “O Lord GOD, *You know*.” And the Lord says: “*Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!’*”

Read what the Lord asks Ezekiel to do. Not heal them. Not gather them. Not negotiate with them. Speak to them. Speak what He gives him to speak. Ezekiel obeys. He prophesies. The bones rattle. He prophesies again. Sinews come on the bones. He prophesies again. Flesh appears. He prophesies again, this time to the breath, and the breath enters the bodies,

and the valley of dry bones becomes — Ezekiel’s words — “*an exceedingly great army.*”

Two things in that text matter for the believer who is sitting in a valley.

First, God will sometimes place you in a setting that looks like a graveyard on purpose. He brought Ezekiel into the valley because the valley was where the army was going to come from. If your current address — the season, the workplace, the marriage, the ministry — feels like death, that does not necessarily mean you are in the wrong place. It may mean you are exactly where He intends to raise something. If things were already flourishing, it is likely He would not send you there because you would not be needed.

Second, He will not raise it unless somebody speaks. Ezekiel’s prophecy was the mechanism. He did not invent the words. He spoke what the Lord told him to speak. But until those words went into the air, the bones stayed bones. That is the partnership; the Spirit gives the breath; the believer gives the voice. Both have to show up.

Romans 4:17 names the same dynamic in the New Testament. Paul writes that God “*gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.*” That is who God is and that is what God does. He speaks what is not yet there as if it were. The Message paraphrase of the Bible puts the same verse over Abraham like this: he was named father before he became a father. Read that twice. Named first. Became second. There were no children. There were no descendants. There were an old couple and a tent. And God named Abraham father of many nations.

Some of what God is asking us to do is to name things before they exist. Not as denial. Not as wishful thinking. As prophetic agreement with

what He has already said. If it is not obvious already, this is not for the faint of heart. I recently heard Bishop T.D. Jakes say, “you are not talking faith until you sound like a fool.”

When I close my eyes and pray for Arise Church, I do not see what is currently sitting in the sanctuary. I see what the Lord has shown me. I see a room that is full. I see a church family that is large. I see a generation reached. And because I have seen it, I will not stand up on a Sunday and call our church small. I will not call it “our little church.” Those words will not come out of my mouth. The Lord said over Abraham, “You are going to have a big family.” I am going to be faithful to repeat what the Lord has said over the church He has given me to lead — the same way Ezekiel was faithful to repeat what the Lord said over a valley full of bones.

Find what the Lord has spoken over your situation. Open the Bible until you can find His specific Word for the place you are sitting in. Then speak it. Out loud. Over the kitchen table. Over the school pickup line. Over the empty chair at the dinner table. Over the diagnosis. The bones do not rattle in silence. They rattle when somebody speaks.

Sing What Is Not Yet There

There is one more posture of faith-speech worth naming, and it is one Scripture treats as a weapon more than a talent: singing.

The prophet Isaiah said, *“Sing, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not labored with child! For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman, says the LORD. Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings. Do not spare; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.”*

Read who that verse is written to. The barren. The woman who has not borne. The one who has not labored with child. The Lord is not telling someone whose life has matched her faith to sing. He is telling someone whose life has not matched her faith yet to sing. To sing *first*. The singing comes before the children come. The singing comes before the tent expands. The singing comes while the desolate is still desolate. The order matters.

There is something the Lord does in His people when we open our mouths to sing what He has said. Worship in seasons of waiting is one of the most underrated weapons in the believer's arsenal. Most of us know how to worship when something has just gone right. We do not always know how to worship when something has not gone right yet. Isaiah 54 is the curriculum for the second one.

A few practical applications. They will sound odd at first. Do them anyway.

When the children are gone — at school, at practice, at a friend's — go into their rooms. Sit on the floor or stand by the bed. Sing scripture over the pillows. Sing peace over the room. Sing health over your child. Sing the future you believe God has spoken over them. They will not know you did it. The atmosphere of their room will know.

When your spouse is at work, go to their side of the bed. Sing over it. Sing health. Sing covenant. Sing the calling God put on their life when He first put it on yours. Marriages get a lot of teaching about communication and not a lot about consecrated singing over the bedroom. The latter is biblical, and the latter changes the air.

When you are alone in the car, sing what the Lord has said. Not just worship music on the radio. Sing what He has spoken to you personally. Make a melody out of it. The Bible never says the singing has to be beautiful. The Bible says the singing has to be His. He inhabits the praise of His people, and the God who comes to occupy your praise will not leave the wait untouched.

And when you do not know what to sing — when the words have left and the weariness has settled in — sing the simplest sentence the Old Testament gives us about Him. He is faithful. He is faithful. He is faithful. Sing that until you mean it. Sing that until the bones rattle. Sing that until the wait fills in.

A Daily Practice

Let me offer a small daily practice that has helped me, and that I share with you. In the morning, before other voices reach your ears — before the news, before the inbox, before the kids — speak three sentences of faith. Feel free to make them brief and rooted in Scripture. It can sound something like this, *Lord, You are my refuge and my fortress. I will trust in You today. By faith I receive everything You have for me this day.*

The first thing your own ears hear is not somebody else's opinion of the world; it is your own voice agreeing with the Lord. Over weeks and months, this practice rewires what comes out of your mouth in unexpected moments. Faith begins to be your reflex.

A Closing Prayer

If at some point in your Christian life you have felt intimidated or afraid to speak according to your faith, my prayer is that the Holy Spirit would embolden you. May we be unashamed of this gospel and unafraid to share

it — even with other believers who may have drifted into doubt and unbelief, who have begun to question the promises of God. With love, but without compromise, may the truth of the Word and the strength of faith come out of us. May we begin to see unusual, miraculous things take place in our lives — not because we are spectacular in ourselves, but because we have, finally, allowed faith to speak.

Pray this with me, in your own voice, before you turn the page:

Father, do a work of revelation in me, the kind You did in Peter. When I am confronted with the question of who Jesus is, may what shoots out of my heart and mouth be the same answer: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. May the promises of Your Word flow out of me. Like David, may I say of You, You are my God, my refuge, my strength, my rock, my fortress; in You I will trust. Let me not cover or shrink back from the fear of man. By Your Holy Spirit, cause me to be a bold person, in Jesus' mighty Name. Amen.

For Reflection

Take a few minutes — by yourself, with your spouse, or in a small group — to sit with these questions before turning the page.

1. Listen honestly to what comes out of your mouth in unguarded moments — at home, in traffic, on the phone with family. What does the pattern of your speech reveal about what is actually in your heart?
2. What is one promise of God you have stopped speaking aloud — perhaps because the wait has felt long, or because you have grown tired of saying it? What would it mean to start speaking it again this week?

3. Read aloud Psalm 91:1–2. What would it look like to begin each morning by saying those verses out loud over your day, before any other voice reaches you?
4. Who in your household most needs to hear blessing spoken over them? When could you begin a daily practice of speaking blessing — even briefly — over that person?
5. Where in your life have words shaped by unbelief been allowed to circulate? What truth from this chapter would you choose to put in their place?

Chapter Four

Your Faith Heritage Is Waiting

Sports has its Hall of Fame. Hollywood has its walk of stars. The Bible has something better — the original Hall of Faith. Hebrews 11 is, in essence, a long list of names compiled by the Holy Spirit to teach us what faith looks like when it is lived out across a lifetime. The chapter does not begin with abstractions. It begins with people. Person after person. Decision after decision. Generation after generation. The point of the chapter is that faith is not a private, unspecific religious practice. Faith is a heritage that has been passed forward and is now in our hands. The eyes of history are on us to see if our names will be added to the lineage of faith.

We all come from different family backgrounds. Some may speak proudly of their lineage. Others would rather not. Most of us know less than we wish we did. The truth explored here is that, regardless of where we come from in the natural, every believer has a *family of faith* and a heritage waiting to be passed on. The baton is being handed forward. Hebrews 11 is the relay race we have entered into.

When I was in high school, I ran track for several years, including relay races. In each of our relays there were transition zones where the current runner enters the zone with the next runner increasing speed to match so that momentum is not lost. At the exact precise time inside that zone, a baton is passed, and the next runner blazes on to continue the race. If the baton is dropped or not passed inside the transition zone, the team is disqualified.

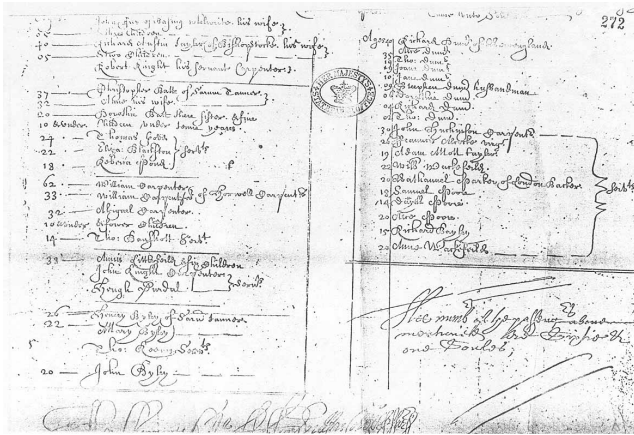
Much can be learned from this picture to impact our view of the moment in time we live in. Much of our early years of adulthood are the time of increasing speed to match the speed of the previous runner and to prepare to receive the baton. For those that have been running there is an eye toward the next and being intentional to securely put the baton into the next runner's hands without dropping it.

It would do the reader well to evaluate what position you are currently in and begin adjusting to make sure you are perfectly aligned to your role in this great race. Every generation has its part, and we need everyone involved so that we are not disqualified.

My Own Hall of Faith

My Family

Sometime ago I researched my family history through an ancestral family tree. I was able to trace our family through generations to the 1400s in England. In fact, I found the ship registry from 1636 on which Richard Austin brought his family from England to Boston Harbor aboard a ship called the Bevis.



This same family had a branch that later decided to move South, Stephen F. Austin, and pioneered modern Texas

with Austin now being the capital and named after him.

These stories frame my understanding of my place in a long line of courageous risktakers. This did not start with me, and it will not end with me either.

Jerry & Kimberly Dirmann

Our Senior Pastors for eighteen years and who we still consider our pastors, instilled in us a passion for God's Word and a fearlessness to pursue the will of God with total abandonment. In an era where so many lack discipleship, my wife and I were blessed to have been disciplined in a house of faith that did not waver.

We accumulated so many stories of walking by faith while at The Rock, but one in particular is worth mentioning here. As our church was growing in a commercial/industrial area of North Anaheim in Southern California, we continued to acquire buildings along the main street in front of the church. These properties were not originally continuous, nor did they have the same ownership. One significant obstacle was a

large cinderblock wall that separated the main building from new buildings we had acquired which restricted car and foot traffic.

As Jerry would often tell, he came to church early one morning, and the Lord corrected him because he had been trying to budget the demolition of this wall but did not yet have the finances. The Lord spoke to him that morning and said, “Use your faith and blow down that wall.” He came to the staff that morning, me included, and we all went to the wall, laid hands on it and commanded it to come down. What a scene!

The following weekend, a visitor approached Jerry and asked about the wall, letting Jerry know he was a contractor in town for a job. The visitor told Jerry not to worry about the wall anymore, because it would be taken care of. Sure enough, the man brought his crew and equipment, knocked down the wall, and removed the debris from our lot... at no cost. I will never forget being in the offices when the wall fell, and we could hear the thud. We had lived the Bible!

Dr. Leslie & Belen Keegel

Pastor Leslie and Belen Keegel are legendary people of faith across the world within the Foursquare Church, the denomination of which I am a part. This unassuming couple planted churches across Sri Lanka for more than forty years so that the total number of churches and pastors trained is in the thousands.

Some years ago, I asked Pastor Leslie if I could shadow him on a ministry trip to just glean from him. Instead, he offered me a two-year mentorship that has now spanned more than ten years. We would meet

when he was in town, and I would just glean from his wisdom, testimonies, and correction.

Even now, Lilia and I will sit with Leslie and Belen to just hear their stories of sacrifice, obedience, and God's faithfulness. It is honestly convicting to hear the faith that they have walked for so many decades. Like those in Hebrews, though they suffered literal violence, they possessed the nation of Sri Lanka for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yaseer & Monique Handall

Yas and Mo as we affectionately call them, are genuine people of faith that sold all their earthly goods many years ago to pursue a mission that God placed in their hearts, which was to reach the Native Nations in America. I remember them selling their house, resigning their good paying jobs, even giving us their dog, so they could pursue this vision unhindered.

Every time I talk with Yas and Mo there are new stories and testimonies of people groups that God has opened to them with extraordinary favor. They steward this influence every time for the sake of the Gospel, which is marked by love and compassion for the people. Their sacrificial obedience by faith is continually being rewarded back to them.

Faith Is the Substance

I could continue on and on with the numerous friends and co-laborers that live by faith with evidence in their lives. Let's turn our attention back to Hebrews 11, which says, *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony,"* That is

the preamble. The rest of the chapter is the account of what *the elders* — the men and women who lived ahead of us in the line — did with that substance. They each moved toward something they hoped for. They each had evidence of things they could not yet see.

That detail matters because it is easy to feel alone in this. It is easy to think nobody else has had to make the kind of decisions God seems to be asking of us. It is easy to feel — and sometimes to be told — that we are crazy. Hebrews 11 is the canonical answer to that loneliness. We are not the first to have made hard moves on the strength of an inward witness alone. We are part of a long line of people who did exactly that, and who, by their testimonies, are still encouraging us today.

Without Faith It Is Impossible to Please Him

The chapter pivots quickly to a man named Enoch. *“By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, ‘and was not found, because God had taken him’; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God”* (Hebrews 11:5). Enoch first appears in Genesis 5, where the only thing said about him is that he *walked with God*, and then, simply, *he was not, for God took him*. The writer of Hebrews adds the missing piece. Enoch pleased God, and the way he pleased God was by faith. The principle is then made absolute: *“Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (Hebrews 11:6).

Read that verse twice. There are two beliefs required of a believer who would draw near to God. The first is that *He is* — that He exists, that He is who He says He is. The second is sometimes neglected: that *He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*. Many people who claim to believe in

God's existence have quietly stopped believing in His reward. They have decided, perhaps after disappointment, that He is real but indifferent — that He may be glorified somewhere up there, but that pursuing Him here will not pay off. Hebrews insists otherwise. Faith requires both: that He is, and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him.

Enoch was rewarded for his walk. He was taken into glory before he saw death. The same kind of pattern shows up later with Elijah, taken up by the chariots of God. There is a reward yet to come for us — and the reward includes things on this side of eternity, but its ultimate weight is on the other side. The clarity of knowing that a reward exists on the far side of this life will carry us through difficult seasons, distractions, and discouragement. When the season feels stretched and we cannot quite locate where God is in the present, the right move is to dig in and remember the second half of Hebrews 11:6. *He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.* The enemy does not want us to remember it.

Pleasing God by Faith

The Greek word for *please* in Hebrews 11 means *to gratify entirely*. It appears in a handful of other key New Testament passages, and it is worth seeing them together. Romans 12:1 reads, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."* The word *acceptable* there shares the same root as the word *please* in Hebrews 11. When we bring our bodies, our calling, our gifts, our finances, our schedule — when we lay our whole lives down as a living sacrifice — that act is acceptable to God *because* it is offered by faith. He sees a believer who is not merely going through religious motions, but who is offering a life on the conviction that He is real and that He rewards. That is what gratifies Him.

A second appearance of the word is in Matthew 3:17. At Jesus' baptism, "*a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'*" *Well pleased* — same root again. I have heard well-meaning teachers say that the Father was pleased with Jesus *before* Jesus had done anything. It is a comforting thought, but it is not quite accurate. By the time Jesus stood in the Jordan to be baptized, He had already been profoundly obedient. Philippians 2 makes this explicit: "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men*" (Philippians 2:5–7).

The point matters because it correctly locates the role of faith in our walk with God. We are saved by grace through faith. Grace is the gift; we cannot earn it. But the gift is laid hold of *through faith*, and faith always has movement to it. Faith responds. Faith obeys. Faith offers. The teaching that the Father is pleased with us before we have responded to Him at all reduces this to passivity, and it deactivates the very response by which we receive His grace. Jesus pleased the Father because, in faith, He emptied Himself. He took on the form of a servant. He went all the way to the cross. He believed the Father is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him — and He was rewarded with the Name above every name (Philippians 2:9–11). His example is also our pattern. Faith pleases God, and faith always involves a yielded life.

Noah and the Ark

After Enoch, Hebrews moves to Noah. "*By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith*" (Hebrews 11:7). Noah received a warning about

something he had never seen and did not yet exist as a category in human experience. There is no biblical evidence that the people of his generation had any frame of reference for what *flood* meant. Noah believed God anyway and “moved.” His faith in God was activated, and he built a boat in a place where boats were not needed. He spent decades preparing for a phenomenon nobody around him believed would happen. He was, by every natural metric, foolish. By the metric of faith, he was *heir of the righteousness which is according to faith*. Righteousness came to him because he believed God evidenced by obedience.

Abraham Obeyed

A few hundred years later, “*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going*” (Hebrews 11:8). The verbs are worth noticing. *Obeyed*. *Went out*. Abraham did not become the father of faith merely by hearing God; he became the father of faith by *moving* in response to what he heard. Hearing God, on its own, is not yet faith. Many of us have spent years hearing without obeying, and we have mistaken the hearing for the substance. Faith is what happens when the hearing becomes an action or step of obedience to what we heard.

Notice as well that Abraham did not have the destination. *He went out, not knowing where he was going*. God had simply said, “Go,” and promised that He would show him the place once he arrived (Genesis 12:1). I have walked through this in my own life more than once. There have been seasons when I knew, plainly, that I was supposed to start moving — and I did not yet know the metaphorical address I was moving to. The Bible says we know in part and we prophesy in part (1 Corinthians 13:9). For example, I do not know the detailed long-range picture for our church. I

know there is a divine destination God has called us to, and I know that as we obey today, He will see to it that we land where we are supposed to land. By faith, we move. By faith, we go out. By faith, we do what He is calling us to do, even when we cannot see the whole map.

The chapter goes further: *“By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God”* (Hebrews 11:9–10). Abraham was moving into things that would outlast him by many generations. That is how powerful faith is. When we begin to obey God in what He has called us to, things start to happen that will affect generations we will never meet. This is not a Sunday school lesson about *Father Abraham had many sons*. This is the principle by which our own lives can leave a wake far past our own grave.

Most of us when we hear a promise from God assume that it will be fully answered in our lifetime and seen with our own eyes. However, many of the promises made by God to his people are fulfilled of our generations and are so layered they are not limited to one person or one generation. This requires our commitment to be obedient and remain in faith for promises that we may not see fulfilled with our own eyes, but our children and our children’s children will. That is an inheritance worth leaving. Knowing that my children will reap the reward of my obedience is more meaningful than I can scarcely express. May we all have a heart to sacrifice and move toward the promises of God knowing that generations to come will enjoy the reward.

