

Trusting God Again Like a Child

by Francis Chan

As leaders, we need to stay strong in the Lord, surround ourselves with people who support and encourage us, and be willing to take risks of faith to see our vision become a reality.

Duration: 1:12:55

Scripture: 1 Samuel 14:6, 1 Samuel 30:6, Psalm 46:1, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 18:3, Mark 10:15, Philippians 4:13, Hebrews 11:1, James 1:5, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Faith", "Childlike Faith", "Strength in Leadership"

Description

Francis Chan emphasizes the importance of trusting God with childlike faith, urging leaders to genuinely love their congregations and seek God's presence in their ministry. He reflects on the challenges faced by pastors today, including criticism and the pressure to perform, while encouraging them to strengthen themselves in the Lord as David did. Chan shares personal experiences of prayer and reliance on God, illustrating how faith can lead to miraculous outcomes. He calls for a return to the simplicity of faith, where believers can experience God's power and presence in their lives. Ultimately, he reminds the audience that true ministry is about loving others and being filled with God's Spirit to serve effectively.

Transcript

I've been praying for you, and the moment I walked in the room with all the singing, and Pastor Jim comes up and he talks about how the Spirit of God is in this room. I mean, I really did feel it the moment I walked in this room. And just welling up with tears over what's going on in this room with this excitement.

But as I began to pray, as we're all singing, these words just kept coming out of my mouth as I'm speaking to God. It just automatically, I just kept saying, fill me, Lord, so I can fill them. Fill me so I can fill them.

Fill me so I can fill them. Like God, I love these people. These people, they have to, you gotta stay strong.

These are the leaders. Everything rises and falls with these people. And so is there anything, God, please give me a word, give me something to say to them, to encourage them, because these are the people that cannot go down.

The last time I was here with Pastor Jim, he was just grieving over the numbers of pastors that were dropping out of ministry. And he was sharing statistics, sharing his heart with me, and just asking if I would partner with him in helping, being a part of the solution. And my heart screams out for that.

I would love to be any part of this. And it's amazing, the moment I walked in this room, and that doesn't normally happen. In fact, I write, there's questions that I put in the front of my Bible.

There's seven questions I ask myself before I preach, just to get my heart right again. Number one, I ask, am I more concerned about what people will think, or am I thinking about God's presence in this and pleasing him? Because sometimes I get caught up in the people pleasing, or will they like me, or this or that. But the number two question that I have in there is, do I love these people? Honestly, do I love these people I'm about to preach to? Because you of all people know, you can get up here and not care at all about the people out there, right? You're thinking about your sermon, you're thinking about so many things, you're thinking about all the criticism that's going to come afterwards, you're thinking about all this stuff, and your heart isn't one of love.

You just get into the routine. And so I try to look at the crowd, and most days I walk into a room and just, they're a bunch of strangers to me. I feel nothing.

And so I'm so glad I have that question to keep me in check, and I come before the Lord and go, God, give me a love for these people. Help me put myself in their shoes, so that I really care about what they care about, so they can sense that I love them, that this is a supernatural thing. Because if I'm doing this without love, it's worthless, right? It's pointless.

There's no reward in this, and it's a waste of time. And yet today, I can honestly say, the moment I walked in here, it was just, I love these people, God. You have to, you have to fill me.

You have to fill me, God, because I don't want to just get up there and ramble, and say things that they don't need. I really want to look at you and think, man, I really believe I'm going to be looking at maybe all of you a hundred years from now, and to really think, what's going to matter? What's going to matter? Was there something I could say there, Lord, that I, and I didn't take the opportunity to say it, that would have encouraged them, that would have kept them in the fight, because we got to keep them in the fight. Because like it or not, things rise and fall with us.

It's a position God's given us as leaders. I mean, you know that. And when you're strong, and you're walking with the Lord, and you, the presence of God is just, you know, all over you, man, it reflects on those around us.

And yet, in this day and age, it is so hard to do what we do. It's so easy to get distracted by so many things. It was a lot easier 20 years ago.

It really was, at least for me. I don't know if you felt it, but it was a lot easier, it seemed, because not everyone could get to you. You know, they couldn't just email you, or then tweet about you, and you know, and write these things, whatever they want.

And we live in such a critical age, where we just slander all authority, especially that in the church. And you see it, every news article on the internet, right? What comes after it? 100, 200, 300 comments, everyone just chiming in on their opinion. Why? Because they can.

We've never had that before. You know, people had their opinions, but they had no one to listen to them. And now it's like this immediate audience.

