

Characteristics of Faith

by Dennis Kinlaw

Faith involves trusting God's leadership and destiny, even when we don't know where we're going.

Duration: 47:18

Scripture: Genesis 15:6, John 3:16, Romans 14:11, Hebrews 11:8-10, Hebrews 11:13, Hebrews 11:27

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the uncertainty of the future and the apprehension it brings. He shares a story of missionaries who claimed a valley for Jesus through their faith. The speaker emphasizes the importance of having faith and expecting God to work in our lives. He encourages listeners to have their 'arms of faith' around a territory or a group of people, believing that God can bring about transformation. The sermon also mentions the example of Abraham and Sarah, who believed in God's promise of a child even in their old age. The speaker concludes by challenging listeners to reach out and claim segments of the world for Jesus, so that all may bow in redemption rather than judgment.

Transcript

This evening is found in the book of Hebrews. You may want to turn and follow the reading in your text. It's from chapter 11 of the Epistle to the Hebrews, beginning with verse 8. By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country. He lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise, for he was looking forward to the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God. By faith Abraham, even though he was past age and Sarah herself was barren, was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.

And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashores. All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the thing's promise, they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, and they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.

People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead they were longing for a

better country, a heavenly one.

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son.

Even though God had said to him, it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive back Isaac from death. I would like to take as a text the sixth verse of this chapter, where the writer speaks and says, Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Shall we unite our hearts together in prayer? Father, we give thee thanks for making clear to us thy word and what thy will is. It is so obvious. Without faith it is impossible to please thee, and if there is any desire in our hearts tonight, it is that we might please thee.

If we are to please thee, thou hast told us that we must seek thee earnestly, because thou art the one that rewards and meets those who seek thee earnestly. And so tonight we come as seekers after thee, seeking thee because we need thee, and seeking thee because we would please thee. Quicken our faith tonight and grant that we may believe.

We ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. It is not difficult from scripture to build a case for the primacy in the Christian's life of faith.

Whether you turn to John 3, verse 16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. Or any one of a score or a hundred other verses in the New Testament where the primacy of faith is lifted out, it is not difficult for a Christian who knows his scripture to build a case for the fact that faith is at the heart of the Christian life, and if we have faith are believers and are Christians, and if we do not have that faith, then we are not among those that belong to God. The Christian is a person who believes.

But now, it's one thing to say that we need faith, and it's another thing to understand what God really means by that when he tells us that we are to believe him. That's one of the reasons that I love the fact that so much of scripture is given in biographical form. You take the first book of the Bible, which is the seedbed for it all, and you will remember that it primarily, though it tells us about things like the creation of the world, it primarily is the story of certain individual lives.

The first of those lives, the first of the greatest of these, is the life of Abraham, and thirteen chapters of that book, of fifty chapters, are devoted to telling the story of this man, and when he is described in all the rest of scripture, he is described as the father of the faithful. We are told that he was a friend of God, and we are told that he believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. We have the story of Isaac briefly given, then we have the story of Jacob given in considerable detail, and then the story of that man Joseph, a young man who trusted God when all the world around him seemed to be hostile to him, and he was victorious in his life because he dared to be faithful to the faith that was within his heart in the God whom he served.

Now, as a result of that, I've gone through scripture and tried to pick out people that God, in his infinite wisdom, had put a sanction on and said, this is a man that pleased me, to find what the characteristics are

of those people who trusted God and satisfied him. Abraham, of course, is the preeminent one, and in looking at his life, it seems to me that there are three things that characterize his faith, and I want to share those with you tonight. And as I share them, I would like to be asking in my own heart whether I am marked by those characteristics, and I would like for you to be asking yourself and asking God whether you in your life are marked by those characteristics.

Incredibly simple things, but you know, so oftentimes it is the simple things that open up doors for us of understanding that we can walk through into new dimensions of life, into new and more fruitful ways of living. Now, if there is anything that characterizes Abraham, it is the first thing that is said about him in this passage. We are told that when God spoke to him, he went out not knowing where he was going.