Sarah Judged Him Faithful

Hebrews then turns to Abraham's wife, Sarah. *"By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised"* (Hebrews 11:11). First notice that the scripture says, "Sarah herself." Though she was Abraham's wife, Sarah had her own faith journey to walk out. She could not simply rely on her husband's faith. Also pay particular attention to the final phrase. *She judged Him faithful*. In the language of Hebrews 11:6, that is exactly what believing God's rewarding faithfulness looks like. She and Abraham both were past the childbearing age. His body was, in the Bible's language, as good as dead. They needed a physiological miracle to come together. And by faith — by judging God faithful to what He had promised — they did. The chapter pulls back: *"Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude, innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore"* (Hebrews 11:12). One couple, by faith, set in motion a lineage we are still standing in.

They Died in Faith

Then comes a reality I want you to read slowly. *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth"* (Hebrews 11:13). Some of these people did not see the full reward in their lifetime. Abraham and Sarah received Isaac, but they did not see the descendants as countless as the stars. They saw it *afar off*. They were *assured of it, embraced it, and confessed it*, even though most of it was beyond their lifetime. This reality brings me to tears full of gratitude as I realize the sacrifice of all these men and women to pave the way by faith for me. I also am grateful that we are getting to see so much today that they only

got to see far off dimly. May we never take for granted the privilege of the days God has chosen to place us in.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises.

My prayer for the Church and for every reader of this chapter is this: may we also die in faith. May we die believing God — that He is and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. May we be people who, even from a distance, see the promise, embrace it, confess it, and steward our days accordingly. The chapter goes on to say of these people, *“They desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them”* (Hebrews 11:16). When believers live looking forward, with their gaze on the promise rather than backward toward what they came out of, God is not ashamed to be called their God. He prepares a city for them.

The Ultimate Test

Hebrews 11:17 then takes us to one of the most jarring tests in Scripture. *“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense”* (Hebrews 11:17–19). Abraham knew what Isaac was. Isaac was the *promise*. The boy was the down payment on the entire blessing God had spoken over his life. And God asked him to give the boy back.

It is important to remember Abraham did not ask God for descendants that were innumerable or to be someone through whom all

the nations of the earth would be blessed. Abraham wanted a son, singular. So, God asking for that one son was significant, maybe more than we can imagine.

However, notice what the writer of Hebrews says was happening on the inside. Abraham *concluded* that God was able to raise the boy from the dead. Why did he conclude that? Because he had already seen God do something similar once. God had given him this boy when his body was as good as dead. The same God who gave Isaac the first time would give him a second time, even from the grave if necessary. That level of faith builds in us when we walk it out across years.

He concluded that God was able to raise him from the dead.

There is a practical application here that I find believers often resist. Many of us, when God asks for something *back*, lose our faith. We received the promise, and we got comfortable holding it, and the moment He asks for some portion of it, we shut down. I believe this is one of the reasons so many believers struggle with tithing. We trust God to provide. He provides. And the moment He asks for ten percent of it back, something in us clenches up and starts negotiating. *I am not sure about that. I do not believe in that.* We forget that the hundred percent we received was His in the first place. Without Him, we would have nothing at all. When He asks for the tithe back, He is not punishing; He is testing whether we have moved up another level in faith. He is asking whether the believer who received from Him at one level can now trust Him at the next. The same dynamic plays out across many seasons of our walk with God. He gives. He asks for some of it back. The question is whether we can say yes

— and whether, like Abraham, we can conclude that He is able to give it back to us again, even from the grave.

Isaac, Jacob, Joseph

The chapter keeps moving. *“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones”* (Hebrews 11:20–22). Each generation, in turn, passed on the inheritance of faith.

Joseph is particularly striking. He is in Egypt — having been sold into slavery by his own brothers, having gone through prison and palace, having ended his career as the second-most-powerful man in the empire. As he is dying, he tells his people, *when* God brings you out — not *if* — *take my bones with you*. That is forward-looking faith. He believed the deliverance was a matter of when, not if, and he made arrangements accordingly. Some of us need to start thinking that long-term about what God has spoken to us.

Moses and the Reward

Then comes Moses. The chapter notes first the faith of his parents, who, when he was born, hid him for three months because they saw he was a beautiful child and they were not afraid of the king’s command (Hebrews 11:23). Then it pivots to Moses himself: *“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward”* (Hebrews 11:24–26).

Read that last clause again. *He looked to the reward.* Moses had been raised in Pharaoh's household. He could have lived out his days in the palace. From a natural standpoint, the rewards of staying in Egypt were obvious and immediate. But Moses saw something greater that would outlast everything Egypt could offer. He, like Jesus, gave up his royal position — and took on the suffering associated with belonging to God's people — seeing *greater riches* than the treasures of the most prosperous empire of his day. May we begin to make the same calculation. May we stop trading our long-term reward for short-term comfort. This is not our forever home. There is a reward, paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ, that will far outlast everything we are currently chasing.

The Faith of an Outsider

I want to single out one more person from Hebrews 11 because she is so often skipped, and her presence in this list is among the most generous things in Scripture. Rahab. *By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace* (Hebrews 11:31). Rahab was not a member of the covenant people. Her profession was unrespectable. She lived in a city under judgment. By every measure of religious resume, she did not belong on this list.

And yet there she is, in the Hall of Faith, alongside Abraham and Moses. The reason is that, when the moment came, she believed. She believed the God of Israel was the true God. She believed that the army at her city walls was going to win because the God they served had spoken. She acted on that belief by hiding the spies and asking for mercy when the city fell. The Lord did not just spare her. He grafted her into the very lineage of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5). The harlot of Jericho is in the family tree of the Messiah.

If you have been carrying a private sense that your past disqualifies you, that your background or your profession or your previous decisions have placed you outside the line of inheritance, Rahab's name in this chapter is one of the gentlest and most powerful answers Scripture gives. Faith does not consult your resume before it works. The Lord builds with whoever will believe Him. He has a long history of putting unlikely names in His-story.

Subdued Kingdoms

From there, the testimonies accelerate. By faith, Moses forsook Egypt. By faith, he kept the Passover. By faith, the people passed through the Red Sea on dry land. By faith, the walls of Jericho fell after they were encircled for seven days. It would not be possible to tell every story; the writer admits as much.

“And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented — of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth” (Hebrews 11:32–38).

Read it slowly. The same faith *subdued kingdoms* and *suffered torture*. The same faith *escaped the edge of the sword* and *was slain with the sword*. The Hall of Faith is not a list of people whose lives were uniformly comfortable. It is a list of people whose lives were uniformly *trusting*. Some saw the rescue in their lifetime. Others did not. All of them held on to what God had said.

And then a closing line that ought to land directly on every reader. “*And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us*” (Hebrews 11:39–40). The promise they were reaching toward, *they did not fully receive in their day*. God had something better in mind, and that better thing involved *us*. The completion of their faith is bound up with our continuing it. The baton was theirs to carry, and it is now ours.

“The baton was theirs to carry. It is now ours.”

• • •

I have many of my own stories that have not yet turned out the way I would like. When you are in the fight of faith long enough, you will see winds, and you will experience what feels like losses. Some years ago members in our church had a son that died of S.I.D.S. (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) at a very young age. I remember a group of us praying for the resurrection of this precious child. After a long time of prayer, we did not get the resolution we had hoped for. I remember driving away by myself from the funeral and asking, “God what do I do now?” His gentle, firm response guides me to this day, “Believe again.”

This has been my posture for many years as I see so many amazing miracles and experience the reality of this side of heaven with so many seemingly unanswered prayers. Each time I am faced with a new challenge I hear that whisper, “Believe again.”

Honestly friend, so much of this book has that same spirit woven throughout and it is the heart that I have for you. May you believe again.

A Family Heritage of Faith

The Hall of Faith is not only a heritage we inherit corporately. It is the model for the heritage we are meant to leave individually, in our own families. Most of us underestimate how much our own walk with God is silently shaping the people who live with us. Children whose parents pray are different from children whose parents do not. Spouses who watch their partner walk through hard seasons in faith are different from spouses who do not. The fruit of the disciplines we are practicing in this chapter is going to land in lives we may never see fully formed.

There is a corollary, though. Hebrews 11 also reminds us that even believers from broken or unbelieving families can become the *first* link in a new chain. Abraham did not come from a family of believers; the Lord called him out of a household of idolatry (Joshua 24:2). What he became was the father of the faithful. If your family heritage is one you would not wish to pass on, you can become the link where a new heritage begins. The first generation of a new family of faith does not need credentials beyond what Hebrews 11:6 requires: that you believe He is, and that you believe He rewards those who diligently seek Him. Walk in that, and the next generation will inherit something better than what you received.

Take the Baton

What would happen if we — believers reading this in our own season of history — actually began to live and move and operate by faith the way Hebrews 11 describes? What if we stopped being driven so much by fear, by self-preservation, by self-absorption, by short-term thinking? What if we started believing that some of the promises God is making to us today will be answered in a generation we will not live to see — and that our role is to pave the way for those promises by walking them out faithfully now?

Abraham did not see the full promise come to pass. His decisions were nevertheless critical to the promise unfolding. He had to obey. He had to leave a country. He had to go where he had not been before. Had he changed any one of those decisions, the entire arc would have been altered. The same is true for us. Could it be that God is calling us to something far greater, far more significant, than we have allowed ourselves to imagine? Could it be that the heritage of faith we come from has more for us than we have imagined?

A Closing Prayer

Let us not be limited by our own thoughts, our own concerns and fears, our old habits and patterns. Let the word written here pierce every shred of unbelief and cynicism. Let us purely and simply receive what is written: that all of these women and men, by faith, subdued kingdoms, obtained promises, worked righteousness — and that the same faith works today.

Pray this with me, in your own voice, before you turn the page:

Father, help me to live, walk, and move by faith. Help me to stop being limited by my own thoughts, old fears, and old patterns. Reveal this to

me by Your Spirit. Pierce every doubt, every cynicism, every reservation. Let me see clearly the heritage You have placed in my hands and help me to take the baton. As Enoch did, may I walk with You. As Abraham did, may I obey when I do not yet know the destination. As Sarah did, may I judge You faithful. As Moses did, may I look to the reward. May I die in faith — believing You are real, and that You are a rewarder of those who diligently seek You. May I please You, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

For Reflection

Take a few minutes — by yourself, with your spouse, or in a small group — to sit with these questions before turning the page.

1. Pick one figure from Hebrews 11 — Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, or one of the unnamed many — and sit with that person's story. What about their faith stretches yours?
2. Hebrews 11:6 says God is *a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*. Have you quietly stopped believing the second half of that sentence? What disappointment, if any, would you need to bring to the Lord in order to believe again that He rewards?
3. Where in your life have you been *waiting* for the destination before you start moving? What does Abraham's example suggest about the next step for you?
4. Rahab is the patron saint of believers whose past makes them feel disqualified. Where in your story does her presence in the Hall of Faith encourage you?
5. What heritage of faith — for better or worse — were you handed by your own family? What heritage do you intend to leave to those who come after you?

Chapter Five

Strengthened in Faith

The previous chapter walked through the long lineage of faith in Hebrews 11. This chapter narrows in on a single sentence that the Apostle Paul writes about the head of that lineage. *“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform”* (Romans 4:20–21).

Read Abraham’s story in Genesis and you will be tempted to push back on Paul’s evaluation. *Did not waver?* Abraham did some odd and strange things. When famine drove him into Egypt, he was so afraid Pharaoh would kill him to take his beautiful wife that he passed Sarah off as his sister. Pharaoh nearly added her to his household before God intervened. Years later, with no son in sight, Abraham took his wife’s servant Hagar to bed at his wife’s suggestion, fathered Ishmael, and watched the resulting domestic disaster unfold for years. From the outside, Abraham’s story does not look like the resume of the man whose statue belongs in the hallway of unwavering faith. And yet that is exactly

what Paul calls him. Either Paul is being charitable, or we are misreading what *not waver* means. I propose it is the latter.

What Do You Mean, “He Did Not Waver”?

Look carefully at the verse. Paul does not say Abraham did not make mistakes. He does not say Abraham did not get impatient. He does not say Abraham always made his moves wisely. He says Abraham *did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief*. The clause is precise. The thing Abraham did not waver about was the *promise*. The thing he did not let in was *unbelief* about that promise. Whatever else he tried, however many times he tried to manage the situation in his own strength, he never decided that God had not promised it. He never moved his foot from *God said it, so it will happen*.

Fear is a feeling. Unbelief is a position.

This distinction matters because it allows us to be honest about our own histories. Many of us, looking back at our walk with God, can tell stories on ourselves that look a lot like Abraham's. We have done things in our own strength. We have tried to manufacture the outcomes that God told us He would bring. We have been impatient, embarrassed, and occasionally outright foolish. But — and the question is worth asking quietly — *did we ever stop believing the promise?* Did we ever conclude that God was not going to come through? In most cases, the honest answer is no. We were not in unbelief; we were attempting to make God's plan happen on our own timeline. That is a different problem from unbelief, and Hebrews 11 and Romans 4 treat it differently. The grace of God is a wider river than we tend to picture.

The Opposite of Faith

Many Christians say that the opposite of faith is fear. That is not quite accurate. The opposite of faith is unbelief, and unbelief is a *choice*. You do not fall accidentally into unbelief. You step into it. Unbelief is itself a belief system; it is the belief that something God has said is not, in fact, going to come to pass. Fear is a feeling. Unbelief is a position.

This matters because it shifts where the responsibility actually lies. Walking by faith is a choice we make in the face of fear, in the face of delay, in the face of disappointment. Walking in unbelief is also a choice. We tend to give ourselves a pass on doubt — calling it part of the process, treating it as a kind of charming spiritual realism — when God may simply be calling it what it is. *You chose not to believe Me*. The good news is that the same agency works in the other direction. We can also *choose* to believe. We can choose to take the position that what God has spoken stands, regardless of what is currently visible to us.

Trying to Help God

When we look at Abraham's detours, what we usually see is not unbelief. We see a man trying to *help God* fulfill what God had promised him. Sarah was barren. Years passed. Eventually, she said, in essence, *let me figure this out for us*, and Abraham agreed. This led to Hagar, then Ishmael, then years of family pain. None of which was the promise. God's response to the resulting situation was unequivocal: *that is not the child of the promise*. Abraham had to learn — slowly, painfully — that God did not need his help to engineer the miracle.

Many will recognize themselves in this. We have heard from God. We believe what He said. But we get impatient about *how* He is going to do it,

and we start working a parallel plan in our own strength, just in case. That parallel plan is rarely outright unbelief. It is more often the emotional equivalent of taking out an insurance policy on God. The cost of that, as Abraham learned, can be high. The promise still came. But Hagar and Ishmael were a story that did not have to happen — and the consequences of it ripple through Scripture and history today. God's plan does not need our supplements. He simply needs us not to waver about Him while we wait.

David, generations later, walked through the same kind of test in a different shape. He was anointed king as a young man, but Saul remained on the throne for years. David lived as a fugitive, hunted from cave to cave, while the man he was supposed to replace tried repeatedly to kill him. He had two opportunities to kill Saul himself and put a swift end to the waiting (1 Samuel 24 and 26). He refused both. He would not put his hand on the Lord's anointed, even to take what God had already promised him. The waiting was long; David's patience was extraordinary; and his refusal to take the promise by force is part of why his kingship, when it finally arrived, was clean. The temptation to *help God* take the promise rarely arrives in dramatic fashion. It usually arrives as a perfectly reasonable suggestion that bypasses the obedience God is asking of us.

After 9,125 Days

Now consider the timeline. From the moment God told Abraham, *I will make you a great nation*, to the day Isaac was actually born, twenty-five years passed. Abraham was seventy-five when the promise came; he was a hundred when Isaac arrived. Twenty-five years is **9,125 days**. That is the length of time the father of our faith waited for the *one* thing that mattered most to him — the one thing that ached in his chest at every prayer time,

the one thing that he and Sarah could not stop thinking about. I think about all the other births of friends, family members, in the community that they experienced within those 9,125 days. I think about nights where they would have cried or argued or sat in subdued silence waiting for a promise that was made years ago.

Read Romans 4:20 again with that timeline in view. *He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.* Nine thousand one hundred and twenty-five days. That is what *did not waver* looks like. Most of us, on a hard week, can begin to wobble in our convictions. The patriarch of faith held the line for a quarter of a century. There is something in the human heart that needs to know this story is in the Bible. Some readers have been believing God for something for years. Some for decades. The story of Abraham is the message that those years are not strange. They are part of the path. The right move is not to give up. The right move is to refuse to waver.

The Vulnerable In-Between

There is a particular emotional territory that nobody warns new believers about: the space *between* a fresh word from God and the fulfillment of that word. The hearing is exhilarating. *Yes, Lord, I believe. I am going. Pack the bags.* The first three days of obedience feel like spiritual adrenaline. By day five, the family is starting to ask where, exactly, you are taking them and are we there yet? By month two, the people who love you are quietly wondering whether you have lost your mind. The promise is not yet fulfilled, but you are obviously, irreversibly, out from under your old life. That space — between obedience and fulfillment — is where most believers either become Abraham or quit.

Abraham lived in that space for almost a decade and a half before Ishmael was conceived, and another twelve years after that before Isaac arrived. Most of us are not at year ten of any spiritual obedience. We are at week six, or month four, or year two, and we are already feeling silly. Scripture says this is normal, and it says the way through is the same for us as it was for him. *Strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, fully convinced that He is able to perform what He has promised.* That is what the in-between is for. It builds the muscle that the eventual arrival requires.

Emotional Regulation in Long Waiting

A practical word about the emotional dimension of all this. People are not designed to live indefinitely on adrenaline. The first few weeks of obedience can run on excitement. The next several years require something steadier. Believers who only know how to operate on dramatic emotional highs will eventually crash, and the crash will be misread as evidence that the calling itself was wrong. It usually is not. The calling is real and right. The emotional engine was just the wrong fuel for a long journey.

The replacement engine is what David models throughout the Psalms. Honest acknowledgment of feeling. Direct address to the Lord. Recommitment to what is true. *Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him* (Psalm 42:5). David is not pretending he feels great. He is talking to himself, in front of the Lord, and re-anchoring his soul on what he knows. That is the kind of regulation that holds up across years. It is not stoic suppression. It is also not the emotional rollercoaster many believers mistake for spirituality. It is something steadier — what Paul calls *fully convinced* — and it is built one day at a time across thousands of small recommitments.

I particularly love Psalm 103, which says, “*Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me bless His holy Name. Bless the Lord oh my soul and forget not all his benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction and crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.*” Sometimes we need to tell our soul what to do and to remember the truth of God’s promises and benefits for us. I will regularly quote the scripture in prayer so that my own soul is reinforced by these same words.

Doubting Leads to Instability

The Book of James says something pointed about the cost of wavering. “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways*” (James 1:5–8).