And so one person is angry at you, and wants to take it out on you. He's got this instant audience with people who are just wanting negativity, and wanting criticism. And then you're holding on to this, and trying not to be bitter, and not to be angry.

And to stand up there on a Sunday morning, and look at people, and genuinely love them. Even those who you know are criticizing you all week long. And to look at them, and try to say, Father, forgive them.

They know not what they do. They don't even know how much I love them. They don't know a whole lot.

You know, they just, it's just that whole sense of, God, it's hard to do that. It is really, really hard to do that. And so that's why I have prayed for you.

And I, and I do take this very seriously. And even now, I'm going to ask you to, I was going to pray for you, but I want to ask you to pray for me. That God would give me the words to say.

And I know that's, that's weird. Wow, the speaker's asking me to pray for him. But you know, I was in Korea a couple weeks ago.

And it was, it was such an amazing experience. Because as I got up to speak, the pastor had all of the Korean, all the people stand up, thousands of them. And they start singing a song.

And they're, they're, they're all going like this, singing in Korean. I don't know what they were saying, you know. But the translator eventually, you know, told me, he goes, hey, they're, they're, they're singing a song of blessing over you.

They're asking God to speak through you, because they want to hear a message from God. And, and I tell you, I mean, I, I was nervous, you know, getting there. And you know, the Korean church, and every, you know, and here's this massive church.

And yet the moment all the people, I mean, they were looking at me with the most sincere eyes, and just singing the song of blessing. And I heard it just in your response, like, like, I tell you, it changed everything. Suddenly, it's like, oh, you guys are for me, like you, you love me.

It's really weird to walk into a church service and feel loved, you know. It is, you know what I mean? It's like, wow, you guys are all for me, and praying that the Spirit of God, you're not just out with notepads, you know, waiting to make me, you know, see if I make a mistake or whatever else. You're praying for me.

You really believe that this could be a moment from God. And the way we saw the Spirit fall and move, I tell you, what a thrill, what a rush that was. And so, I am going to ask you to sing a song in Korean for me right now.

Just any Korean song you know, it'll work. No, I seriously, oh, is there a Korean here? Of course, it's Brooklyn Tabernacle. You got someone from every country here.

I would ask, just for 30 seconds, of you really connecting to God right now, not just going through, but thinking about God in heaven, and say, God, make this supernatural. Speak through him. Would you just pray over me right now? So, Father, you know my heart that I, this is not out of selfishness that I asked for these prayers.

It's out of this love of just, God, I need to be filled by you so I have anything to offer them. God, who am I? Lord, please just speak through me now. Please, God, in all power, whatever you want to say through me, God.

God, I just see this. We want to be your army. We want to be fearless.

God, I see the people in Scripture, and I want to be like them. I want to be beyond them. God, I want to have faith that you hear us from heaven right now.

And we're just asking you, Lord, to fill us all. Fill me so I could fill them, so they can fill the people in their congregations, so that the name of Jesus would be lifted up. And none of us, Father, did all about Jesus.

In his name we pray. Amen. Gosh, I hope you guys are doing okay.

I have been praying. Even yesterday, I was speaking somewhere else, but my mind was here, so I didn't do a real good job there. But I was praying for you.

I was, because, you know, it's like, it's just there's something about the pastorate, you know, and knowing. And so college students, they'll figure it out. But, you know, it's something about the position that you guys are in, and just remembering the pain, and the struggles, and how much of a fight to stay in it, and to maintain that joy, and that strength.

And so my heart was with you, and also just seeing the cost. Again, I mean, whether you like to hear it or not, things rise and fall with you. You are the one that God has chosen.

And I don't like that sometimes upon myself, the pressure, and the way Satan attacks us, and the way people attack us, and anyone put in a position of leadership. It's so much easier just to sit in the background and criticize everyone. But to actually be the leader, and be on the front lines to take some of that, it's tough.

And so I pray for you, and I just wonder, I wish I could just know what's really going on in your hearts right now, and whether you're still feeling strong in the Lord, because we need you to be strong. We need you to be the I was reading the other day in 1 Samuel. I don't know if you ever noticed that story of Saul, and then Jonathan, and his armor bearer.

But it's a story of the Philistines, and there were just some things that jumped out to me in 1 Samuel 13. It talks about how the Philistines, verse 5, mustered to fight with Israel. 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude.

And then in verse 6, it says, when the men of Israel saw they were in trouble, for the people were hard-pressed, the people hid themselves in caves, and holes, and rocks, and tombs, in cisterns. And some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was at Gilgal, and all the people followed him, trembling.