And in that brief phrase, the basic heart of Abraham's faith is summed up. You know that Abraham lived beyond the Tigris-Euphrates, he lived in Babylon, and there God came to him apparently when he and his family were living in idol worship. There is a great old story told by the rabbis that Abraham's father was an idol maker, and that that is the way he supported his family.

And as he made his idols, he put them in his idol shop where he let his customers come and look at them, and then he sold those idols to people who needed some religious help. Abraham's task, among other things, was that he was the one that every morning came in and put the food for the idols to eat. And then every morning when he came in to put the fresh food there for the idols to eat, he had to take out what they hadn't eaten.

So over a period of time, he began to catch on that they didn't have very big appetites. And finally he raised the question as to whether they had appetites at all. And then the inevitable question as to whether it was the idols or the rats and the evaporation that caused the change in the amount of food that he took out from what he brought in.

So one night he tried an experiment. He took an axe and went in and he chopped all of the idols that his father had made and that he had helped his father make, chopped them to bits, to pieces, to kindling wood, except for the one biggest idol in the shop. He left him and he took the axe with which he had chopped up all the other idols and carefully placed it in the arms, the outstretched arms of the biggest of the idols, the one he had left, and went to bed.

The next morning he was awakened by his father, who was somewhat distraught, and he said to his son, Abe, somebody has ruined us. Come see the damage that he's done. So he took him to the idol shop and there was the result of Abe's work the night before.

All of the idols chopped to bits except for the big one. And his father looked in great distress at his son and said, Abe, who would have ever done this to us? And Abe looked back at him and said, well, it's rather obvious, isn't it? There he stands. You've caught him red-handed.

And the rabbis say that was the day that Abraham started on his journey. Now, I'm sure that that story is not true, but it must have been some circumstances like that when a man who lived in a pagan country, worshiping false gods, had the true and living God come to him and say, I want you. And I want you to walk with me.

I want you to live with me. And I want you to follow me wherever I lead you. And Abraham looked up and said, where are you going? And he said, that's not your problem.

Your business is to follow me. You see, you're not to follow me because of where I'm going to take you. You're to follow me because of who I am.

I don't want you to follow me to a place. I want you to follow me. There's a big difference between those two things, isn't there? There are many of us that would be perfectly willing to go with Christ if we thought he was going where we wanted to go.

But you see, what he's after is for us to go with him where our attachment is not to his will, but our attachment is to him. And whatever that will may be, we accept it because with that we get him. He wants us to know him, to trust him, to love him, and to want him because he wants us.

Now, the amazing thing is that Abraham looked at God and said, that's a bargain. I'll go. Not knowing where you're taking me, I will go.

I will leave. In the States we have greyhounds and they advertise, leave the driving to us. So he said, I'll let you be the one who decides where we go.

I want to go with you. Abraham attached himself to the Lord God and began to follow him. Blindly? Well, yes.

Blind in the sense that he didn't know where he was going, but there was nothing blind about his faith, because his faith was not in where he was going, it was in the one that was taking him. And there's a big difference between those two things. Now, you know, as I've lived with that over the years, at first that seemed to me an amazing thing.

But you know, as I've gotten to know more of the word of God and more of God himself, that really should not be such a surprise. And it should not be such a strange thing. As you know, I'm an old Hebrew teacher, and I have found through that some fascinating insights into the ways of God and into the book that he has given to us.

I remember one day I was learning some of the words for the points of the compass in Hebrew, and it's very interesting. There's a word smol, which means left, and there's a word yamin, which means right. But I looked at that word yamin, and I thought, now wait a minute, that's also the word for south, isn't it? And if you know anything about that, you will remember that Arabic and Hebrew are very similar.

Hebrew is sort of a broken down Arabic, really. You know Arabic, Hebrew is like falling off a wall, but Arabic is quite a chore. But nevertheless, if you know the Arabian Peninsula, you know that the southernmost part of the Arabian Peninsula is Yemen.