The word James uses for *doubting* is the same root word that Paul uses for *waver* in Romans 4. The Greek word is *diakrinō*, and it pictures someone who is constantly changing his mind about what he believes — wobbling, vacillating, evaluating, reconsidering, second-guessing. The wave of the sea is the right image. Whatever the wind is doing on a given day, that is the direction the wave is going. James says that kind of believer should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. The reason is not that God is stingy; it is that the believer’s mind is moving too quickly between two positions for any one of them to take root.

James does not stop there but goes on to say, the wavering person is *double-minded* — *dipsychos* in Greek, literally *two-souled*. One soul pulls one way; the other pulls another. The result is a person who is *unstable in all his*

ways. Notice the word *all*. Wavering does not stay confined to the area of life where it began. It bleeds into everything else. The home. The workplace. The marriage. The finances. The capacity to make decisions and stick to them. James is being severe because the consequences of double-mindedness are severe. The remedy is to become single-minded, and the only place to anchor that single-mindedness is on what God said. Most of us do not treat this position of double-mindedness with the urgency that we ought. If we truly believe what James has written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit then we would lean in to the truth of God's word until we become of one mind again, firmly rooted in his truth.

As we live in a day of deep deception, this is one of the more important truths we must deploy in our walk with God. There are so many other minds being platformed and promoted on social media that have the potential to undermine your faith and cause you to be unstable and therefore unable to receive anything from the Lord. I urge you to pay attention to your own mind and take steps toward becoming fully convinced that what God says overrules everything others may say.

Your Job Is Not to Time It

A great deal of harm has been done in the body of Christ by sincere believers who got ahold of half of this teaching and started applying it like a club. *You do not have enough faith. If you really believed, this would have happened by now. Twenty-five years suggests there is something wrong with you.* That is not Scripture. Romans 4 does not say Abraham and Sarah waited twenty-five years because there was a problem with their faith. It says, in fact, the opposite — that across the entire twenty-five years, they did not waver. Your faith level does not necessarily control God's timetable. He is not

running a vending machine that dispenses promises faster when we deposit more belief.

Your job is quite simple though not always easy. Your job is to not waver. God's job is the timing. That sentence is one of the most clarifying things I have ever absorbed about the life of faith. We do not have to manage when. We do have to manage what we believe in the meantime. The Lord will lead and correct us along the way; sometimes there is something to obey, something to repent from, something to adjust. He is faithful to walk with us through that. But the burden of *making the promise show up on schedule* was never assigned to us. He carries that. We carry the conviction that what He has promised, He is able to perform.

For some, this is the most freeing sentence in the chapter. You have been quietly carrying a sense of failure for years, wondering whether God's slowness is a referendum on your faith. It may not be. Your assignment is not to time it. Your assignment is not to waver. Hold the line on what He said, and let Him handle the rest. Whew!

Don't Turn Right or Left

When Joshua took over the leadership of Israel after Moses died, he was facing one of the heaviest assignments in the Old Testament. God spoke to him directly. *"Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success"* (Joshua 1:7–8).

Do not turn from it to the right or to the left. The instruction is the same posture Paul describes when he says Abraham did not waver. When God gives a believer a direction and a promise, He tends to also give an instruction about how to walk it out. The temptation, after a few weeks or months, is to start tweaking the plan — *I think it would work better if I did it like this.* And the moment we start tweaking, the plan ceases to be His and becomes ours. The promise He gave was tied to the path He gave us. Joshua was told that the path itself was the secret to prosperity. The same is true for our own callings. Do not turn right. Do not turn left. Meditate on the Word, fulfill the assignment, walk it out — and then watch God do what He does.

Not by Might, Nor by Power

The Lord says to Zerubbabel, in the middle of a discouraging building project, *“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts”* (Zechariah 4:6). The promise of God is not going to come about because of our physical strength or because we managed to push it through by sheer force of will. It is going to come about by His Spirit. That is great news, because we, even on our best days, are not nearly good enough to bring about a supernatural miracle. There is no quantity of self-help, no sufficient discipline, no eating plan, no productivity system that turns a human being into someone capable of producing what only God can do. We need His Spirit, and we need His power. Faith is the door we walk through that puts us in cooperation with both.

Wait on the Lord

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is

unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:28–31).

The promise of God is not delayed because *He* is lacking. He neither faints nor is weary. He is not even wearied by our occasional ridiculousness, our half-measures, our mid-course corrections. He gives power to the weak. He increases strength to those who have no might. The pattern He is looking for in His people is not perfection. It is *waiting*. Those who wait on the Lord renew their strength. They are the ones who mount up. They are the ones who run without exhausting themselves. They are the ones who walk through long seasons and do not faint. *Wait* in this passage is not passive. It is the same posture Romans 4 describes — fully convinced, giving glory to God, refusing to waver.

Could it be that many people who experience burnout do so because they are trying to bring about God’s promises through their own means and strength? I’m sure most of us can relate and may have even gone through seasons of exhaustion, and even burnout. I believe there is a generation that is hungry to know how to be supernaturally used by God but also maintain a healthy, God honoring life.

Open-Handed

There is one more dimension to non-wavering faith that the rest of Abraham’s story makes clear. Genesis 22 records the moment when God asked for Isaac back. Abraham had waited a quarter of a century for his boy. The promise had finally been fulfilled. And then God asked for the

child as a sacrifice. Hebrews 11 tells us what was happening on the inside as Abraham obeyed: he concluded that God was able to raise Isaac up even from the dead, because the same God who had given the boy the first time — when his body was as good as dead — was capable of giving him back a second time, even from the ashes (Hebrews 11:17–19).

That is the maturity faith eventually grows into. It is not white-knuckled clinging to what God has given us. It is open-handed trust in the Giver. Everything we hold is His to begin with. Our role, our season of life, our relationships, our finances, our calling — all of it is His. He is not obligated to leave any of it in our hands forever. When He asks for something back, the unwavering believer can say yes, not because the gift was never important, but because the Giver is more important than the gift, and we have learned by experience that He is faithful to give it back when He chooses to. Faith that is fully convinced is also faith that is open-handed. There is no contradiction.

A Closing Prayer

If you are reading this in a season of waiting, I want to settle something over you in the name of Jesus Christ. Renewed strength is not merely you feeling better. Renewed strength is you arriving at a place where your faith no longer wavers, where you keep the line and judge God faithful, where you trust that He who promised is able to perform it. Renewed strength is what positions us to receive the promise — whether it lands in the year of your reading this or in a year we will not live to see. Either way, our eyes are fixed on the One who made the promise.

Pray this with me, in your own voice, before you turn the page:

Father, strengthen my faith in this season. Where double-mindedness has crept in, make me single-minded. Where discouragement has built up, drain it out and replace it with courage. Where I have felt betrayed, draw me back into Your friendship. Where disappointment has tempted me to waver, remind me to praise You for Your faithfulness. Where fear has crowded in, comfort me. Speak to me again, as You spoke to Abraham more than once, restating the promise You have made. I will not let go of it. My job is not to waver. Your job is the timing. I trust You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

For Reflection

Take a few minutes — by yourself, with your spouse, or in a small group — to sit with these questions before turning the page.

1. Look at your own history with God. When you have done things in your own strength to *help* a promise along, what did that produce? When you have waited on the Lord, what did that produce?
2. Where in your life has waiting tempted you toward unbelief? Reread Romans 4:20–21 and ask the Holy Spirit to settle it in you again that what He has promised, He is able to perform.
3. James 1 describes the wavering believer as a wave tossed by the wind. What winds in your life — feelings, news cycles, conversations — most often blow you off course? What would it take for you to anchor more deeply?
4. *Your job is to not waver. God's job is the timing.* Where in your life would you most need to receive that truth? What would change if you did?

5. Genesis 22 describes Abraham as open-handed even with what God had promised him. Is there anything in your life right now that you are gripping a little too tightly? What would it look like to hold it open-handed before the Lord?

Chapter Six

Costly Faith

The chapters so far have been encouraging. This one is going to be honest. Faith, when we follow God seriously, is costly. Most of the New Testament teaching on faith does not flinch from this, and the Old Testament examples we have been working through demonstrate it bluntly. Abraham's life is the case in point. We have already covered the way he did not waver across twenty-five years of waiting. This chapter is about what happened *after* the promise was finally fulfilled, when God turned to him and asked for it back.

Let's look at this passage from another angle. Genesis 22 begins, "*Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then He said, 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you'*" (Genesis 22:1–2). Read that twice and try not to soften it. The son Abraham had waited a quarter of a century for — the boy who was the visible answer to every prayer Abraham had prayed since he was seventy-five years old — God now

asked him to give back. As a burnt offering. On a mountain God would point to once they got there.

The Test Nobody Studies For

The text introduces the moment with a single critical word. *God tested Abraham*. I have noticed in years of pastoring that we do not preach much on testing anymore. It is not what tends to go viral on a sermon clip. Yet every believer who has followed the Lord for any length of time has been tested, and most of us more than once. The first test for Abram was the call to leave his country, and we tend to say *amen* to that one — *I left my old life when I gave my heart to Jesus, and that was my test*. But anyone who has walked with the Lord any distance at all knows the next test is always coming. Sometimes it announces itself. Often it does not. The Lord seems particularly fond of pop quizzes — questions delivered without warning, in a season when we do not feel ready. The early-morning, first-period of school, kind. Not when we are well-rested and prayed up. Often when we are not.

Notice the absence of any reassurance in God's words to Abraham. There is no wink, no aside, no *don't worry, I am not really going to take him*. The instruction is unqualified. *Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love*. Almost like a Hallmark card written in reverse. Each word is calibrated to land on something tender. *Now. Your son. Your only son. Whom you love*. The language of the test was deliberately exact, and it cut where it was meant to cut.

Take Now Your Son

Most of us, when we read this passage, do so from a comfortable distance. We know the ending; we know the ram in the thicket; we know God

provided. Abraham did not have any of that information yet. He had a command. He had a son. He had three days of walking ahead of him with his boy. The test ran for at least seventy-two hours. Three days of preparing wood, three days of walking with Isaac at his side, three days during which any father in the world would have considered turning around at every campfire. Abraham did not turn around.

Pull the story away from the burnt-offering imagery for a moment and make it personal. Has God ever asked you for something you did not want to give up? Most of us have a list. The promotion. The career. The car. The relationship. The retirement package.

We Will Worship and We Will Come Back

Watch Abraham's posture as he approaches the mountain. "*And Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you'*" (Genesis 22:5). Two things in that sentence are worth catching. First, Abraham calls the act of obedience he is about to perform *worship*. Not *sacrifice*. Not *the worst day of my life*. *Worship*. Second, he says, *we* will come back. Not *I* will come back. *We*. He has already concluded — somehow, on the inside — that he and the boy will both be coming down off that mountain.

Real worship is obedience.

The detail about worship is one of the most important pastoral notes in this chapter. We have done the church world a disservice by labeling the songs we sing on Sunday as *worship* and stopping there. The songs are an expression of worship. They are not the substance of it. Real worship is *obedience*. The disposition of a heart that, when God says to do the thing,

does the thing. Abraham models that with a knife in one hand and his son walking next to him. By the time the words *we will come back to you* leave his mouth, the act of worship has already begun. It is not a future event tied to whether the lamb shows up. It is the obedience itself.

Real Faith Costs Something

Real faith, expressed as obedience, is costly. Some believers, especially those raised in eras of comfortable Christianity, have been taught a version of faith that costs nothing — a faith largely shaped around what we receive from God rather than what He asks of us. The Bible does not preach that faith. It preaches a faith that has skin in the game, that has paid for what it carries, that knows from the inside the meaning of *take now your son*. Abraham's test sets the bar honestly. He did not call this *sacrifice*. He called it *worship*. But the cost of that worship was real, and we should not pretend otherwise.

Many Christians, instead of carrying the language of worship into their hardest decisions, have settled into the language of sacrifice — and not the holy kind, but the resentful kind. *I cannot believe I have to give up this. I cannot believe He is asking me for that.* The posture is the same posture Eeyore takes in every story. *That is just my luck. I guess somebody has got to do it.* Abraham's posture was different. He did not pity himself on Mount Moriah. He worshipped. The difference between sacrifice as resentment and sacrifice as worship is largely a difference in what we believe is on the other side of obedience. It is like the person who places an offering in the basket and weeps as she watches it passed down the aisle versus the lady who places an offering in the basket and rejoices because she sees it as worship.

Concluding That God Was Able

Hebrews 11 lets us see what was happening on the inside as Abraham bound his son to the altar. *“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense”* (Hebrews 11:17–19). One translation renders the end of that passage *even if he had to be raised from the ashes*.

Abraham was not in denial. He understood exactly what he was being asked to do. He was, however, working out an internal calculation that his obedience required. *God promised that the line of nations would come through this boy. God is not in the habit of breaking promises. Therefore, even if I obey to the very end, God must have a way to bring this boy back so that what He said comes to pass.* That is the math of fully convinced faith. It does not pretend the cost is not real. It concludes that the Giver is more powerful than the cost.

There is a different way of thinking that operates in believers who have grown into faith of this kind. People who walk in unbelief look at every sacrifice and see an ending. The tithe leaves the bank account and is gone. The yes leaves the lips and is over. Faith sees the same act and recognizes a *seed*. Not just *I will see this again*, but *when I see it again, it will be multiplied*, as Jesus said: *good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over* (Luke 6:38). When you are operating in unbelief, you can usually only see the spreadsheet — your math, your bills, your bank balance. God’s math is not your spreadsheet. He is not bound by the pie-chart logic in which one slice taken means one slice missing. In His kingdom there is more than enough, and the seed that goes out in obedience returns multiplied.

When my wife and I began pastoring our church, there was a mortgage of more than \$1,300,000. The first couple years of our ministry were triage and resetting the culture, not focusing on the finances. God was faithful to supply all we needed through those years. In the process of time God put it in my heart to believe him to pay off the mortgage. To our church I began to say, “Let’s believe God to pay off our mortgage.” I also gave them context for why I believed it was important for us to owe no man anything. In fact it may be beneficial for you to know that my concern was that churches that have mortgages and leases may come under leadership one day that succumbs to pressure to not teach or preach the truth of God’s Word because it may be displeasing to those contributing to the church finances and cause them to alter the message.

When I began to believe God to pay the mortgage there was no magic bullet that I had in mind of how this would look. As was emphasized earlier, I remained unwavering in my faith. I also did not pressure our church, nor did I strategize a capital campaign to raise funds. I am not against strategy or fundraising if it is instructed by the Lord.

In May of 2025, I approached our church council to use a portion of some income to our church to give to two other ministries. At that time our mortgage balance was approximately \$1.13 million. We donated approximately \$11,300 each to those ministries. I can honestly say at the time we were not meaning for the exact percentage of the donation to correlate to the mortgage balance. Many would have told us to take that money and apply it directly to the mortgage payoff which we did do with a large portion of that income, but we were sowing into other ministries by faith. More on this in a moment.

Fast forward 11 months later. on Good Friday of 2026, a family from our church approached me before service and handed me a check for \$715,000 to go toward the principal of the mortgage. This was by far the largest gift given to our church. I was so grateful and excited for our church to see God begin to answer our prayer.

A few days later, another family in our church contacted me to let me know that they were contributing another \$100,000 to the principal of the mortgage, desiring to put us closer to the payoff. The same night of this gift, I had a meeting with our church council and was able to report to them that our March tithes and offerings had been quite large. As we met to discuss these large donations and a large month of offerings, we quickly concluded that we could use cash on hand to finish what was needed to fully pay off the mortgage. Praise the Lord!

We started the month of April 2026 with a mortgage of \$960,000 and ended with a balance of zero. This was not coincidence, nor was it preplanned by us. God honored our faith and obedience with his supernatural provision and timing. Dozens and dozens of details had to come into place for us to see this fulfilled as swiftly as it was.

As everything was being finalized, I felt the Lord remind me to go research the gifts I had previously mentioned to those ministries in May of 2025. That is when I discovered that we literally paid 100 times the amount we had given to those ministries toward the mortgage, which paid it off. You cannot make this stuff up. Our church council can verify the details of this testimony because I noticed some of it sounds too uncanny to be real.

Because You Have Obeyed

Back to Abraham. After the angel stops Abraham's hand and a ram appears in the thicket, the angel speaks again from heaven, and the language is worth lingering on. *"Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: 'By Myself I have sworn,' says the LORD, 'because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son — blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice'"* (Genesis 22:15–18).

Because you have done this thing. Because you have obeyed My voice. The blessing being released here is not unrelated to the test that has just been passed. It is *because of* the test that has just been passed. The promise itself was not new — God had already spoken something very similar to Abraham years earlier. What was new was that Abraham's obedience had unlocked a fuller measure of it. There are levels in our walk with God that are not accessed merely by being saved. There are doors that open only on the far side of the obedience that God specifically asks of us. We do not earn our salvation; that is grace through faith. But we do steward the level of life and reward we walk in, and stewardship looks like obedience.

Genesis 26 confirms the principle. When God spoke this same blessing to Isaac years later, He explained why: *"I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws"* (Genesis 26:4–5). The next generation's inheritance was tied to the previous generation's obedience. That is sobering, and it should be. Some of what

is sitting in our descendants' futures is being decided by the tests we are passing or failing right now.

Small Obedience Builds Big Capacity

A practical observation about how this works in real time. The Lord is gracious about how He builds the muscle of obedience in us. He typically does not start a new believer on a five-thousand-dollar test. He starts on a five-dollar one — or, when I was much younger, a fifty-cent one. Each small obedience builds the capacity for the next obedience. By the time the larger asks come, we have spent years saying yes to smaller asks, and the answer is already settled in our hearts before the question is asked.

That is why I want to encourage believers in earlier seasons not to despise the small. The whisper of the Holy Spirit prompting you to give the meal to the homeless man, to apologize to your spouse, to write the encouraging note, to say no to the entertainment that is hardening your heart — those are not small things. They are the muscle-builders. The believer who consistently obeys in small things finds, in time, that obedience in big things is not the impossibly heavy lift it would have been earlier. The capacity has been built.

The Other Side of the Test

It is easy, especially in seasons of waiting, to imagine that God is testing us in order to *fail* us. He is not. The whole arc of Scripture insists otherwise. God tests us because He wants more of us — and because He is preparing to entrust more to us. Paul writes that we go *from faith to faith* and *from glory to glory* (Romans 1:17; 2 Corinthians 3:18). Most believers, if they were honest, would prefer that He stop testing us once we say yes to Jesus. *I prayed the prayer. I left my old life. Can I just ride this out until heaven?*

The answer is no, and the no is good news. He has more for us than the place we currently sit. The path forward involves additional yeses. That is the cost of moving deeper.

God is also gracious about how we steward the tests. When we fail one, He generally allows us to take it again. That is mercy. Strict justice would say we missed our chance. The Lord allows us a do-over. He brings the same situation back around in a slightly different form, and He gives us another chance to obey. Some readers will recognize a pattern in their own life of seeing the same test return more than once. The kindness is that He is letting us pass it. The right response is not embarrassment that we are taking it again. The right response is to pass it this time.

Disobedience Is Also Costly

Faith is costly, but disobedience is more costly. 1 Samuel 15 records the conversation between the prophet Samuel and King Saul after Saul has half-obeyed God's instruction to destroy the Amalekites. Samuel confronts him directly. *"When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over Israel? Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD?"* (1 Samuel 15:17–19).

Saul tries first to claim he did obey, and then — when Samuel does not let him slide — he reaches for the most familiar excuse in the human catalogue. He blames the people. *They took the plunder. The people made me do it.* Adam said something very similar in Genesis 3 when he blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. The pattern is as old as recorded history. The human soul is endlessly inventive at deflecting accountability. Samuel cuts

through it with one of the great sentences of the Old Testament: “*Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams*” (1 Samuel 15:22).

“To obey is better than sacrifice.”



Saul lost the kingdom over that test. He had been chosen, anointed, set in place by God Himself. And he disobeyed in the very assignment God had given him. The cost of his disobedience is in the Bible for the rest of recorded history — every reader of every generation will read about Saul and notice what failure to obey can cost a leader. Few of us will face stakes that high. But the principle is unchanged. There is no costless path. The cost of obedience is the temporary price we pay; the cost of disobedience is usually steeper and lasts longer.

The Word of the Lord Tested Him

There is a single line in Psalm 105 that frames Joseph’s entire life. “*Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him*” (Psalm 105:19). Joseph had a dream. He told his brothers about it, perhaps less wisely than he should have, and they sold him into slavery. He went down into Egypt. He was falsely accused, imprisoned, forgotten. He went up. He went down again. The shape of his life, from the outside, was a long up-and-down line that did not seem to be heading anywhere. The Psalmist tells us what was actually happening. The word of the Lord was *testing him* — until the day the word came to pass.

When Joseph finally arrived at the place God had been preparing for him — second-in-command of the most powerful empire of his day — he was able to look at his brothers and say, *what you meant for evil, God turned around for good* (Genesis 50:20). That is the voice of someone who recognized, in retrospect, that he had been in a long test. He had passed it because he had refused to surrender his trust. There is a tenacity that develops in believers who have been through enough testing to recognize the pattern. *I have come too far to give it up now.* That posture is built across many small steps of obedience before it shows up in the big ones.

What He Has Asked Me For

Allow me to share a few of these from my own life. Before I share, I want to reiterate that this is not intended to brag on me or my faith. These are simply testaments to say that God is real and his Word is truth. They are the stories that have deeply informed my conviction around this teaching.

Lilia and I were a young family with debt, mostly dumb debt. Like many young families with children, we would often get a sizeable tax return each year and this particular year was no different. We had originally assumed that the full return would go toward paying off our personal debt. As we approached the date the money would come, the Lord asked us for all of it. He specifically asked to give the full amount to our church at the time. The amount was about \$5,000. From every angle of natural logic, this was a poor decision. I argued the case with the Lord for a while — He had, after all, written most of Proverbs about wisdom. But the inner witness did not change, and we were committed to obedience. We gladly wrote a check (yes, a physical check) for the full amount, took our children with us, and gave it as a family in the presence of our pastor. We wanted our kids to know that we as a family were doing

this by faith. We wanted them to know that we believed it would come back many times over. Did it ever! Many times over, in places we could trace and places we could not. We were tested, and we obeyed. The fruit of that single obedience compounded for years.

A larger test came in 2020 when the Lord called us back from California to the East Coast. The role I was being offered came with more than a fifty-percent reduction in household income, on top of the loss of the network of relationships and security we had built on the West Coast. There is no spreadsheet on which that move added up. We knew the Lord was speaking. We said yes. We immediately began to see God's supernatural provision take place. I honestly believe there is an Abrahamic blessing that we receive through this unusual obedience to leave your land to a new land.

Then, in 2024, the Lord asked again. He prompted me to resign from my full-time role with our denomination, which carried a salary, full family benefits, and retirement. From the moment of that resignation forward, our income and benefits structure changed materially. I moved before any of the supplemental pieces had been worked out. The math, in retrospect, was not the issue; the obedience was. And He has provided faithfully on every level. Looking backward now, I am grateful we obeyed each test because the doors that have opened since are doors I could not have opened by argument.

These stories are not unique to my family, and they are not meant to suggest that every believer's test will look like ours. For many, the test will be smaller. Some, larger. The principle is the same. *Obey God*. Whatever He has asked of you in your present season, do that. The doors that open by obedience are not opened by any other key.

The Small Obedience

Not all obedience is large. Some of the obediences God has called me to that have most changed the direction of my ministry have looked nothing like a move across the country or a resignation from a salary. They have looked like a five-minute conversation during a coffee break.

Several years ago, when Lilia and I were still on staff at our church in California, our leadership team gathered for one of those long, multi-day planning meetings churches of any real size go through every year. I went into the room expecting to feel connected. I did not. Hour after hour I sat there feeling oddly outside the conversation — disengaged, irritable, restless. I went Christian-eze on it the way most of us do, thinking maybe the grace had lifted on this season or maybe I am not supposed to be here anymore. Maybe the Lord is moving me. The familiar spiritual rationalizations.

I caught something else in the meeting that surprised me. Every time one specific person on our team spoke — someone I genuinely loved and respected — I felt an internal eye roll. Not a small one. A real one. That is not my character. I do not normally sit across from a brother in Christ rolling my eyes at him in my heart. So, I asked the Lord what was happening.

He showed me plainly. Two months earlier, that pastor had said something to me that hurt my feelings, and I had never addressed it. I had buried it and tried to move on. I had told myself it did not matter, told myself I had forgiven, told myself I was over it. But the eye-roll told the truth on myself. I had unforgiveness in my heart that I had not named.

During the next break, I walked up to him. “Hey — remember a couple of months ago when you said such-and-such? That actually hurt. I

have been carrying it. I needed to bring it to you.” He quickly looked at me and profusely apologized. He told me what had been going on in his own life when he had said it. We reconciled instantly. The tension and argument I had been imagining did not happen. The conversation I had been avoiding was healed.

Then the unexpected part happened. When the meeting resumed after the break, my heart was open. The disconnection was gone. I could see what the team was talking about. I could see my part in it. The “maybe the grace has lifted” story I had been telling myself dissolved. What I had been calling discernment was offense. The offense was the obstacle between me and the vision God had for our family in that season. And the obedience that pulled me out of it was not a dramatic, fast-forward-to-North-Carolina obedience. It was a five-minute conversation with a brother during a coffee break.

The Lord will keep pointing at things like that. The brother you have not called. The bill you have not paid. The tithe you have not given. The early morning prayer you have not gotten up for. The conversation you have been avoiding. None of them feel connected to the larger thing God has spoken over your life. All of them are. The smallest unaddressed obedience can become the largest unaddressed blockage. Address the small thing. Watch the big thing move.

Faith pleases God, and faith always involves a yielded life.

From Faith to Faith

When believers walk this out across years, the language of testing changes from anxiety to honor. The Lord is not testing us in order to humiliate us.

He is testing us because He has more to entrust. The yes you give Him today is the down payment on the next door He will open tomorrow. There is a future you cannot yet see that depends, in part, on the tests you are passing now. Abraham could not have known that the obedience he offered on Mount Moriah would be the moment recorded for the next several thousand years as the picture of faith for the entire family of God. He simply obeyed in front of him. The legacy was decided downstream of the obedience.

A Closing Prayer

Wherever you are in your walk with the Lord — first decade or fifth, first test or twentieth — He is speaking to you at your level of faith. For some readers, this chapter is a retest. Graciously, lovingly, He is bringing the same situation back around. The good news is that He is letting you take it again. The better news is that on the far side of obedience are things you do not yet know He has for you.

Pray this with me, in your own voice, before you turn the page:

Father, I am willing. Show me what You are asking me for in this season, and give me the strength to obey. Where I have been holding on to what You have given me with too tight a grip, loose my hands. Where I have been calling sacrifice what You meant me to call worship, change my language. Where I have been failing the same test for too long, give me the grace to pass it this time. I want what is on the far side of my obedience. I trust that You will not waste a single yes I give You. As of today, I take the test. In Jesus' worthy Name. Amen.

For Reflection

Take a few minutes — by yourself, with your spouse, or in a small group — to sit with these questions before turning the page.

1. What is one thing God has asked of you that you have been quietly avoiding? What does avoiding it cost you?
2. How would your inner life change if you began to think of an act of obedience as *worship* rather than as *sacrifice*?
3. Are there small obediences in your daily life — a prompting to give, to apologize, to encourage, to refuse certain inputs — that you have been ignoring? What would it look like to start saying yes to them?
4. Have you experienced the pattern Hebrews 11 describes with Abraham, where God gave you something and then asked for it back? How did you respond? How might you respond differently next time?
5. Take a few minutes to ask the Holy Spirit to show you any test you may be currently retaking. What would it mean to pass it this time?

Chapter Seven

How to Increase Your Faith

Faith is not a fixed commodity. It grows or it shrinks. The Christian who treats it as a static asset—something you either have or don't—will spend a lifetime confused about why prayer feels flat and why the promises in his Bible read like rumors from someone else's life. The believer who treats faith the way the New Testament treats it—as substance that can be built, fed, exercised, and increased—finds the door opens.

Picture the great cloud of witnesses of Hebrews 11. Or the race we are called to run. Picture Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Author and finisher. He is not standing at the start line waving us off and then walking away. He is working faith into us and toward us, and He intends to bring it to a finish. The author of our faith is also the manufacturer of our faith. Which means faith is not a personality trait that some people happen to be born with. It is something He produces, and something we can ask Him to produce more of in us.

Chapter One established the definition we are leaning on for the rest of this book: Hebrews 11:1, faith as substance. The Greek word, for any

reader interested, is *hypostasis*—foundation, underlying reality, what something actually is underneath the appearance. The implication of that definition is the question this chapter is built around: if faith is real substance and not hopeful fog, then the amount of it matters. Not all faith is the same size.

Levels of Faith

Jesus identified levels of faith in the Gospels. Not insults. Diagnostics. If we are going to talk about increasing faith, we first have to be honest about where we are. He called out the absence of faith in four different ways.

1) No Faith

The first is no faith. In Mark 4, He gets in a boat with His disciples and tells them they are going to the other side. He lies down in the stern with a pillow under His head and goes to sleep. A storm comes up, and the storm is not gentle. Waves break over the boat. Water fills the hull. The disciples—many of them professional fishermen—are convinced the boat is going down. They wake Him up, and the words they choose to lead with are these: *“Teacher, don’t You care if we drown?”*

He stands up. He rebukes the wind. He says to the sea, *“Peace, be still.”* The wind stops. The water flattens. And He turns to the men He has been pouring His life into for three years and says, *“Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”*

No faith. That is what He calls it. These were not pagans. They were not skeptics. They were His own disciples, men who had left their fishing nets to follow Him, and He looks at the way they handled the storm and says you still have no faith. It will be tempting to read that and write it off

as harsh. It is not. It is the most accurate diagnosis any of them ever received from anyone. He is telling them what they need to know in order to grow.

2) Little Faith

In Matthew 6, He is teaching about worry. He points to the flowers of the field. He points at the birds of the air. He says God clothes the grass that gets burned tomorrow—will He not much more clothe you? And then: *“O you of little faith.”*

Little faith is the faith that has a hard time believing God will pay for groceries. Little faith is the faith that lies awake at three in the morning calculating the mortgage. Little faith is the faith that walks into church on Sunday saying yes and amen and walks out into the parking lot already worrying about the week. If we are going to be honest, this is where most American Christians live most of the time. We are functionally agnostic about whether God is going to take care of the basics. We trust Him with our eternity. We struggle to trust Him with our paycheck. He is gracious about it. He is not condemning. He is naming it so we can move past it.

3) So Little Faith

In Matthew 17, the disciples cannot cast a demon out of a boy. The father had brought the boy to them because Jesus was not there. They tried. Nothing happened. The father is left with a son who keeps falling into fire and water. When Jesus comes back, He casts the demon out in a single sentence, and the disciples ask Him afterward, in private, why couldn't we drive it out?

He does not say, “because some things are reserved for Me alone.” He does not say, “because you are not a senior pastor yet.” He says,

“because you have so little faith.” Then He gives them the hope: *“if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, move from here to there, and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”*

A mustard seed is small. You could lose one in the carpet. Jesus is not asking us to manufacture heroic spiritual energy. He is telling us that even a real, small, substantive faith—true faith the size of a peppercorn—is enough to move a mountain. If our mountains are not moving, the issue is not the size of the mountain. The issue is that the substance we are bringing to it is not actually faith. It is hope, or optimism, or sentiment. Faith—even tiny faith—moves mountains.

4) Lack of Faith

In Matthew 13:58, He has come back to His hometown. Mark’s parallel passage uses even sharper language: *“He could not do any miracles there, except lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their unbelief.”* Matthew softens it slightly: *“He did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.”*

Lack of faith puts a ceiling on what God will do in a room. Not because He is unable. Not because His will has changed. Because faith is the substance He moves through, and where the substance is missing, the miracles thin out. There are churches today where there are not many miracles, and the reason is not that God left the building. The reason is that the people in the building have stopped expecting Him to do anything in particular. The amount of miracles in a room will rise as the faith in the room rises. They are correlated.

Great Faith

This catches Jesus' attention—great faith. In Luke 7, a centurion sends word to Jesus through some Jewish elders. His servant is sick and dying. The elders plead: “he is worthy, he loves our nation, he built our synagogue, do this for him.” Jesus starts walking toward the house. Before He gets there, the centurion sends a second message: “Lord, do not trouble Yourself. I am not worthy to have You come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed.” And he gives the reason: “I am a man under authority. I tell one of my soldiers to go, and he goes. I tell my servant to do something, and he does it. You operate the same way. Just say the word.”

Luke says Jesus was amazed. He turns to the crowd following Him and says, *“I tell you, I have not found such great faith—even in Israel.”* The Gospels record two times Jesus was amazed. Once by unbelief, in Nazareth. Once by faith, here. He is amazed when faith catches up to the authority He is actually carrying. A pagan Roman officer understood Him better than the chosen people did. The centurion did not say, “come to my house, lay hands on him.” He said, “speak.” That is the kind of faith Jesus marvels at.

I want that kind of faith. Not mediocre faith. Not Sunday-morning faith. Not theoretical faith. Great faith. The kind of faith that makes Jesus look up. That is the goal. And the question this chapter is built around is the same one the disciples eventually asked: Lord, increase our faith.

“Lord, Increase Our Faith”

In Luke 17, Jesus has just told the disciples that if their brother sins against them seven times in a day and seven times comes back saying “I repent,” they must forgive him. And the disciples respond, “Lord, increase our

faith.” They do not say “teach us a parable.” They do not say “give us a method.” They say increase our faith, because they know forgiving someone seven times in one day is not going to come out of normal willpower. They are going to need a different substance to live that way.

That is the point I do not want anyone to miss. The disciples did not ask for more faith so they could have a bigger ministry, or build a bigger church, or earn more money. They asked for more faith so they could forgive. The first application of increased faith in the New Testament is not a miracle crusade. It is a hard relationship.

That should reset something for us. Increasing faith is not a self-improvement program. It is what makes everything else in the Christian life actually possible. The marriage that has gone cold. The brother you have not spoken to in two years. The job that feels stuck. The prodigal child whose phone goes to voicemail. The diagnosis you have been afraid to name. All of it is downstream of faith. If our faith goes up, every other room of the house starts to change.

So how does faith increase? Jesus and the New Testament writers do not leave us guessing. There are six concrete ways the Bible names.

One: Receive the Gospel

The first way to increase your faith is the obvious one everyone wants to skip past. Make Jesus Lord of your life. Romans 1:16—*“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes . . . for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.”* From faith to faith. The gospel itself is the soil where faith grows from one level to the next. If a person is trying to figure out how to have stronger faith without

first being grounded in Christ, the math will not work. The substance He multiplies is the substance of His own life in us.

There is a lot of soft talk in our culture about many paths to God. That talk is universalist. It is wrong. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* You cannot read the Bible and believe Jesus while also believing other paths get you to heaven. He closed that door Himself. If you are reading this and you have never made Him Lord—not just Savior, not just a comforting idea, but Lord—that is step one. Confess Him with your mouth. Believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. The substance of faith starts there.

Two: Feed on the Word

The second way to increase your faith is the one Chapter One already named, and it is worth saying once more in this context.

Romans 10:17—*"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."* Hearing is continuous. Faith comes—present tense—by hearing. The substance of faith is generated in the soul of a Christian by direct exposure to the voice of God in His Word. There is no shortcut. There is no substitute. Worship music will not do it. Podcasts will not do it. A great sermon once a week will not do it. You have to read the book.

It is striking how many believers in our generation have functionally outsourced their Bible intake. They get their theology from a fifteen-second clip. They get their convictions from whichever influencer agrees with them this week. They get their courage from a vibe. None of those things produce hypostasis—substance. They produce feelings. And feelings are not what God uses to move mountains.

If you are wondering why your faith feels like it has plateaued at a level you are not satisfied with, the diagnostic is almost always the same. The Word is not getting access to your heart often enough or long enough for the substance to grow. Feed your faith from the Bible and it grows. Feed it from anything else and it shrinks. That is the mechanism. The believer who treats the Bible like a daily meal will not live in the *little-faith* camp for long.

Three: Watch Your Words

The third way to increase your faith is to watch what comes out of your mouth. Romans 10 again, a few verses earlier: *“the righteousness of faith speaks in this way . . . the Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that is the Word of faith which we preach.”* The Word of faith is something believers speak. Faith has an oral nature. The same chapter ends with the most famous evangelical verse on confession: *“if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”* Even salvation itself, the foundation of everything else, comes through speaking.

If speaking is how faith comes in, speaking is also how faith goes out. The fastest way to dismantle the faith you were building on Sunday is to spend the drive home talking about how nothing is going to change. “Yeah, but the economy.” “Yeah, but my family always had that diagnosis.” “Yeah, but I just don’t see how it’s going to work out.” Each of those sentences is the word of unbelief, leaving your mouth. And the same mechanism God uses to deliver salvation through the spoken word will deliver doubt through the spoken word.

This is not a name-it-and-claim-it caricature. This is the New Testament. The righteousness of faith speaks. The believer who learns to speak the Word—out loud, in the car, at the kitchen table, on the phone with his mother—builds faith in himself and in everyone around him. The believer who narrates his fears all day long talks himself out of the substance God was trying to grow in him.

Pay attention to your conversations this week. What percentage is glorifying the problem? What percentage is glorifying God? Change the percentage.

Four: Pray in the Spirit

The fourth way to increase your faith is praying in the Holy Spirit. Jude 20—*“but you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.”* That is a verse written about how to build faith, and the mechanism Jude names is praying in the Spirit. It is not the only kind of prayer that matters. But it is the kind of prayer the New Testament directly connects to faith building.

When I cannot find the words—when something has knocked the wind out of me and the normal prayer language is not coming—I pray in the Spirit. In the car. In the shower. While I am doing dishes. Romans 8 tells us that when we pray in the spirit, we are praying the perfect will of God when we do not know what to pray. That is not a small claim. That is the Holy Spirit Himself praying through us, hitting the bull’s-eye of the Father’s will every single time.