We pronounce it the land of Yemen. And that word Yemen means south, and it also means right. It's as far south as you can go in the Arabian Peninsula without getting your feet wet.

Then you get into the sea, you see, the Indian Ocean. But it is both south and right, I thought, for heaven's sake. Then a man has to, if he's going to be a good Hebrew, stand in a certain relationship to the compass.

And I checked, and that's right, because in Hebrew the word kedem is the word for east, and it's a word for what's in front of you. So that immediately made me check the next thing, and you know what it was. That's right.

The word for west is the word for what's behind you. And then a fascinating thought came across me. Do you know that the word for kedem is both the word for east and what's in front of you, and it's also the word for antiquity? It's the word for the past.

Well, immediately I checked, and sure enough, the word achor, which means behind you and means the west, is also the word for the future. I thought, for heaven's sake, there goes all my high school commencement addresses. You know, you talk to these starry-eyed young people marching face forward into the future, and in Hebrew it says, no, that's not the way they go.

They stumble awkwardly and hesitantly backwards into a future they can't see. But that's much more realistic, isn't it? Not a soul in this crowd that can tell me what the next 24 hours will contain. And there's not a fully conscious person here who can't trace out for me what the last 24 hours have contained.

There they are right in front of you, and you can see them and review them. But the future, it's behind you, and you can't see it. I thought, you know, that's the way life is.

That's the reason there is always apprehension about the future, because it's unknown. You know, we don't like to walk backwards. We're very uncomfortable moving that way.

How do you know whether there's anything there for your foot to land on? And if it is, whether it's stable. Then I thought, for heaven's sake, that's the reason faith in Jesus is so eminently reasonable. Do you know who he is? He is the one who was and who is and who is to come.

He is the beginning and he is the ending. He is the one who transcends all time distinction. We live in time, but he made time.

So time is in him. He's not in it. And he knows tomorrow as well as he knows yesterday.

And he knows exactly where I need to go for my own well-being. Now, if you knew somebody who knew tomorrow and knew what was in your best interest, wouldn't you be asking him some things? How eminently reasonable that if Jesus is the person we say he is, that we should put our hand in his. Not this way and say, let's go, but this way and say, be patient with me as I stumble a bit, but lead me.

I don't know what's there and I don't know what's good for me, but I know you do. You love me and you've made me for something good and I'm going to trust you. Lead on, O King eternal.

You know what that word eternal means? Transcends time. No yesterday, today and tomorrow there. It's all now and he lives in it all, all at once.

Now, you know, I first started doing that when I was in my teens. There's a lot of fun in getting old. Now, no young person in the crowd will believe that, but you get richer as you get old.

I don't mean in money, but you get richer in memory. And, you know, memory can be a great burden or memory can be a great liberator. You see, if you don't know where to go, you're in trouble.

But if you've been over the road enough that you know which way to go and your memory tells you, you don't even think, you just move right ahead. You know, one of the things that now I know, he doesn't lead those who let him guide them into dead-end streets. Don't you hate dead-end streets? I don't know many things I hate worse than dead-end streets when I don't know I'm on them until I get to the end.

Then I have to turn around. I don't know why I'm in so much hurry, but I don't like dead-end streets. Do you know something I can bear witness to after 40-some years? When I've been faithful to him and let him guide, there's never been a dead-end street in the whole 40-some years.

But as the future has opened up, as the future has turned into the past in front of me, I've been able to see his way working. And you know, if when I had been in my teens I had known how good his way was going to be, I would have loved him a lot more, trusted him a lot more fully, and been a lot more zealous to stick very close to him. And somehow Abraham said, I believe you know what's coming, and I'm going to trust you and let you lead the way.

I want to ask you, are you still trying to manipulate your life? If you are, you are not very smart. The only intelligent thing that any man can do, if Jesus is who he says he is and who the scripture says he is, is for a person, young or old, to put his hand in Christ's hand and say, I don't know the future and I don't know what's best. But you do, and you love me, and it's safe to trust you.

I'm going to let you lead me. That's what Abraham did. God said, I like a guy like that.