If you are walking through a season where your faith feels depleted, pray in the Spirit. Pray for an hour if you have one. Pray for five minutes if that is all you have. You will not get up from it the same.

Five: Gather with Other Believers

The fifth way to increase your faith is to stop trying to do this alone.

There is a lie loose in our culture—and it is louder than the gospel right now—that says “me and Jesus are enough.” Just me and the Lord and my devotional. Just me and my podcasts. Just me and my online church on the weekends; I do not feel like getting up. Scripture explicitly contradicts this. Hebrews 10:25—“*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*” More, as the Day approaches. Not less. The closer Jesus gets to coming back, the more we need each other.

Acts 14:21 says the apostles went back through the cities they had planted in, “*strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith.*” Acts 16:5—“so the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily.” The increase came in a context. The context was gathered believers, talking about what God was doing, exhorting one another to keep going.

When you isolate, your faith depletes. You start thinking thoughts you would have never thought three months ago. You start questioning things you used to be sure about. Your conversations with God begin to sound like conversations with yourself. The remedy is not more discipline. The remedy is presence with other faith-filled believers. Eat lunch with them. Pray with them. Tell them what God is doing in your life. Ask them what God is doing in theirs. Talk about faith out loud, not just the weather and the kids’ activities. Live wide open enough that someone can correct you when your speech starts to drift. I want to be told. I want a brother in my life who will look at me and say, “Pastor, you’re talking wrong.” Because

my faith is on the line. And if I let go of the substance, everything God promised starts to fizzle out.

Six: Give God Glory

The sixth way to increase your faith is to give God glory—out loud—every chance you get. We did the deep work on this in Chapter Five. The anchor verse there — Romans 4:20–21 — says Abraham *“did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.”* That whole verse is the mechanism. Praising God strengthens faith. Worship strengthens faith. Speaking aloud who He is and what He has done — even before anything visible has come to pass — adds substance to what you are believing for. The application I want to put on it here is the one we miss most often in our worship services.

“Praising God strengthens faith.”

• • •

If you sit in a worship service with your mouth closed, you are not going to grow. I am not saying that as a shaming tactic. I am saying it as a mechanism. The mechanism the Bible names for growing faith is verbal glorification of God. He designed it that way. You can sit through the most anointed worship service in the country with your arms crossed, and you will leave the way you came. Or you can open your mouth and tell Him He is good—even on the days you are not sure you mean it—and you will leave filled with more faith than when you arrived.

I will tell you a story on myself. A few years ago, I was serving at a leadership conference in California. I had been working sixteen-hour days for almost a week. I was depleted. I was—and dare I say—cranky. By Wednesday night I did not want to go to anything else. But there was a small gathering in our previous pastor’s hotel room, and I went out of obligation. People started talking about what God was doing. People started giving Him glory. And without me trying, my attitude changed. Not because anyone preached at me. Because the atmosphere I was in shifted, faith rose, and the Lord met me in it. He did not even let me wake up the next morning with the same heart. He just put me in a room with people who were saying He is good, and I was honest enough to join them, and I was strengthened.

Africa Shall Be Saved

I want to close this chapter with a story from a man who lived this, Reinhard Bonnke. They called him the Billy Graham of Africa. He died in 2019 and stepped into glory after a lifetime of seeing salvations on a scale most of us cannot picture. By the verified count at the end of his ministry, more than eighty-seven million people had given their lives to Christ at his meetings. Not estimates. Verified, counted decisions.

In the early years of his ministry, Bonnke was a German missionary serving in Lesotho—small country, small ministry fruit. He was, by his own account, content with what he was seeing. He had fifty thousand people enrolled in a correspondence Bible course. He thought that was a good year. Then one night, he had a dream. He saw a map of Africa, the whole continent, and the map began to be splashed and covered with blood. At first, he thought it meant some apocalyptic war was coming. Then he sensed the Spirit say, “This is the blood of Jesus,” and that the

terrible violence that spilled this blood happened two thousand years ago on a cross. Then he heard one sentence: Africa shall be saved.

He woke up and did the math. Africa was home to 478 million souls. At the pace he was going, he would need to live to be 47,752 years old to see a blood-washed continent. He decided the dream was unrealistic. He went to sleep. The dream came back. The next night, the same dream. And the next. And the next. After the fourth night, he turned to his wife Annie and said, “I think God is trying to tell me something.”

Then the real question arrived. Would he speak it?

He wrote about it later. He could hear the critics in his head: who do you think you are to say Africa shall be saved? He knew that was the question Satan throws at God’s servants in order to silence them. He decided that the answer was—and I quote him—“no, a thousand times no.” He started saying it. He said it everywhere. Africa shall be saved. It separated him from his fellow missionaries. It put a target on his chest. It also became the trajectory of his entire ministry. He stopped being a missionary in the small sense and became, in his words, a missionary evangelist. Decades later, the count was over eighty-seven million. Eighty-seven million people went from death to life because one German missionary dreamed a dream and dared to speak it.

I read Bonnke’s book several years ago. I cried through most of it. I read it in a season when God was speaking to me about audacious things, and I was not sure I had the courage to say them out loud. About three-quarters of the way through the book, I found out that Reinhard was going to be in Anaheim—the city we were living in at the time—for an impartation breakfast. You better believe I signed up. He laid hands on

every person who was there, including me. I left that morning knowing the Lord had stirred something in my faith life that He intended to finish.

I am not Reinhard Bonnke. You are not Reinhard Bonnke. That is not the point. The point is that God is not a respecter of persons. He is a respecter of faith. When your faith starts to move, He moves. The same God who put a continent on Bonnke's heart will put an office, a campus, a family, a city, a generation on yours—if you will let your faith out of the cage you have been keeping it in.

Decide Today

The Christian who keeps believing God only for minutia is going to have a very small life. They will spend decades on earth negotiating with the Father about the basics He has already promised to provide. They will not see their neighborhood saved. They will not see their prodigal come home. They will not see mountains move.

But the Christian who decides today—today, not in a month, not after the next sermon, today—to let God increase their faith is going to live a different life. They are going to open the Bible and let it confront them. They are going to watch their words. They are going to pray in the Spirit when there are no words. They are going to stay in the gathering with other believers, even on the days they may not want to. They are going to glorify God out loud in their car, in their kitchen, in their church. And when God begins to put dreams in their heart—about a school, a city, a ministry, a family—they are going to stop arguing and start saying yes.

Let's all stake this in the ground together today. You and I are not going to be Christians of little faith. We are not going to be Christians of no faith. We are going to be—by the grace of God—Christians of great

faith. Not arrogant. Not bombastic. Real. The kind of faith Jesus looks up at and marvels. The kind of faith that moves mountains and sees waves of salvation. The kind of faith that hears one word from the Lord—come—and steps out of the boat.

A Closing Prayer

Pray this with me, in your own voice, before you turn the page:

Father, in the name of Jesus, increase our faith. Increase our faith to the level You want it. Take us from where we are to where You have always meant for us to live. Speak Your dreams over our offices and our homes and our cities. Make us a people of great faith—for Your name's sake, for the sake of the souls You died for, and for the glory of Your kingdom. Amen.

For Reflection

Take a few minutes — by yourself, with your spouse, or in a small group — to sit with these questions before turning the page.

1. Of the six ways to increase faith — receiving the Gospel, feeding on the Word, watching your words, praying in the Spirit, gathering with other believers, giving God glory — which one has been the weakest part of your practice this past season? What is one specific change you could make this week?
2. Honestly assess where Jesus would most likely diagnose you right now — no faith, little faith, so little faith, lack of faith, or great faith. What in your life over the last six months has led you to that answer?
3. Where in your daily conversations has it been easier to glorify the problem than to glorify God? What would it look like to flip that ratio over the next thirty days?

4. Reinhard Bonnke had to decide whether to speak out loud what the Lord had shown him. What is the audacious word God has put in your heart — about your family, your office, your campus, your city — that you have not yet said out loud?
5. Take a few minutes to ask the Holy Spirit which level of faith God is calling you to live at next, and what He is asking you to step into in order to get there.

Chapter Eight

Faith to Repossess

How do you get something back after you have lost it? If you have been walking with Jesus for any length of time, you know what it is to make significant progress and then slide backwards. Jobs lost. Marriage issues. Relationships compromised. Habits resurrected from years we thought were behind us. Territory we used to occupy, we no longer occupy. How do you take it back?

The Bible has an answer. It is built into the story of a man named Jephthah, and it is sitting inside a single sentence inside that story. He is in the Hall of Faith. You can almost miss him.

In fact, you may have missed him already. We read the Hebrews 11 roll call back in Chapter Four — *“And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets . . .”* Jephthah’s name moves past in the same sentence as Samson and David, and most readers do not stop on it. The writer of Hebrews put him there on purpose. By faith. Not by charm. Not

by wisdom. Not by inheritance. By faith — the same substance Chapter One opened with.

A Mighty Man of Valor

Open the story up and the first line tells you something you do not expect. “Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he was the son of a harlot.” Two facts in one sentence. Mighty man of valor. Son of a harlot. The Bible does not flinch about either one.

His half-brothers did not flinch either. As soon as their father’s wife’s own children had grown, they drove Jephthah out of the house. “*You shall have no inheritance in our father’s house,*” they told him, “*for you are the son of another woman.*” He was disinherited because of how he came into the world, by people who did not choose to come into the world either. He fled to the land of Tob. The text adds the small detail that worthless men gathered around him there. The community he found in exile was not a high-end community.

I want to stop on the phrase for a second, because I know how many people read this and feel like the Bible just described their family origin. You were born under circumstances you did not choose. Your father is not in the picture. Your mother carries shame. Your last name does not sit well in your hometown.

It does not. The same Bible that tells us Jephthah was the son of a harlot also tells us he was a mighty man of valor. The two facts are not contradictory. They sit in the same sentence because both are true. The label of how you arrived does not get to write the ending of how you leave. God names you according to what He has put in you, not according to how you were brought in. If you have been waiting for someone to

look you in the eye and say it: you are not illegitimate. You are not tainted. You are not worthless. You are mighty.

Going Backwards

To understand why Jephthah's story matters, we have to back up one chapter. Judges 10 sets the stage. It tells us what was happening to Israel that would make them desperate enough to go find a man they had thrown out.

"Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him." Read that roster again. Gods, plural. The text inventories them, almost mockingly, as if to say: you cannot even name a neighbor you did not borrow a god from. They were collecting.

And these were not pagans. These were God's own people. Delivered out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Carried through the wilderness. Brought into the land He had promised them. The generation that ate manna had children. The children grew up. And the children — the very ones the manna was supposed to be a testimony for — started to do what was right in their own eyes.

It is easy to read that chapter and feel sorry for them, and a little superior. Until we look at our own lives. Have you ever sworn off sugar — really off, no donuts, no soda, no halfway — and then a few months later been standing in the lobby of a church holding a donut, wondering how you got there? That is a small version of the same story. There is a way every person knows what it is to go back to something he or she has already given up. Israel did it with deities. We do it with screens, schedules,

relationships, substances. The pattern is the same. The substance is replaced. The Lord, slowly, gets relegated to last place in our lives.

The Idols You Don't Think You Have

Somebody is going to read this section and say, “Well, I do not have a Baal in my closet. I do not own a figurine. I have never been to a tarot reader. This does not apply to me.” I want to gently challenge you to look deeper.

Idolatry, biblically, is not the question of what you have on a shelf. Idolatry is the question of who you go to first.

When something hurts in your body, who do you go to first? Most American Christians, if they are honest, go to Google before they go to the Lord. We type the symptom into WebMD before we have even asked the One who calls Himself the LORD who heals you. When the bank account is short, who do you go to first? Bank of America? A payday lender? A balance transfer? When the kids are in crisis, who do you go to first?

I am not against doctors. I am not against advisors. I am not against counsel. I am against improper order. He who called Himself our first refuge was meant to be our first call. When He is not, He is at minimum tied for tenth, and that is the functional definition of an idol — anything you consult before Him, any voice that gets to weigh in before His does. The God who said, “You shall have no other gods before Me,” meant it. He still means it.

If your bank is your first phone call, your bank is your god. If Instagram is your first morning consult, Instagram is your god. If your boyfriend's opinion is the one you cannot move forward without, your

boyfriend is your god. The Bible is unsparing about this because the Bible is honest about what idolatry is. It is rarely a statue. It is almost always a priority.

Forsaking, Harassment, Severe Distress

What happens next in Judges 10 is the most chilling part of the chapter, and it is the part our generation needs to read more carefully than any other.

“So the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon. From that year they harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years . . . so that Israel was severely distressed.”

Three words to underline. Forsook. Harassed. Severely distressed. That is the trajectory. It is not arbitrary. It is the spiritual physics of opening the door of your house to anything other than the Lord and being surprised when something other than the Lord shows up in your house.

Most of us in this generation are not facing literal foreign armies. We are facing modern equivalents. Anxiety that no medication seems to relieve. Sleep that will not come, no matter how disciplined the sleep hygiene. Strife in the marriage that does not respond to any communication tool. Heaviness on the children that no school counselor can name. We treat all of it as medical. Sometimes it is. Sometimes — and I have seen this pattern enough times now to say it without flinching — it is spiritual. The doors were opened. The harassment came in. The distress is real, and it is severe, and it will not lift until we close the doors.

The Family with the Game Room

A family — believing, Bible-reading, church attending — asked my wife and me to come pray through their home. The mother was not sleeping. The children needed psychological evaluations. The atmosphere in the house was heavy enough that they could feel it walking in the door. They had tried what they knew to try. Nothing was lifting.

We came over. I asked if we could walk around the property and just pray before anything else. As we walked the house, I noticed an entire room dedicated to games of every kind. I expected Monopoly. I expected Clue. Instead we found bookshelves of games, hundreds of them, that I had never heard of and would not have wanted to be introduced to. Dragons. Witches. Warlords. Decks of cards that read like the iconography of the kingdom of darkness, sitting in a Christian home, played for hours every week, on a game table.

The family was not malicious. They loved Jesus. They had not connected the dots between the entertainment they had subscribed to and the harassment they could not shake. We did not burn the games. They were not mine to burn. What I asked was permission to lay the ones I was concerned about on the table, and to talk about them. I told them clearly: this is your house and your money. You get to decide, but I see these card games depict the very demonic beings that you are being tormented by, and I would get rid of them. Based on the ensuing chaos of their life, I do not believe they heeded our instruction, and it was to their detriment. The games were an idol.

The Cabinet

I have prayed through our church facility and property many times. When we first came, the Spirit kept directing me to specific places — corners, closets, cabinets. I did not know what I was looking for. I just knew I was supposed to walk, pray, and pay attention.

In one of those cabinets, I found a new age book. Somebody with access had put it there. The kingdom of darkness is not coming for the football stadium. It is not coming for the grocery store. It is coming for the Kingdom of Light — for the church, for the Christian home, for the believer's bedroom and the believer's phone. That is the territory it wants. We have to be constantly watchful and vigilant.

A few years ago, I had breakfast with a pastor friend who was wrestling with issues going on in his church and community. Having been to his city and church, I told him plainly: I think there is witchcraft active in your city, and I think it is targeting your church. He was polite, but I could tell he was not quite convinced. He drove from breakfast back to his church, walked inside, and the first thing he saw — sitting out in the open — was a book titled *The Witch's House*. He texted me a picture of the book. Our mere conversation set off a sequence of events that exposed the darkness trying to creep into his church.

Some of us, the moment we start to ask the Lord to show us what is in our house, He will show us. That is mercy, not paranoia. The God who delivered Israel out of literal idolatry has not lost interest in delivering us out of the modern, decorated, subscription-based versions.

Take Inventory

I am going to be direct with you, because somebody reading this needs directness more than they need warmth.

Magazines that traffic in lust or witchcraft — out. Streaming subscriptions that pipe pornography into your living room for fourteen dollars a month — out. Figurines you picked up at an airport on vacation because they were cute, where the sign over the shop counter actually read “Idols,” spelled in capital letters in case there was any doubt — out(yes, those exist). Books that promise the secret. Apps that promise you energy. Crystals you keep on your nightstand for sleep. Tarot cards in the drawer “just in case.” The bracelet your friend gave you that came from a yoga retreat — it all has to go.

I’m not interested in arguing about whether any of those objects do anything. The fastest way to find out is to remove them and see what changes in your house. Most of you who do it will be honest enough, within a month, to admit something changed.

Judges 10 says it plainly: *“Then the children of Israel said to the LORD, ‘We have sinned. Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us, we pray, this day.’ So they put the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.”* That is the sequence. Confess. Remove. Serve. His soul cannot endure your misery once you stop colluding with the thing that caused it. He moves quickly to deliver you.

The Return of Jephthah

Knowing all that causes Judges 11 to make sense. The Ammonites are coming. Israel is severely distressed. The elders of Gilead — the very ones who had thrown Jephthah out of his father’s house — go and find him in

the land of Tob, where he has been making a life with worthless men because his own family did not want him.

They say, *“Come and be our commander, that we may fight against the people of Ammon.”* Jephthah looks at them and says what any honest man would say: *“Did you not hate me, and expel me from my father’s house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?”*

It is one of my favorite lines in the Old Testament. He is not bitter. He is not bargaining. He is naming what happened. He has not forgotten. He just refuses to pretend.

There is a quiet word here for the Christian whose family or friends have ridiculed his or her faith. They will be back. The same coworkers who roll their eyes when you mention prayer at the holiday party will be the ones texting you when the bleak diagnosis comes. The same brother who told you to “tone it down” at Thanksgiving will be the one calling you when his marriage is on fire. You do not have to be offended by the mockery now. You just have to keep walking with the Lord, so that when the call comes — and it will come — there is a man or a woman of God on the other end of the line. The mocking does not get the last word. The distress eventually finds out who knows the Lord.

Jephthah cuts a deal. If the elders take him back and the LORD delivers Ammon to him, he is their head. They agree. He becomes commander. He tries diplomacy first, sending messengers to the king of Ammon, asking what the dispute is. The king claims the land Israel is occupying is rightfully his. Jephthah goes through the history — methodically, biblically — and shows him the truth: the LORD gave Israel that land. The LORD went before them, and they possessed it. Then

Jephthah delivers the line that the whole chapter is built around, and the whole chapter of your life may be built around too.

“We Will Possess”

“So whatever the LORD our God takes possession of before us, we will possess.”

Underline it. Write it on the inside of your wallet. Stick it to your bathroom mirror. That single sentence is the language of audacious, repossessing faith.

Notice what it does and does not say. It does not say, “whatever I think I can take, I will take.” It does not say, “whatever fits my budget.” It does not say, “whatever is reasonable given my circumstances.” It says whatever the LORD has gone before us to possess. That is the boundary. That is also the promise. The territory in question is not territory we have to invent. It is territory He has already gone ahead of us and taken. Our job is to walk into it.

***“So whatever the Lord our God take
possession of before us, we will possess.”***

• • •

I want to tell you something practical I learned about this distinction. When Lilia and I bought a house, the day we closed, the house was legally ours. We owned it. We had the deed. We had the keys. But we did not live in it. The previous owners had asked to rent it back for a couple of months while their next move came together, and we agreed. We bought the house in April. We did not possess the house until June 18.

For two months, our house was someone else's address.

A lot of Christians live in that gap. The Cross purchased everything God promised us — peace, joy, healing, freedom, calling, family wholeness, generational blessing. And we are still sleeping in the rental down the street. We have the deed. We have not moved in yet. The territory is ours. Somebody else is occupying it.

It is time to move in.

Hebrews 6:12 — *“imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”* Faith and patience. Faith says it is mine. Patience does not move out when nothing changes in the first week. Faith pounds the for-sale sign into the yard. Patience pays the mortgage even when no equity is showing yet. The promises do not come to the impatient. They come to the believer who is willing to stand on the deed for as long as it takes, and to refuse to live in the rental any longer.

“That’s Still Your Assignment”

In January of 2020, before we ever moved across the country, Lilia and I went through an interview process for the senior pastor role at the church I now pastor. We had prayed. We had heard the Lord. We had told the children. We had told our family. We had told our church staff in California — over a hundred people — that we were probably coming. We had plane tickets booked to go house-hunt. Two hours before we were going to make the public announcement to our congregation, I got a phone call. Another couple's name had come up to be considered as the pastors. They now wanted to vet both of us.

We guarded our mouths. We kept walking through the door we had believed God opened. The decision was made. They went with the other

couple. We had to go back to our church and our staff and our family and tell them that the move we had been preparing for had been given to someone else.

I will not pretend I was thrilled. But the Lord kept walking us forward. We left California in June of 2020 — not for North Carolina, but for Maryland, on staff with our denomination. We stayed there roughly two years. While we were in Maryland, I had a front-row seat to what was happening at the church we had been turned down from. Things had not gone well. The pastors who had been chosen were eventually made to leave. And one day the Lord said one sentence to me. He said it the way He often does with me — without fanfare, just clearly. He said, “That’s still your assignment.”

That was all I needed. I did not have to be angry about how I had been treated. I did not have to revisit who said what. I did not have to defend my qualifications again. He had spoken. We went through another vetting process — humanly necessary, spiritually irrelevant — and we arrived at Arise Church in June of 2022. Two and a half years after I had first been told no.

Now read Jephthah’s story again and tell me it is not ours. He was the son of a harlot. He was thrown out by the elders. They went with somebody else. Time passed. Distress came. Things did not go the way the original choice had hoped. And the same elders who had thrown him out came back and put him at the head of the army.

You do not have to chase the assignment. You do not have to argue your way back in. You do not have to convince anyone. You have to keep walking with the Lord. Whatever the LORD your God goes before you to possess, you will possess. That is not bravado. That is the math of

obedience. He goes. We follow. We possess. The detour is not the destination, but it is also not wasted. He used those two years in Maryland to dispossess things in us we needed dispossessed before we could walk into what He had for us here. The detour is preparation.

It is Time to Repossess

If you are reading this and you have lost ground — in your marriage, your health, your calling, your peace, your family — let me give you the sequence the Bible gives.

First, check yourself. Take an inventory of what you have allowed into your life. Foreign gods, plural. Streaming subscriptions you would be embarrassed to read aloud. Books and apps and habits and figurines and conversations and friendships that have been pulling you in a direction the Lord never pointed. Put them out. Repent — not the formless, generalized repentance of “Lord, I’m sorry for [whatever].” Specific. Named. Out.

Second, ask. The children of Israel cried out: “*We have sinned. Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us, we pray, this day.*” God’s soul could no longer endure their misery. He does not sit at a distance once we are honest. He moves.

Third, possess. Open the Word. Find the promise. Take it. Say it out loud. Refuse to live in the rental down the street when the deed in your name is for the house on the hill. Whatever the LORD your God has gone before you to possess, you will possess.

You are not the son of a harlot. You are not the one who got passed over. You are not the one who got thrown out. You are — by the call of God on your life — a mighty man, a mighty woman, of valor. The family

may have hated you for a season. The harassment may have been real. The distress may have lasted eighteen years. But the LORD has gone before you. He has dispossessed the enemy. The territory is yours.

Go take it back.

A Closing Prayer

Pray this with me, in your own voice (and lead your household in this prayer), before you turn the page:

Father, in the name of Jesus, increase our faith to repossess. We renounce every foreign god we have allowed into our home and our s. We turn our trust back to You. We declare that whatever You have gone before us to possess, we will possess. Restore the territory we have lost. Restore the calling we walked away from. Restore the family the enemy has been harassing. We come back as Your people. Lead us in. Amen.

For Reflection

Take a few minutes — by yourself, with your spouse, or in a small group — to sit with these questions before turning the page.

1. Walk through your home, your phone, and your subscriptions honestly. What is in your space that does not serve the Lord — a streaming subscription, a book, a figurine, an app, a habit — that you have been postponing dealing with?
2. When something hurts in your body, your finances, or your relationships, who do you actually go to first? Be honest about the order. What does that tell you about the priorities of your trust?
3. What territory has the enemy taken back from you over the last few years — peace, joy, calling, family wholeness, ministry — that the Cross has already paid for and that you are ready to repossess?

4. Have you been thrown out, passed over, or rejected by people who, in a later season, came back asking for your help? How has the Lord asked you to handle the way you were treated?
5. Take a few minutes to declare out loud, the way Jephthah declared over the king of Ammon: *“Whatever the LORD my God goes before me to possess, I will possess.”* Name what you are repossessing this week.

Chapter Nine

Faith That Heals

Let me start with the obvious objection. The moment a chapter is titled “Faith That Heals,” somebody is going to want to say, “It’s the Lord who heals, not faith.” I want to respond: of course. We agree. Of course it is the Lord who heals. He calls Himself by that name — Jehovah Rapha, the LORD who heals you. There is no healing apart from Him. Nobody serious about Scripture would suggest otherwise.

But there is also a pattern in the Gospels that we must be honest about. Over and over, when Jesus heals someone, He does not say, “My power healed you.” He says something different. Read carefully — He says it to a woman with chronic bleeding, to a blind beggar, to a leper who came back to thank Him, to two more blind men, to anyone He could find who came with the right component.

He says, *“your faith has made you well.”*

Your faith. Not just His power. Not just His sovereign will. Not just a random act of His Providence. Your faith. That is so consistent across

the Gospels that we cannot pretend we do not see it. And it forces a question: if Jesus said it that often, what was He trying to teach us about how healing moves from heaven to a sick body? Because if your faith has anything at all to do with whether you receive what He has already paid for, then the level of your faith is not a side issue. It is the issue.

This chapter is for the reader who knows how to ask God for healing politely and is ready to learn how to ask Him for it scripturally.

By Faith They Obtained

The foundational verse of this whole book is Hebrews 11:1 — faith as substance. Chapter One laid that out plainly. The next verse keeps going. *“For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.”* By it. By faith they obtained.

Read that with healing in mind. There were things available to them. Sitting on the table. Already paid for. But faith is what reached out and obtained them. Without faith, the elders would have looked at the same table and walked away with empty hands.

If healing is on the table — and the Cross says it is — then the same word applies. By faith we obtain. This is a New Testament observation. Imagine being at a large banquet table with the best food laid out. The food is yours to take. Faith is the action that reaches out and takes a big bite!

I am going to walk you through several stories from the Gospels that point at how Jesus talked to the person in front of Him, and at what the Holy Spirit chose to record about what He said. By the time we are done, you will not be able to read Mark or Luke the same way again. Then we will get specific about what to do with what you see.

Your Faith

Jesus is on His way to heal a synagogue ruler's daughter — emergency, important man, packed crowd, no time. A woman pushes through. The gospel of Mark gives us her medical chart in one sentence. *"A certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse."*

Twelve years. Many physicians. Spent everything. Got worse. This is the true story of a real human being in real desperation, and the Bible does not soften it.

Regarding doctors and the medical profession, I do not want anyone reading this to think I am against medicine. I am not. If it were not for good healthcare, there would be more dead Christians. Doctors do God's work in the world. I am grateful for them. But the woman had reached the end of what they could do, and she still needed something the medical system could not give her. Fortunately she had heard about Jesus.

Watch what she says. Not what she prays — what she says, out loud, on her way. *"If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well."* Not "I might be made well, if it's the Lord's will." Not "I'm not sure but I'm going to try." I shall be made well. That is how faith talks.

She pushes through the crowd. She touches the hem of His garment. Mark writes the line that will redirect the rest of your reading of the Gospels: *"Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction."* Immediately. Twelve years of suffering undone in a single instant. She had not even gotten His attention. She had not yet asked Him out loud. She had touched the fabric of His clothes, and the substance of her faith met the substance of His power.

Jesus felt it. He stopped. He looked around. He asked who had touched Him. The disciples laughed at the question — the crowd is mashing in on you, what do You mean who touched You? But He felt the difference between the random press of a crowd and the deliberate reach of a believer.

When the woman, trembling, came forward and admitted it, Jesus did not say, “My power healed you.” He said something different, and the Bible records it word for word: *“Daughter, your faith has made you well.”*

Your faith.

By the time the conversation between them even happened, she was already healed. The substance had done its work the moment she touched Him. Jesus was just confirming, with His own mouth, what her faith had already obtained.

In another instance in Mark, Jesus is leaving Jericho with a great multitude following Him. There is a blind man on the side of the road. Mark gives us his name — blind Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus. He is a beggar. He hears that it is Jesus of Nazareth walking past. And he does what faith does when it is desperate. He inappropriately blurts out,

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

The crowd tries to shut him up. They tell him to be quiet. He cries out louder. *“Son of David, have mercy on me!”* Jesus stops. He has the crowd call the blind man over. The Bible records the small detail that Bartimaeus throws aside his garment — that is, he leaves behind the beggar’s cloak that has been his identity — and comes to Jesus.

Then Jesus does something that should surprise us. He asks the blind beggar a question that, on its face, sounds insensitive. *“What do you want Me to do for you?”*

It is obvious what he wants. He is blind. He is begging. But Jesus does not assume. He asks. Because there is a difference between Jesus knowing what you need and Jesus hearing you say it. He wants Bartimaeus to put it in his own mouth. He wants Bartimaeus to commit to the level of faith he is asking for.

Bartimaeus does not hedge. *“Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.”*

Jesus’ response: *“Go your way; your faith has made you well.”* And the Bible says immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

There it is again. Your faith has made you well. A blind man had faith. A beggar had faith. A man with every reason in the world to be cynical had faith. If he could find it on the side of a Jericho road, then the diagnosis you got at your last appointment is not the disqualifier you think it is.

In another encounter, ten men with leprosy meet Jesus at a customary distance. Leprosy in the ancient world was social death. You could not come close to anyone. You had to yell, “Unclean!” if anyone wandered near. You lived with other lepers in colonies because no one else would have you. The disease itself ate away at appendages over time, plus the shame was as crushing as the symptoms.

These ten lift their voices from that distance, *“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”* Jesus does not even touch them, but gives them an instruction: *“Go, show yourselves to the priests.”* That direction, in the law of Moses, was

for what people did after they had been healed. Jesus is asking them to act on a healing they have not yet visibly received.

Luke records, *“and so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.”*

As they went. Not when they got to the priest. Not when the symptoms left first. While they were still walking — while the obedience of faith was in motion — they were cleansed.

One of them, when he saw what had happened, came back. Fell on his face and glorified God. The Bible notes, almost as an afterthought, that he was a Samaritan — a foreigner — and that the other nine never returned. Jesus asks the question: *“Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?”*

Then He says again, to the one who came back: *“Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”*

If a man eaten by leprosy could find enough faith to call on Jesus from a distance, the symptoms you are afraid will overwhelm your faith are not as overwhelming as you may have thought. Faith reaches around the symptoms. Faith does not need the symptoms to leave first.

Two more, quickly, because they say the same thing from a slightly different angle.

In Matthew 9, two blind men follow Jesus, crying out, *“Son of David, have mercy on us!”* Jesus goes into a house. The men follow Him in. Jesus turns to them and asks one question. “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”

They say, *“Yes, Lord.”*

Jesus touches their eyes and says, “*According to your faith let it be to you.*” Their eyes open. That is a New Testament truth written in red letters. The measurement He uses to give back to us is the measurement we bring to Him. Not always the way we wished it worked, yet the way He said it works.

A few chapters earlier, in Matthew 8, a leper comes to Jesus and says something that has confused well-meaning believers for two thousand years. “*Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.*”

If You are willing.

Jesus does not lecture him about whether God’s will is to heal. He answers the question immediately, in the most decisive terms, “*I am willing.*” He then touches him and cleanses him of that terrible skin condition.

His question resonates amongst many modern-day Christians. In fact, you may have been taught to pray, “Lord, if it’s Your will, please heal.” It sounds reverent. It sounds humble. But it is the prayer of someone who has not yet heard the answer the leper got. I am willing. He has been willing the whole time. The Cross is His will, expressed. The nailed-to-the-wood, finished-work, by-His-stripes-you-are-healed reality of Isaiah 53 is His will, made flesh. If we are waiting until we know His will before we ask, the answer is already given.

When Your Friends Carry You

I have spent the first half of this chapter on your own faith because that is where it has to start. The Bible is also clear that there are moments when somebody else’s faith does the lifting.

Chapter One walked through the paralytic in Matthew 9 — the man whose four friends carried him to Jesus, dug through a roof, and lowered him down on a mat. The verse that should change the way every Christian prays for a sick friend is the one Matthew gives us: *“When Jesus saw their faith...”* Their faith. Not the paralytic’s. The healing came down because four believers refused to let an obstacle stand between their friend and Jesus.

Hold that picture and add the next one to it.

A woman from Canaan comes to Jesus and cries out, *“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.”* Jesus does not answer her. The disciples come over and ask Him to send her away because she is making a scene. He says to her, *“I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”* She comes closer and worships Him and says, *“Lord, help me!”* He says, *“It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.”*

That sounds harsh. It is not. It is a comment about the current covenant that the Jewish people had alone.

She answers: *“Yes, Lord — yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”*

Jesus marvels. *“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.”* And the Bible says her daughter was healed from that very hour. Her daughter. Not her. The daughter was the one with the affliction. The faith was the mother’s. The fruit was the daughter’s healing and deliverance. That is how this works in the Kingdom of God — sometimes the faith by one is what unlocks the breakthrough for another.

Setting the Atmosphere of Faith

There is a third pattern in the Gospels that does not get preached often, and we should know it. There are moments when neither the sick person's faith nor the family's faith is what opens the door. There is faith in the room, but it is one person's faith, and that one person is the leader on the scene.

Jesus is on His way to heal Jairus' twelve-year-old daughter. While He is still walking, a messenger comes from Jairus's house. *"Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"*

Jesus hears the bad report and interrupts it with one sentence. *"Do not be afraid; only believe."*

Imagine the way Jairus needed to hear that. Bad news has just arrived. The natural response is grief. Jesus interjects with a single instruction. Do not be afraid, only believe. Not "I'm so sorry for your loss." Not "I'll do what I can." Only believe. That instruction is the dividing line between what is about to happen in that house and what is not.

Jesus permits only Peter, James, and John to follow Him. They arrive at the house. The professional mourners are already wailing. Jesus says, *"Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."* They ridicule Him, and the Bible uses the literal word — they laughed at Him.

Jesus does something that could preach the message by itself. He puts them all outside: the mourners, the wailers, and the skeptics. Everyone whose presence is undermining what He has come there to do. He clears the room. He brings only the father, the mother, and the three disciples He trusts in. He goes to the child, takes her by the hand, and says, *"Talitha, cumi"* — *"Little girl, I say to you, arise."*

She gets up and walks. She is alive.

The text is clear about what Jesus did before He raised her. He set the atmosphere. He removed unbelief from the room. He surrounded the dead child with only the people who could carry the weight of what was about to happen.

There is a teaching for the modern church in that. We let too much unbelief into the room. We let the wailers stay. We let the skeptics in the front row. We let the news cycle preach louder than the truth of God's Word. And then we are surprised when nothing happens.

In the early days of the Church, Peter is in a nearby town. A disciple named Tabitha — called Dorcas in Greek — has died. She was a believer, full of good works. The widows of her church are devastated. They send for Peter and he comes. Peter, while the widows are weeping, showing him the tunics and garments Tabitha had made for them while she was alive, looks around the room. Then — exactly the way Jesus had done, with Peter watching — Peter puts them all out.

He kneels alone in the room with the body. He prays. He turns to her and says, "*Tabitha, arise.*" She opens her eyes. He gives her his hand and lifts her up. The Bible says it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

Peter had watched the Lord do it and when his turn came, he did it the same way. He set the atmosphere of faith. He cleared the room.

Sometimes you are going to be the only person in the room with the faith for what God wants to do. That is not arrogance. That is not pride. That is the call of God on a person who has prepared. When it happens, you do what Jesus did, and what Peter did. You do not shame the people

who do not have the faith. You honor them. You ask them to step aside. You handle what God has given you to handle. And the fruit will speak. By the time the daughter walks out of the room, nobody is still arguing about whether you should have done it.

Two Stories

I want to tell you two stories that are more recent than the early first century. The first took place in Peru. I was praying for people at an altar call in a town square. I do not speak Spanish, so I was just laying hands and praying in English while a brother next to me translated. A man came forward whose need I did not know. Putting my hand on his shoulder, I prayed in faith for whatever it was he was asking for. After I finished, he started making noise. The interpreter came over and explained what had happened. The man had been blind in one eye. He had come forward because he had heard Jesus could heal him. And while I was praying with no idea what his condition was, his eye miraculously opened.

I do not believe my prayer healed him. His faith healed him. He had come for healing. He had stepped out and reached for the metaphorical hem of the garment. And what God said to him — through a young preacher from California who did not even know what was wrong with him — was, your faith has made you well.

The second one happened in California. A woman came forward at the end of a service for prayer. She was very thin — abnormally thin. She had a medical condition that was making her steadily lose weight, and it was becoming serious. She asked me, “Will you pray that I gain weight?”

I will be honest, I had never had anyone ask me to pray for that. I told her, “I have never prayed that prayer before, but if that is your need let’s pray.” We prayed and asked the Father for what she needed.

A few weeks later she came back. “Pastor, I have gained twenty pounds.” I have run into her several times since. Every time, she reminds me. Because for her it was not a fable, but now it was a body that had been wasting and was now restored.

I bring up both stories for the same reason. Faith asks specifically. Faith asks for what it actually wants. Some of us have been getting the answer to the wrong prayer because we have been praying the wrong prayer. We have been asking for the symptoms to ease when God was waiting for us to ask for the disease to leave. We have been asking for endurance through the trial when God was waiting for us to ask Him to take it out of our body.

Take It

If you are reading this and you need healing — in your body, in your mind, in your family — let me give you the sequence.