I like him. And he said, he's my friend. But now, that's not all of Abraham's faith.

There's a second characteristic of Abraham's faith that is equally significant once that has been established. We are told that God, over the years, led him and told him that he was going to do a great thing for him. He was going to give him a son.

Now, when God began to talk with Abraham, he was 75. I like that, because I'm getting there. And I'm glad to know that the gospel is not just for young people.

And I don't believe that life ought to be one where the horizons get narrower all the time. I believe if you're following Christ, they ought to keep going like this. And there ought to be a place of usefulness and worth for those that are as old as I am.

You see, he was 75 when God began to talk to him, and God said to him, I'm going to give you a son. And you will remember, he gave him the son. And then after the son got up and was in those teen years, God came to him one day and said, I want you to take your son Isaac, and I want you to take him out where I lead you, and there I want you to build an altar, I want you to put him on that altar, and I want you to sacrifice him to me.

Now, that was not unknown in that world. There were many cities in Abraham's world that had a king's son's body in the foundations where they sacrificed him so that the city would have the blessing of their God. So God was not asking Abraham to do anything that other gods didn't ask.

But you see, there was something strange about Abraham's relationship to Isaac. God had told Abraham that the salvation of the world, the blessing of the world, hinged on that boy, and that through him all the nations of the earth would find blessing. Abraham had a great sense of destiny himself, but he had a greater sense of destiny about what was to come through his son.

And you know, I believe every believer has a sense of destiny. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, Jesus said, and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain. I believe that there is that sense of mission and that sense of destiny in every person that is walking with God, because God's going somewhere.

He's not going nowhere. And if you're going with him, he's taking you somewhere. And so, you see, there should be that sense of destiny.

Every man wants to be worth something. Every woman wants to be worth something. And when you come to God, you know you are, and you know something good is going to come out of your life.

Now, all of Abraham's ambitions and hopes and his sense of mission and purpose is tied up in that boy. And God says, I want you to kill him. Now, the unbelievable thing is to me that the biblical text tells us nothing about Abraham's struggle.

In fact, the biblical text simply says, God told him that one day, and then the next thing you have is, and Abraham arose early in the morning and took his servants and animals with the wood and things they needed and his son and started toward Mount Moriah. As I said, I used to teach Hebrew. I'll never forget when I read it the first time and it came home to me.

God tells him to offer Isaac. And then the next line is, which means, and he arose early in the morning. I'm glad it doesn't tell us about the night because I expect he went through the same thing that night that you and I might go through.

No man forfeits his son easily, the supreme love object of his life. But whatever he went through that night, the next morning, he was obeying his friend. And he said, he hasn't failed in his leadership to me yet, and I will follow him.

If he leads me to Mount Moriah, there I will follow him. You know, it's a wonderful thing to come to the place where, no matter what the future looks like, there is something in your heart that says, the one thing I know about him is he does all things well. Now, it was not an easy thing, but this was established in Abraham's life out of that.

Abraham now knew that there was nothing in his life that he was holding back from God. Abraham, that day, came to the place where it was not something he said with his lips. He now knew within his own heart and consciousness, all that I have is open to my friend.

He can have it all. Never a greater example in scripture, I suppose, of a man saying, the best that I've got, you can have. Now, nothing held back from his friend.

Now, how difficult was that for him? I think I understand a little of it. You know, I'm convinced that our families are the best theological educational institutions the world ever had. I've got six major professors that have changed my life.

One of them's name is Elsie, one of them's name is Bessie, one of them's name is Denny, one of them's name is Katie, and the other two are Susie and Sally, and the last three are red-headed, and the last two are twins. I think there's where we learn more theology than we'll ever learn in classrooms or in Sunday school. That's where we ought to learn more.

I remember, you know, they say, think about a man who's 75 before he's sure he's going to have a child, and his wife's 65, and then it's 25 years that he waits for the child, and he's 100 when the child is born. Can you imagine how much fun and delight he got out of that boy? You know, it's one thing to be a father, but to be a grandfather, you know, they say you love your children, you worship your grandchildren. I didn't believe that one, but I suspect Abraham understood some of that.

I remember when our oldest daughter was in Latin America in mission work. A Monday morning, I was coming home from a preaching engagement, and about 9 o'clock in the morning as I drove, I stopped and called Elsie to let her know where I was and about what time I'd get home, and when I got her on the phone, the minute she recognized my voice, she exploded into tears. And I was sure the world had come half to an end, and I said, what's happened? And she said, Bessie's had her baby, and I'm not there.

Now, it was 9 o'clock in the morning, 10 o'clock that night, I put her on a plane in Cincinnati, and 10 o'clock the next morning, she was sitting in a hospital room in Medellin, Colombia, holding that baby that Bessie had had. And then I began to get the letters. An ecstatic, sentimental old grandma.

Now, you know, I've had people tell me, you love your children, you worship your grandchildren. I thought that's stupid. One thing I know is, I'll never love anybody any more than I love my children.

How can you love your grandchildren more than you love your children? You love your children with all your heart. How can you love your grandchildren more? So I got those letters and smiled to myself, condescendingly. She's a grandmother and a woman.

So about six months later, I landed in Medellin, Colombia. My daughter and son-in-law picked me up at the airport and took me to their apartment and set me down in their small apartment in the most comfortable chair, and then they put that little thing six months old in my lap. Inexplicably, unsolicitedly, unintentionally, I suddenly found myself as mushy as a rotten squash.

You know what a squash is? My attention span is not long, but I don't believe I had a fault for five minutes, except, do you think it could ever possibly be? No, it couldn't be. Nobody could ever know that she was loved that much by some old idiot. And then, you know, after about five minutes, I had a second thought, a humbling thought.

It couldn't be that anybody ever loved me like that. And then, you know, slowly I began to realize, yes, there was somebody once that loved me, not one but more that loved me like that. Abraham's child was never born until he was a hundred years old.

Everything he had was wrapped up in me. And he looked up and said, I can trust you. I don't understand, but I won't fight with you.

There's nothing in my life held back. You are the one who says, and my word to you is no matter what, yes. No matter what the cost.

Now, you know, there's no limit to what God can do with a person who doesn't have any nose in him to God, where all those nose have been rolled up into one response and now they've become one supreme yes to God. The nose are gone. You don't believe that will make a difference? It will shake the world.

What intrigues me is that God told Abraham that through that boy would come a land, a nation, a people. And what intrigues me is ABC, CBS, NBC, and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, whatever your TV news is up here, they can't keep Israel off the evening news to save their necks. The New York Times averages a story a day on the descendants of Abraham.

You see, when you and I get all the nose out of us, when we let him take them out and let him put one supreme yes in us, there are eternal consequences that come. And it takes history to spell them all out. And I think God must sit there and look down and smile.

You know, I wonder what he's going to do. You don't see Walter Cronkite, I'm sure, but in the United States, he's been the chief news reporter for how many years? I can't tell you. And I've listened to him with great delight report the news.

You know, I've never heard him once mention God. He's reported the events of the day. What, what, 20 years? Reported 20 years of history and never once referred to God.

I wonder if when he shows up before God, God's going to say, Hello, Walter. What do you think about me? Didn't I ever do anything to rate the evening news? No, God never got on. But Abraham's children are there every night, still in business, and he's keeping his promise.

Nothing held back. I want to ask you, are you protecting certain areas in your life, keeping your defenses up to keep God from having his way? Maybe your child that God wants on the mission field, and you're carefully moving him toward a career where you can keep him near you or keep her near you. Or maybe some of your possessions that God is saying, I could use that for the saving of souls.

And you say, well, you know, a man has to take care of his own interests. Or maybe your reputation. Why don't you in that business office where you are give a clear witness for Christ? You say, now wait.

I can't afford to run that risk. I'll never forget how much fun it was a winter ago to walk in the office of one of the top banks in Hong Kong and one of the biggest banks in the world, the bank that Mexico owes more than any other bank in the world, vice president and manager for their Hong Kong and now for their China office in Peking. Briefcase in one hand and a big, thick Bible in the other.