First, level up your faith. Faith for healing does not come from watching the news. It does not come from Googling your diagnosis at eleven o’clock at night. It does not come from group-texting your symptoms to people who will only fuel your fear. It comes the same way faith for anything else comes — by hearing the Word of God. Read every healing in the Gospels, slowly, until the substance of what Jesus did rises up in your heart bigger than the diagnosis on the chart.

Second, speak like the people in this chapter spoke. I shall be made well. I am healed. By His stripes I am healed. That is how faith talks. Stop

narrating the symptoms. Stop confessing the death sentence. Confess the verdict of the Cross.

Third, ask specifically and aloud by name. The way the woman with the issue of blood named it. The way Bartimaeus named it. The way the blind men named it. The way the Canaanite mother named it. Lord, I want this. I want my body well. I want my child delivered. I want this disease out. Put it in your own mouth.

Fourth, if you cannot believe for yourself right now, find friends who will. Be the four. Find your four. Let the room get smaller and the faith get bigger.

Fifth, if you are the leader on the scene — pastor, parent, spouse, friend — set the atmosphere. Clear the unbelief out of the room. Bring only the people who can carry the weight. Speak only the Word. Lay your hand on what needs to come to life, and say, arise.

This is not arrogance. This is the inheritance.

He is willing and has always been willing. The Cross has already spoken His will on this matter, and it spoke loudly enough to settle the question for two thousand years of believers. What He is waiting for is for somebody to come — by faith — and obtain what His stripes have already purchased.

A Closing Prayer

Pray this with me, in your own voice, before you turn the page:

Father, in the name of Jesus, increase our faith to heal. Build into us the substance that obtains. Cleanse our mouths of confession that undoes the work of the Cross. Put us in the same line as the woman who reached, the beggar who blurted, the leper who

walked, the friends who lowered, the mother who pressed, the leaders who cleared the room. Let it be to us according to our faith. And let the healings that come from this place draw others to Your name. Amen.

For Reflection

Take a few minutes — by yourself, with your spouse, or in a small group — to sit with these questions before turning the page.

1. When you pray for healing — for yourself or for someone you love — what is the language of your prayer actually doing? Is it asking for the symptoms to ease, or is it asking for the disease to leave?
2. Read Luke 7 and stop on the centurion's words: "*Lord, do not trouble Yourself . . . but say the word.*" Is there a place in your life where you have been asking Jesus to come, when He has been waiting for you to ask Him to speak?
3. Whose faith might you need to be the carrier of right now — a friend or family member who cannot believe for themselves? What specific prayer of healing have you been holding back from praying over them?
4. If you are a parent, pastor, spouse, or small-group leader, where in your life right now are you the leader on the scene? What unbelief is in the room that may need to be respectfully ushered out before the breakthrough comes?
5. Take a few minutes to ask the Lord to name one specific healing He wants to obtain through your faith — for your body, your mind, your family, or someone in your circle. Speak it out loud, in your own words.

Chapter Ten

Battle Ready Faith

The previous nine chapters have built faith. Faith is the substance of what we hope for. Faith is contested ground we have to fight for. Faith speaks. Faith is an inheritance handed down to us from a long line of believers. Faith does not waver, even when years pass. Faith is costly. Each of those chapters is meant to put weight on the same foundation. This final chapter is about what happens when the weight is tested in real time. It is one thing to read about faith on a quiet afternoon. It is another thing to need it on a Saturday morning when the news has not yet caught up with the situation you are already standing in.

“Faith is contested ground we have to fight for.”

• • •

Paul writes to Timothy, his spiritual son, with the same urgency. *“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in*

warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:3–4). The verbs are plain. *Endure*. *No entanglement*. The language is military, deliberately. Paul wants Timothy — and us — to understand that the Christian life is not a vacation interrupted by occasional inconvenience. It is an enlistment. There is hardship that has to be endured, and the way through it is to refuse to entangle ourselves with affairs that are not part of our assignment.

Endure, Not Escape

Many faith messages — including some I have preached well — emphasize how to *avoid* hardship. There is a place for that. But there is also a place for honest preparation, and the New Testament keeps insisting on it. Paul does not write *learn how to escape hardship*. He writes *endure hardship*. The believers he was writing to were facing real persecution. Some of them would be imprisoned. Some would be killed. The faith that would carry them through could not be a faith built only on the promise of comfort. It had to be a faith ready to suffer.

I have noticed that Christians who are sold a story in which following Jesus is supposed to be easy tend to come apart when life gets hard. They begin to doubt the entire arrangement. They start to wonder whether they did something wrong. They look for an escape route from circumstances God has actually called them to walk through. The honest preparation Paul gives Timothy here is the corrective. *You are going to have to endure hardship. That is not a sign you are off track. That is the assignment*. When believers internalize that, they stop reading every difficulty as a referendum on their relationship with God. Hardship is not how we discern whether we are in the will of God. Sometimes the hardest seasons are the ones in which we are most directly in His will.

No Entanglement

Paul's second instruction is just as practical. *No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life.* When a soldier is in active engagement, the soldier does not have the bandwidth for trivia. He is not arguing about the food, debating the weather, or rehashing last week's small grievance. His attention is on the mission. The same is true of the believer in spiritual warfare. We do not have unlimited bandwidth. When the enemy is pressing against us, our families, our church, our city, we cannot afford to be entangled in things that have nothing to do with the fight.

That does not mean we live in a permanent state of grim alertness. It means we develop the discipline to know what level of conversation we are in at any given moment. I have noticed in my own pastoral life that I sometimes feel as if I am living in two different rooms simultaneously — one room is full of love and warmth and pastoral connection; the other room is a war room. The two are not in contradiction, but they require different attention. A pastor who is supposed to be in the war room and gets distracted into trivia for too long is putting his people at risk. A believer in active spiritual conflict who wastes away their energy on small offenses is doing the same thing to their own household. *No entanglement.* Keep the line of sight clear.

In our cultural moment, the most common form of entanglement is the digital scroll. Hours per day, every day, evaporate into feeds designed to outrage us, sell us things we do not need, and pull our attention away from anything that requires depth. None of that is what Paul calls *the affairs of this life*, technically — that phrase had a different cultural meaning in the first century — but the principle applies. Whatever consistently entangles

us in trivia is, at minimum, eating bandwidth that belongs to the mission. Believers serious about battle-ready faith have to be honest about how much of our attention has been given over to feeds that contribute nothing to the kingdom. Reclaiming an hour a day from low-value digital noise is, for most of us, not a piety issue. It is a basic act of warfare.

When Faith Becomes Real

I want to share a real-time test that came through our family while I was preaching this very series at our church. As I mentioned in the introduction, my wife Lilia flew with a group of more than a hundred women to Israel for what was called the Esther Mandate trip. The group landed safely on a Thursday morning. Within hours, the United States State Department issued an advisory urging Americans to leave the country. The next morning — early Saturday, our time — Lilia called me from a bomb shelter. She was calm; the news in the United States had not yet picked up what was happening; she simply told me that Israel and the United States had moved against Iran, that missiles were being exchanged in both directions, and that her group was sheltering. By the time I could pull up the news, the story she had just told me began appearing on every channel.

What followed across the next several days was one of the most clarifying spiritual experiences of our marriage. Lilia and I had been disciplined, intentionally, in the conversations we were able to have. We did not talk about the food. We did not talk about the weather. We talked about where she physically was, where the group was, what was happening in the spirit, and what we believed God's assignment for that group was in that location at that moment. We did not have one conversation in which I told her I was worried, because I was not. We had said yes to that

trip in faith, and once we had said yes, the assignment was the assignment. The hardship around it was something to be endured, not escaped, until the assignment was complete.

When her leadership decided it was time to leave Israel, the only path out was a long overland journey south, across the border into Egypt, and through the Sinai Peninsula. I read the State Department travel advisories on that route after she was already on it. Level four. Do not travel. The Sinai is one of the more dangerous corridors in the region; ISIS operates to the north of it, and a number of groups are active across the area. I never told her any of that during the journey. I had to know, on the inside, that *God has this*. The Sinai trip was part of the assignment, too. They came through it. After the group reached Egypt, Lilia and a small subset stayed an additional couple of days to minister to workers in that region — people who serve the gospel in places we leave when our trips end. The hardship had not been avoided. The assignment had been completed. That is what battle-ready faith looks like in real time.

The week of that war taught me — through my wife’s experience and through my own — that you cannot manufacture battle-ready faith *during* a battle. You either have it when the alarm goes off, or you don’t. What follows is what I have come to call *the four reveals*. When the battle starts, four things become immediately visible. Your training. Your strength. Your community. Your faith.

“You cannot manufacture battle-ready faith during a battle. You either have it when the alarm goes off, or you don’t.”



Battle Reveals Your Training

David writes, “Blessed be the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle” (Psalm 144:1). For David, the language was literal. He was a man of war. For New Testament believers, the war is in the spirit, but the principle of training is the same. The Lord trains us for the engagements we will face. He does so over time, through the ordinary disciplines of the Christian life — the word, prayer, discipleship, gathering with believers, walking in the Spirit, learning by experience to recognize His voice. Training is not optional. The believer who skips training is the believer who arrives at the battle unprepared. It can be fatal.

When Lilia was in that bomb shelter, she was not pulling Scripture out of nowhere. She had been hearing it, studying it, and rehearsing it for years. The same is true of every member of that group who handled the situation with the composure they did. The training had already happened. They simply drew on what was already there. This is also why, when I preach, I ask people to physically turn in their Bibles when they are able. There is something about having to find the passage yourself — running your fingers across the pages, learning where the books are — that becomes a form of training. When the missiles are flying, you will not have time to wait for someone to project the verse on a screen. You will need to know where to go.

The Bible uses military metaphors deliberately. Training is not glamorous. It is repetitive. It is often quiet. But when the battle starts, training is the first thing that becomes visible. The Lord is gracious; He gives us advance notice that conflict will come, and He invites us to prepare. The believer who accepts that invitation will not be caught flat-footed. The one who declines will suffer unnecessary losses.

Battle Reveals Your Strength

Proverbs 24:10 says it bluntly: *“If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small.”* This is uncomfortable truth. It is accurate. The day of adversity reveals what level of strength we have actually built, not what we told people we built. Believers with shallow strength faint quickly when the pressure is real. Believers who have built strength across years can stand in a moment that would have taken them apart at an earlier season.

During the week of the war, I watched many sincere Christians spiral when adversity came near them. They reached for their phones. They sent unhelpful texts to people in the middle of crisis. They said things that were not strengthening. None of that was malicious. It was the symptom of insufficient strength. Lilia and I had to be deliberate about what came out of our mouths to one another and to others. Not because we were faking confidence, but because we knew that what we said in those moments would either reinforce our faith or erode it. The discipline of strength is largely the discipline of restraint — not spouting off whatever comes to mind in a moment of pressure, but rooting ourselves in what God has said and speaking from there.

Strength, like training, is built across ordinary days. It is built in the season when nothing is on fire. It is built in the discipleship class, in the

small group, in the marriage conference, in the half-hour of prayer that nobody but God sees. By the time you need strength, the building project has either happened, or it has not. That is why the practical disciplines of the Christian life are not a luxury. They are the construction project that produces the strength we will eventually need. It reminds me of the skyscrapers that spend months building the foundation many stories deep into the earth because there will be stories at the top of that building that are dependent on the strength of the foundation.

Battle Reveals Your Community

Proverbs 17:17 reads, “*A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*” Battle reveals who is actually with us. There are friends who love at all times — comfortable times — but a *brother* is the one born for the day of adversity. That sentence describes the kind of community a Christian needs to have built before the day of adversity comes.

The military understands this principle well. The camaraderie that the armed forces build before deployment is not optional team-building; it is the social infrastructure required for combat. You go into a fight knowing that the people next to you will not abandon you if you go down. They will drag you off the field if they have to. They leave no person behind. The same kind of community has to be built among believers, and it has to be built deliberately, in advance.

During Lilia’s week in Israel, one of the men in our church called me. He was not someone Lilia and I knew especially well, but he was part of our church family. He told me, plainly, that if I wanted, he would fly out and physically extract her. He said he had a contact in government who could give him coordinates and resources. I will never forget that call. I

am not sure I would have taken him up on it, but the offer told me something important. *That* is the kind of brother born for adversity. His offer really meant something to me. I want to make sure I am that kind of brother for someone else, and that our church is that kind of community for one another.

Battle Reveals Your Faith

The fourth reveal is the one all the others lead toward. Battle reveals your actual faith — not what you say you believe, not what is written in your journal, not what you wish you believed. What you really believe. Psalm 18 is one of the great battle psalms in the Old Testament. David writes, *“I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies”* (Psalm 18:1–3). Read those names slowly. Rock. Fortress. Deliverer. Strength. Shield. Salvation. Stronghold. Every one of them has a military image. David is writing from inside an active life of conflict. He is also writing from inside an active relationship with the One he is trusting.

A few verses later David adds, *“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears”* (Psalm 18:6). That is the test of where our faith actually is. *Who do we call on when the trouble starts?* The instinct under pressure tells the truth. Some of us call on the news. Some of us call on the bank account. Some of us call on the most reasonable person in our contacts. None of those are necessarily wrong, but if they are the *first* call, our faith is somewhere other than where we said it was. The believer with battle-ready

faith calls on the Lord first — not because He is the only resource, but because He is the most reliable, and because He answers.

The Iron Dome of Faith

Our adversary does not launch physical missiles at us. He launches what Scripture calls *fiery darts* (Ephesians 6:16). Those darts arrive in the form of thoughts. *God is not coming through. He has forgotten you. You are alone in this. Why bother praying. Look at how everyone else has it easier.* Each of those thoughts is a payload, and each one is designed to land in our soul. They are intended to break our resolve, our peace, and our willingness to keep speaking faith.

The shield of faith is the defensive system Scripture has placed in our hands. *I know who I am in Christ. I know that He who called me is faithful. I know He is well able to perform what He has promised me.* Each of those statements, spoken in faith, intercepts a thought-missile that would otherwise have landed. Israel's Iron Dome system has become a familiar image to most; the believer has been given a greater, more effective spiritual equivalent. The fiery dart goes up. The shield of faith goes up. The dart is quenched. The believer keeps moving forward. The image is biblical and the function is real.

The other thing Scripture says about that shield is that, raised properly, it will quench *all* the fiery darts of the wicked one. Not most. Not many. *All*. That is the standard the Bible holds out, and it is the standard we should refuse to settle below. The strategy of our adversary is to convince us that our shield does not work — that the next dart will be the one that lands. The strategy of our faith is to keep raising the shield, regardless of how tired we are, until the engagement is over.

Stay in the Secret Place

I want to land this chapter, and this book, on Psalm 91. It is the passage believers in war zones have prayed across centuries, and it has not lost its power. The whole of Psalm 91 is worth absorbing slowly; I want to walk with you through some of its key verses.

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalm 91:1). Notice the verb: *dwells*. Not *visits*. The secret place is not a Sunday-morning hour; it is the residence of the believer’s heart. The shadow of the Almighty is reserved for the one who has set up a permanent address in the secret place.

“I will say of the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust’” (Psalm 91:2). The believer’s mouth follows the believer’s residence. We will see this verse a third time in this book because it is that important.

“He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day” (Psalm 91:4–5). The defensive imagery is unmistakable. *His truth shall be your shield*. Coupled with the New Testament *shield of faith*, the picture is complete: the truth of God, received in faith by the believer, is the shield that intercepts the enemy’s arrows.

“Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling” (Psalm 91:9–10). Here is the sentence that has reframed how I think about safety as a believer. Safety, biblically, is not a place we run *to* in moments of fear. It is a *place we already live* in. As long as we stay in the secret place, we are safe in the only sense that ultimately matters. When I live in the

will of God, I am safe, regardless of exterior factors, including a literal war.

Safety, biblically, is not a place we run to. It is a place we already live in.

“He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation” (Psalm 91:15–16). The psalm closes with a series of promises that read as the deliberate inverse of every threat the enemy could possibly mount. *I will answer. I will be with him. I will deliver. I will honor. I will satisfy.* The believer who lives in Psalm 91 has no ultimate cause for fear, regardless of what is happening in the headlines.

Safety Is Not Your Highest Value

When following God, your physical safety is no longer your highest value. That sentence will land harder for some readers than for others, and I want to be careful with it. I am not advocating recklessness. I am not glorifying suffering for its own sake. I am simply telling you what I learned, in real time, the week my wife was on the other side of the world during a war. The thing I most needed to be praying for her was not *Lord, keep her safe*. It was *Lord, keep her in the secret place. Lord, keep her in the assignment. Lord, keep her in You*. If she stayed in the secret place, the rest would take care of itself. The Lord said as much through the psalmist three thousand years ago. He has not changed.

For most readers, the battle will not look like missiles or international borders. It will look like a hostile coworker, a difficult diagnosis, a financial pressure, a family rupture, a season of grief that does not lift on

schedule. The principle is the same. Stay in the secret place. Stay in the assignment. Stay in Him. Build the training, the strength, the community, and the faith now, in advance, so that when the battle finds you — and it will — you are ready. That is what battle-ready faith looks like.

Stay in the secret place. Stay in the assignment. Stay in Him.

A Closing Prayer

The fight that is in front of you, or the fight already underway, is not the end of your story. The Lord is more than able to bring you through it.

Pray this with me, in your own voice:

Father, I am Yours. I belong to the army of Jesus Christ. Train my hands for war and my fingers for battle. Build my strength so that when the day of adversity comes, I do not faint. Place me in a community of brothers and sisters who are born for adversity, and make me that kind of friend in return. Strengthen my faith so that when the fiery darts come, my shield is up. Keep me in the secret place — in Your will, in Your assignment, in You. Teach me to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, without entangling myself in things that do not concern the mission You have given me. I trust that what You have promised, You are able to perform. I will not waver. I will obey. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him I will trust. In Jesus' name. Amen.

For Reflection

Take a few minutes — by yourself, with your spouse, or in a small group — to sit with these questions before turning the page.

1. Of the four reveals — training, strength, community, faith — which one feels most ready for a battle today? Which one feels most underdeveloped?
2. Where in your life are you currently entangled in *the affairs of this life* in a way that is consuming bandwidth needed for the mission God has given you? What would it look like to disentangle?
3. Read aloud Psalm 91. Underline or write down the phrase that lands most heavily on you in your current season. Why?
4. When pressure hits, who or what do you call on first? What does that reflex tell you about the actual location of your faith?
5. Imagine the Lord is asking you, *what would change about your daily disciplines if you knew the next battle was coming this month?* What changes would you make this week to be ready?

Discussion Guide for Individuals and Small Groups

This guide is designed for an eleven-week study, with one session for the Introduction and one for each of the ten chapters. It can be adapted to suit your context — used as the foundation of a small group, a Sunday school class, a married couples' study, a men's or women's discipleship cohort, or for individual reading and journaling. The format below is a suggested rhythm; feel free to adjust the timing to fit your group.

Suggested Format (60–75 minutes):

1. **Opening (5 min)** — Open in prayer; have a member of the group read aloud the chapter's closing prayer.
2. **Catch Up (10 min)** — Brief check-in. How did each member do with the application from the previous session?
3. **Scripture (5 min)** — Have someone read aloud the key Scripture passage(s) for the session.
4. **Discussion (30–40 min)** — Walk through the questions below at a comfortable pace. Skip any that does not fit your group; let the conversation breathe.
5. **Application (5 min)** — Each member shares one specific step they will take during the coming week.
6. **Closing Prayer (5 min)** — Pray over one another, especially for the steps just named.

Session 1: Have Faith in God

Key Scriptures: Mark 11:22–24; Hebrews 11:1; Romans 10:17

Opening question: When you hear the word *faith*, what image first comes to mind?

1. The chapter argues that the object of our faith matters more than the strength of our faith. Where in your life has your faith been aimed at the wrong object — a person, an institution, your own ability — and what was the result?
2. Discuss the word *whoever* in Mark 11:23. Why does it matter that Jesus did not restrict His promise to the credentialed or the experienced?
3. The chapter offers a careful reading of *whatever* in Mark 11:24 — that the word is about *quantity*, meaning *as much as*. How does that adjust the way you have been praying?
4. Share a story, if you have one, of a moment when you knew God was speaking to you. How did your faith respond?
5. What practical step are you taking this week to put yourself in a position where faith can grow — particularly through hearing the word?

Session 2: The Fight for Your Faith

Key Scriptures: 1 Timothy 6:12; Ephesians 6:10–18; 1 Samuel 30:6

Opening question: Have you ever been in a fight you did not realize you were in until it was over?

1. Which piece of the armor of God do you most often forget to put on? What does that look like in your daily life?

2. The chapter lists six disciplines for fighting in faith — discernment, imitation of promise-getters, hearing the word, gathering with believers, praying in the Spirit, and strengthening yourself in the Lord. Which one is most developed in your life? Which is least?
3. David *strengthened himself in the LORD* at his lowest point (1 Samuel 30:6). What does that look like for you in your hardest seasons?
4. Who are the *promise-getters* in your life — believers whose faith you would do well to imitate? How could you draw closer to them?
5. Is there an area of your life where unbelief has been quietly tolerated for too long? Pray for one another about that this week.

Session 3: Faith Speaks

Key Scriptures: Proverbs 18:21; Luke 6:45; Romans 10:8–10; Psalm 91:1–2

Opening question: What is one thing you tend to say in unguarded moments that you wish you did not?

1. The chapter argues that what we actually believe eventually comes out of our mouths. What does the pattern of your everyday speech reveal about the actual condition of your heart?
2. Where have your words been heaping life onto a relationship or situation? Where have they been heaping the opposite?
3. Discuss the practice of speaking blessing over family members. Have you done this before? What might it look like for you to begin or continue this practice?

4. The chapter recommends speaking three sentences of faith aloud each morning before any other voices reach you. What three sentences would you choose, and why?
5. Consider Romans 10:8–10. Why does Scripture insist that confession with our mouths is part of the act of faith, and not optional?

Session 4: Your Faith Heritage Is Waiting

Key Scriptures: Hebrews 11 (especially verses 1, 6, 13, 39–40)

Opening question: What is one story from Hebrews 11 that has stayed with you since the first time you heard it?

1. Which of the figures in Hebrews 11 do you most identify with right now? Which one stretches you most?
2. The chapter highlights Rahab as a believer whose past did not disqualify her from the Hall of Faith. How does her presence on the list speak to your own story?
3. Hebrews 11:13 says the elders *died in faith, not having received the promises*. How does that change your perspective on promises that are taking longer than expected?
4. Consider your own family heritage of faith — what was handed to you, and what would you like to leave to those who come after you?
5. What is one specific way you can pick up the baton this week — moving in obedience that affects more than just your immediate moment?

Session 5: Strengthened in Faith

Key Scriptures: Romans 4:20–21; James 1:5–8; Joshua 1:7–8; Isaiah 40:28–31

Opening question: What is the longest you have ever waited for an answer to prayer that you eventually received?

1. The chapter draws a careful distinction between unbelief and human imperfection in trying to *help God*. Where in your past does that distinction bring relief?
2. Discuss the sentence: *Your job is not to waver. God's job is the timing*. Where in your life would receiving that sentence change something today?

“Your job is not to waver. God’s job is the timing.”

• • •

3. James 1 describes the wavering believer as a wave tossed by the wind. What winds in your current season most often blow you off course? What would help you anchor more deeply?
4. Read aloud Isaiah 40:28–31. What does it look like, practically, to *wait on the Lord* in your current season?
5. What is one thing you are gripping a little too tightly that you sense the Lord asking you to hold open-handed?

Session 6: Costly Faith

Key Scriptures: Genesis 22:1–18; 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 105:19

Opening question: What is something obedience has cost you that you would not trade for the world now?

1. The chapter argues that real worship is *obedience*. Where has the language of *worship* in your life been confined too narrowly to musical expression?
2. What is one obedience you sense the Lord asking of you right now? What is the cost of obedience? What is the cost of disobedience?
3. Discuss the section on tithing. Have you experienced the partnership the chapter describes? What is your honest position on tithing today?
4. Consider Saul's story in 1 Samuel 15. Where in your own life have you been tempted to half-obey and then justify it?
5. Share, if comfortable, a small or large *yes* God has asked of you that you have been postponing. Pray for one another to say it.

Session 7: How to Increase Your Faith

Key Scriptures: Mark 4:35–41; Matthew 17:14–20; Luke 7:1–10; Luke 17:5–6; Romans 10:17

Opening question: When have you most clearly felt your faith increase, and what was happening in your life at the time?

1. The chapter walks through the levels of faith Jesus diagnoses across the Gospels — no faith, little faith, so little faith, lack of faith, and great faith. Where would Jesus most likely diagnose you

right now, and what in your life over the last six months has led you to that answer?

2. Of the six ways to increase faith — receiving the Gospel, feeding on the Word, watching your words, praying in the Spirit, gathering with other believers, giving God glory — which one has been the weakest part of your practice this season? What is one specific change you could make for this week?
3. Discuss the moment in Luke 17 when the disciples ask, “*Lord, increase our faith,*” in the context of forgiveness — Jesus had just told them to forgive a brother seven times in a day. Whom in your life does increased faith call you to forgive?
4. Reinhard Bonnke decided to speak out loud what God had shown him: “Africa shall be saved.” What is the audacious word God has put on your heart that you have not yet said out loud — about your family, your office, your campus, your city?
5. Share with the group one specific area where you want your faith to be measurably greater by the end of this study. Pray for one another in that area this week.

Session 8: Faith to Repossess

Key Scriptures: Hebrews 11:32–34; Judges 10:6–16; Judges 11:1–29

Opening question: When have you watched the Lord restore something you thought was gone for good?

1. The chapter walks through Israel’s progression in Judges 10: forsaking the Lord → harassment → severe distress. Where in your own life have you watched a softer version of that pattern play out?

2. Discuss what idolatry actually looks like in our day. Who or what do you go to first when something hurts in your body, your finances, or your relationships? What does the order of your trust reveal?
3. Take a few minutes to consider your home, your phone, and your subscriptions. What is in your space that does not serve the Lord — and what would you remove if you let the Lord answer that question for you?
4. Discuss Jephthah's line to the elders: "Did you not hate me, and expel me from my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in distress?" Has the Lord asked you to keep walking faithfully through a season of rejection or being passed over? What did that look like?
5. As a group, declare out loud: "Whatever the LORD our God goes before us to possess, we will possess." Have each member name one specific area of territory they are repossessing this week.

Session 9: Faith That Heals

Key Scriptures: Mark 5:25–34; Mark 10:46–52; Luke 17:11–19; Matthew 8:1–3; Mark 2:1–12

Opening question: Have you ever been part of a moment of physical, emotional, or spiritual healing — yours or someone else's — that you could not explain in any other terms than the work of God?

1. The chapter walks through the consistent Gospel pattern of Jesus saying, "*your faith has made you well.*" How does that pattern challenge the way you have been praying for healing — for yourself or for someone you love?

2. The leper in Matthew 8 said, “*Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean,*” and Jesus answered, “*I am willing.*” Where in your life have you been praying “if You are willing” prayers, when the Cross has already settled the question of His will?
3. The chapter names three categories of healing faith: your own faith, the faith of friends, and the faith of the leader on the scene. Where are you right now — needing somebody to carry you, called to carry somebody else, or called to set the atmosphere?
4. Discuss the story of the four friends in Mark 2 who tore through a roof to get their friend to Jesus. Who is a person in your life that you are willing to be that kind of friend to right now?
5. Name one specific healing — for your body, your mind, your family, or someone in your circle — that you are committing to pray for over the coming week. Pray for one another out loud before you close.

Session 10: Battle Ready Faith

Key Scriptures: 2 Timothy 2:3–4; Psalm 144:1; Proverbs 24:10; Proverbs 17:17; Psalm 91

Opening question: When was the last time you needed your faith and were grateful for the years of preparation behind it?

1. Of the four reveals — training, strength, community, faith — which is most ready for a battle in your life today? Which is most underdeveloped?
2. Discuss the principle of *no entanglement*. What in your daily life consumes bandwidth that belongs to the mission God has given you?

3. Read aloud Psalm 91. What phrase lands most heavily on you in your current season? Why?
4. What does it mean for you, practically, that *safety is not your highest value* once you are following God? Where have you been tempted to make safety the highest priority?
5. As you finish this study, what is the single most important thing you will carry forward from these ten weeks? Write it down. Tell someone in the group. Let them hold you to it.

After the final session, plan one celebratory gathering — a meal, a coffee, a walk — to reflect together on what God has done in your individual lives across the ten weeks. Faith grows in the celebration of testimonies. Make sure the testimonies are spoken aloud.

Now It Is Your Turn

You have read ten chapters about faith. You have read the testimonies of believers across thousands of years — Abraham, Sarah, Noah, Moses, David, Joseph, Peter, Paul — and you have read the smaller, more recent testimonies of one pastor and his family in our own day. The reason any of those stories were worth telling is that they ended up in the same place. Faith, exercised in real time, produced real fruit. Faith, allowed to waver and atrophy, produced loss that did not have to happen. The two paths are not equivalent. One is the path of life. The other is the path of slow death. Scripture is unflinching about the difference.

Now it is your turn. The promises God has spoken over your life were not spoken into a vacuum. They were spoken to be carried out — by you, walking in faith, taking the next step, and the next step, and the next step. There is no formula in this book that will work without you. This book alone does not produce faith. The hearing of God's Word produces faith (Romans 10:17), and the obeying of God's Word releases the substance of that faith into the situations God has placed in front of you.

A few practical encouragements as you finish. **First, get into the Word every day.** The training, the strength, the language of faith — all of it begins there. The believer who walks with an open Bible across the years is the believer whose faith is ready when the day of testing arrives. **Second, find your community.** Do not try to walk this out alone. Find believers whose faith is alive and stay close to them. Be a brother or sister born for adversity, and be that for one another. **Third, identify the**

place in your life right now where unbelief has been tolerated.

Name it specifically and choose to take a different position about it from this day forward. Choose to believe what God has said. **Fourth, do the next thing He has asked you to do.** Whatever it is. Whether it is a small obedience or a costly one, take the step in front of you. Faith always moves. Faith always speaks. Faith always obeys.

I want to leave you with the same benediction the writer of Hebrews leaves his own readers with at the end of his great chapter on faith. He writes about a vast crowd of witnesses — the patriarchs, the prophets, the men and women whose names we have walked through together — and he says, *“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. He is the One who began this in you, and He is the One who will finish it. The whole life of faith is found in keeping our gaze on Him. Run your race. Lay down what does not belong on your shoulders. Endure what He has given you to endure. Trust Him for the timing of what only He can produce. And remember the cloud of witnesses around you, cheering you on. They have already run their leg of this relay. The baton is in your hand now.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May He lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace (Numbers 6:24–26). May the eyes of your understanding be enlightened. May your faith not waver. May what He has promised you come to pass,

in His exact timing, by His mighty Spirit, for His glory and your good.
May you, in Jesus' name, be a person who actually believes. So be it.

— *Ty Austin*

Acknowledgments

No book is the work of one person, even when only one name appears on the cover. I am grateful, first and most, to my wife Lilia — for the years of partnership in ministry that produced almost every pastoral instinct in these pages, and for the willingness to walk through the test in real time that became the closing chapter. Whatever this book accomplishes for the kingdom of God, it accomplishes alongside her.

I am grateful to our three children, Faith, Jude, and Jewel, who have grown up in the rhythm of a household that tries to walk by faith and have been remarkably gracious about the seasons in which their parents were learning more than teaching. I love each of you and am praying every day that the heritage of faith you are receiving will outlast anything I could leave you in earthly inheritance.

I am grateful for my parents, Terry and Beth Austin, who passed on the heritage of faith and continue to model this life and teaching. Your tenacious and generous lives have paved the way for me, Lilia, and your grandchildren.

I am grateful to the pastors, leaders, and people of Arise Church. The messages that became this book were preached to you first. Your responsiveness, your hunger for the Word, your testimonies as you put these teachings into practice in real time, and your willingness to fight the good fight of faith alongside us made the writing of this book worth the time it took. Thank you for being a church that believes God.

I am grateful to the pastors and mentors who shaped me long before I was a senior pastor — particularly Jerry & Kimberly Dirmann and the leadership team at The Rock in Anaheim, California whose faith stewarded a building project we should not have completed and yet did, on the date that had been declared. The story I tell in chapter one is not theoretical for you; you lived it. Thank you for showing a young man on staff what faith looks like over and over again.

Above all, I am grateful to the Lord Jesus Christ — the author and finisher of our faith. Every word of Scripture I have quoted in these pages is His. Every illustration is a small attempt to make plain what He has already made clear. May He receive the glory for whatever good is done by this book, and may He cover with mercy whatever I have gotten wrong.

— *Ty Austin*

Scripture Index

A reading map of the principal Scripture passages used in this book, with the chapter in which each is most extensively discussed. Many additional Scriptures are quoted in passing throughout the text and are not listed here.

Old Testament

- Genesis 12:1–4 — Abraham’s call (Chapter Four)
- Genesis 15:6 — Abraham believed God (Chapter Five)
- Genesis 22:1–18 — Abraham offers Isaac (Chapter Six)
- Genesis 26:4–5 — Because Abraham obeyed (Chapter Six)
- Genesis 50:20 — What you meant for evil (Chapter Six)
- Numbers 6:24–26 — The priestly blessing (Final Word; Chapter Three)
- Joshua 1:7–8 — Do not turn right or left (Chapter Five)
- 1 Samuel 15:17–22 — Saul’s disobedience (Chapter Six)
- 1 Samuel 30:6, 8 — David at Ziklag (Chapter Two)
- Psalms 18:1–6 — David’s battle psalm (Chapter Seven)
- Psalms 42:5 — Why are you cast down? (Chapter Five)
- Psalms 91:1–16 — Dwelling in the secret place (Chapter Seven)
- Psalms 105:19 — The word of the LORD tested him (Chapter Six)
- Psalms 144:1 — Trains my hands for war (Chapter Seven)
- Proverbs 17:17 — A brother is born for adversity (Chapter Seven)
- Proverbs 18:21 — Death and life in the tongue (Chapter Three)
- Proverbs 24:10 — If you faint in the day of adversity (Chapter Seven)
- Isaiah 40:28–31 — Wait on the LORD (Chapter Five)
- Isaiah 53:5 — By His stripes (Chapter Three)
- Zechariah 4:6 — Not by might nor power (Chapter Five)
- Malachi 3:10 — Test Me now in this (Chapter Six)

New Testament

- Matthew 3:17 — In whom I am well pleased (Chapter Four)
- Matthew 9:1–2 — Their faith (Chapter One)
- Matthew 16:13–18 — Peter's confession (Chapter Three)
- Mark 6:5–6 — He could do no mighty work (Chapter One)
- Mark 11:14 — The fig tree cursed (Chapters One and Three)
- Mark 11:22–24 — Have faith in God (Chapter One)
- Luke 1:18–22, 59–64 — Zacharias's silence (Chapter Three)
- Luke 6:38, 45 — Out of the abundance of the heart (Chapter Three)
- Luke 22:31–32 — I have prayed for you (Chapter Two)
- John 15 — The Vinedresser prunes (Chapter Two)
- Romans 1:17 — From faith to faith (Chapter Six)
- Romans 4:20–22 — Abraham did not waver (Chapter Five)
- Romans 8:26 — The Spirit makes intercession (Chapter Two)
- Romans 10:8–10, 13, 17 — Confession unto salvation (Chapters One, Two, and Three)
- 1 Corinthians 13:9 — We know in part (Chapter Four)
- 2 Corinthians 3:18 — From glory to glory (Chapter Six)
- Ephesians 1:18 — The eyes of your understanding (Introduction)
- Ephesians 2:8 — Saved by grace through faith (Chapters One and Four)
- Ephesians 6:10–18 — The whole armor of God (Chapter Two)
- Philippians 2:5–11 — Made Himself of no reputation (Chapter Four)
- 1 Timothy 6:12 — Fight the good fight of faith (Chapter Two)
- 2 Timothy 2:3–4 — Endure as a good soldier (Chapter Seven)
- 2 Timothy 4:7 — I have kept the faith (Chapter Two)
- Hebrews 6:11–12 — Imitate those who inherit (Chapter Two)
- Hebrews 10:23–25 — Not forsaking the assembling (Chapter Two)
- Hebrews 11 — The Hall of Faith (Chapter Four)
- Hebrews 11:1, 6 — Faith is the substance (Chapters One and Four)
- Hebrews 11:17–19 — Abraham concluded that God was able (Chapter Six)

Battle Ready Faith

Hebrews 12:1–2 — A great cloud of witnesses (Final Word)

Hebrews 13:7 — Whose faith follow (Chapter Two)

James 1:5–8 — Let him ask in faith (Chapter Five)

Jude 20 — Praying in the Holy Spirit (Chapter Two)

1 John 5:4 — Our faith overcomes (Chapter One)

About the Author

Pastor Ty Austin is the senior pastor of Arise Church in Apex, North Carolina. A native of Greensboro, North Carolina, he was called to ministry as a young man and trained on the West Coast at Life Pacific College in San Dimas, California. He went on to serve in pastoral leadership at The Rock in Anaheim, CA for more than eighteen years before returning to the East Coast with his family in 2020 to begin a new chapter of ministry.

He and his wife Lilia have three children. Together they have served in kids, youth, and young adults ministries both locally and globally, and they bring a particular passion for the next generation, for the equipping of the local church, and for the ordinary believer who longs to know what it actually looks like to walk by faith.

Arise Church is a community on a mission, discipling generations to arise now. The church, made up of the Apex, NC Campus and house churches, is engaged in a multi-generational effort to fulfill the ministry vision God has given them — a vision being walked out, day by day in faith.

To learn more about Ty Austin, Arise Church, and additional resources, visit:

arisechurchnc.com