Jim Schweitzer came walking in. That's the way he comes in every morning. And everybody knows where he stands.

You see, he's given his reputation wholly to God. Nothing held back. Are you protecting yourself at any point? Let me say, where you protect yourself is where the spiritual cancer is.

And where you let him take your hands off and say, God, it's all yours, that's where there is health and freedom and life. But now here's the third thing. You will notice that it says that they were looking for a city.

Now, this means that they were future-oriented. And if there's anything that's characteristic of Abraham's faith, it is that there is a future orientation in it. You know, so oftentimes when somebody asks you what you believe, I know when somebody asks me, Kinloch, what do you believe? I tend to either testify or theologize.

You know, I will give my testimony about the past, or I will say, well, I believe in one God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Triune. You know, I think if you'd ask Abraham, you would have gotten a surprise. If you had asked Abraham, if I read the book of Genesis right, if you'd ask Abraham what he believes, you know what I think he would have said? You want to know what I believe religiously and theologically and church-wise? And I say, yeah, Abe, that's what I'd like to know.

Well, he said, see these hills around here? And I say, yeah, I see these hills. You mean these hills here in Canaan? Yes, these hills here in Canaan. What does that have to do with your religion? Abe says, well, you see, what my religion tells me is that one of these days all these hills are going to belong to my descendants.

I say, that's a strange religion. Now, wait a minute, Abe. What do you mean this is your religion? Well, he said, I have a friend who has been walking with him for a number of years, and he tells me that all these hills, one of these days, are going to belong to my descendants.

That's what I believe. Not a word about heaven in that, is there? You know, I think sometimes we let our belief in heaven be an escape from getting at what God wants us to get at here and now. Now, I'm aware that God said about Abraham that he looked for a city eternal in the heavens, and therefore God was not ashamed to be his God.

But you know, God's not ashamed of people who believe God wants to do something in the here and now, too. You know, I studied a little Near Eastern stuff, and I say, now, Abe, you say all these hills are going to belong to you, your descendants. He says, yes.

I say, now, I know enough to know it's against the law for a sojourner, a stranger, a Babylonian to own land here, real estate here in Canaan. Canaanites are afraid the Babylonians might take over, so it was against the law. We know that.

Abe said, yes, I'm aware of that. Well, then pray tell me how these hills can ever belong to your descendants and your foreigners. Well, he said, I don't know how that's going to work out, but I know the guy who owns these hills, and he said they were going to belong to me, and he was here before the Canaanites came along, and he'll be here after they are gone.

I say, so all these hills are going to belong to your descendants. How many children do you have, Abe? Well, you'd ask him that first year. He'd have said, right now I don't have any.

And say, Abe, how old are you? Well, he said, at the present moment I'm 75. And how old is your wife, Miss Sarah? Well, he'd say, right now she's 65. And you say, you're going to have a son? Abraham would say, now, don't talk to me about the birds and the bees.

I know about them as well as you. But I also know the one who said to me, and he's never told me a lie yet, and I choose to believe him. I come away saying, that's strange religion.

Come back ten years later. Say, Abe, you're different from anybody I've ever seen. You're as different from these Canaanites as white is from black.

What is it that makes you so different? What do you believe? Abe says, see these hills? I say, Abe, how old are you? Eighty-five. And you still believe? How old's Miss Sarah? Seventy-five. You say you still believe? He's never lied to me yet.

Come back fourteen years later. Say, Abe, what do you really believe? How old are you? Ninety-nine. How old's Miss Sarah? Eighty-nine.

Then Abe says, would you come back next year? A quarter of a century he lived, looking, looking, believing. And the interesting thing is, after twenty-five years, that child was born. We used to have a man who was president of Asbury College who was a great preacher.

He had a sermon on this. I never had the privilege of hearing it. But the way he told it was, he said, God came to Abraham and told him he was going to have a son, and so the next day Abe went downtown to the local furniture store and went in and looked at his Jewish friend, Jake, and said, Jake, I want the best

baby buggy in the house.

And Jake looked back at Abe and said, one of the servant girls going to have a child at your place, Abe? No, he said, now hold on, Jake, you'll have a little trouble with this, but Miss Sarah's going to have a baby. And Jake says, now wait a minute, Abe. And while he's expopulating, Abe says, Jake, do you want to sell a baby buggy? And being a good Hebrew, Jake went and got the most expensive one in the house and brought it back.

And Abe, 75 years of age, went pushing it down the street along the sidewalk. And every woman down the street got a crinck in her neck, sticking her head out the window and craning it to see what that old man was doing with that empty baby buggy. And he got to his house and pulled it up across the steps and across the porch and into the family room and parked it next to the fireplace and left it there for 25 years for a conversation fee.

And everybody that came in said, Abe, what's the baby buggy for? And Abe said, see these hills? Now I want to tell you, that's great preaching. I didn't do it, but that's great preaching. You know why? I believe there ought to be some baby buggy side of your fireplace.

I'm not talking about the young mothers either or the older ones. Somewhere in my life there ought to be a symbol that I believe God's got something he wants to do in my life. Something significant he wants to do through me for his own glory and for the good of the world.

I stood in Guatemala on a filling station and looked in the face of a young man who was halfway to his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. And I said, how did you get here? Well, he said, I was a Disciples of Christ preacher and had never been born again. They sent a man to my town who had been converted off Skid Row.

He pastored a little church and he had no friend. And my wife befriended him, did his clothes for him and helped him. And he'd come talk to us and said he didn't last long.

He was too direct and he was direct with us. But he said the last night before they booted him out of town, he was sitting at my table, me with all my degrees and my wife with hers, and he was reading John 3.16 and saying, Now, Tom, repeat after me. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that if Tom believes in him.

And he said, That fellow led this Disciples of Christ preacher to Christ. And then God called me to the mission field. He said, We came to Guatemala.

We went back into the interior. He said, Dennis, we came to a big cut in the mountain. And he said, We stood there and we could look down across a huge valley.

And he said, I turned to my wife and said, We're home. And he said, You know what we did? His eyes flushed full of tears. He said, We got down on our knees in that cut and reached our arms of faith out around that whole valley and claimed every square foot and every Indian on every square foot for Jesus.

And at that point his eyes were full and he said, Dennis, they're coming. Dennis, they're coming. We've got some believers in there and there are six of us missionaries now instead of two.

And my seven children are with me, born back in there too. Dennis, they're coming. Now, you know what I believe? I believe that's biblical faith.

I want to ask you a question. Have you got your arms of faith around any territory for him? Are you expecting God to do anything in your life? Don't talk to me about your faith if you are not expecting God to do something in your life. You may be a Sunday school teacher.

Have you got your arms around that class and claiming every one of them for God? I had a friend tell me, Dennis, I live in a trailer park. God said, They're your responsibility. I don't know how it's going to be, but I've put my arms around that trailer park for him.

Let me ask you a question. What if every person in the sound of my voice tonight reached out and laid claim to a segment of Canada for the Lord Jesus? One of these days, every knee will bow. Why don't we help them so that they bow in redemption instead of under judgment? I have a friend who said it is his goal to give \$100,000 a year to Christian missions.

And he reached it. Not overnight, but he reached it. But his goal this year is \$1,400,000 because last year he gave \$1,300,000.

I want to know where you are in your progress. Is there a future element in your faith? I want to tell you something. If you go home from this camp meeting without laying claim to new territory for Christ, your life this year will not be worth living.

And you will come back next year saying, disaster. But do you know something? If you look at him and say, Lord, you lead the way. My hand is in yours.

I will let you do the driving. And there is not a thing in my life that I will hold back. It is all yours, anything.

And you whisper to me what your will is and I will reach out and work with you for it. Do you know what you will do? You will come back next year having gone from victory to victory. Is he speaking to you?

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