And later on, it says that Saul numbered the people who were present with him. He says about 600 men. And I'm reading this passage, trying to picture this.

All these people are hiding in caves, in cisterns, because you got these 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and then you got the people, the army. They said it was like the sand on the seashore. And then here's these 600 men, just terrified.

And then some of them are with Saul, and then others are just running for their lives, finding anywhere to hide. I'll hide in a tomb. I'll jump in this coffin with this guy.

These guys are going to kill us. And then there's the story of Jonathan. This blows me away.

Jonathan, verse 6 of chapter 14, says to the young man who carried his armor, come on, let's go over to the garrisons of these uncircumcised. It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few. And his armor-bearer said to him, do all that is in your heart.

Do as you wish. Behold, I am with you, heart and soul. Like, oh man, isn't that a beautiful picture? See, that's what a leader does.

He just says, okay, there's only a quarter million of them. Whatever the Lord, that doesn't stop the Lord. Like, the faith of this guy.

And then to look at his armor-bearer and go, come on, come with me. And this guy goes, I'm with you, heart and soul. You ready to take him on? You believe in this God that much? I'm with you, heart and soul.

And even as I was reading that earlier today again, just thinking, man, God's given me a couple armor-bearers. I recently moved to San Francisco and just God brought a couple guys along my side. And sometimes I think, oh, but I don't have these thousands of people following me right now.

And again, just looking at this passage, it doesn't matter. Man, you got two armor-bearers. You're better than Jonathan.

You got two of them. And to just look in your life, and I hope you have a guy like that. I hope you have a couple people like that.

I hope your marriages feel that way. It's the two of you. Come on, we'll do it.

I'm with you, heart and soul. I tell you, that was the greatest thrill of being, well, second greatest thrill of getting married. And it was when I told my wife, I go, I think the Lord is leading me to start a church.

And I know we never talked about this. And I don't know, you know, we've only been married two weeks, but it's really, I know, can you imagine? And so I say to her, I go, but the things that he's put on my mind and my heart, it means we're just going to start in our living room. And I don't know if anyone's going to show up.

And that means you would have to work and support us. And I mean, two weeks of marriage, saying this to your new bride. I mean, you can imagine how nervous I was like, wow, what am I doing? And I still remember her looking at me and just saying, you know, if you believe that's what God's called us to do, she goes, I married you because I believe that the Lord would lead me through you.

And so if you believe that's what God wants us to do, I am with you 100%. Do you know what that does for a guy? Just, especially someone whose parents died at, you know, when I was a young age, no one that believed in me, no one that believed I was this man of God, everything I touched failed. And then this woman comes into my life who comes alongside very much like this armor bearer and says, I'm with you heart and soul.

I married you because of this. I came into this relationship. I tell you, the confidence, that's why if some of you are associate pastors or whatever else, the opportunity to come alongside of someone, I can't tell you what that means.

I remember as a pastor, I used to speak at a lot of youth pastors conferences, and I would take some Q&A from these youth pastors, and inevitably every youth pastors conference, it was always, well, what do you do if you hate your senior pastor? What if your senior pastor this? What if this? What if this? All blah, blah, blah, you know? And I just remember one time just being so overwhelmed by it all, and I go, you guys, I'm sorry. Maybe I'm just weird. I go, but I love my youth guys.

And I go, honestly, I'd be willing to bet you guys that my junior high pastor or my high school pastor or my college pastor, that each one of those guys would take a bullet for me because we're family. And it's weird to hear you talking this way about your senior pastor. Like, if they're at a conference right now, I'm pretty confident I know what they're saying about me, and it's not this.

You know, when I look at this pastor, I mean, I look at this passage, I think of some of these guys in my life, and I go, no, no, no, they're like this armor bearer. And I pray that you have those relationships with certain people. I wasn't even going to get into that, but when I read that, I was like, wow, that's such a powerful statement.

But anyways, you see the two of them, you know, verse 11, they show themselves to the Philistines, and the Philistines go, hey, look, they came out of their holes. And they said, come on up to us, and we'll show you a thing. And so Jonathan climbs up on his hands and feet and his armor bearer after him, and they fell before Jonathan, and his armor bearer killed them after him.

And that first strike with Jonathan and his armor bearer made killed about 20 men, verse 15, and there was panic in the camp, in the field, and among the people, the garrison, and even the raiders trembled, the earth quaked, and it became a very great panic. So these two guys climb up, you know, I mean, well, let's just conservatively say a quarter million people, and they took down like 20 of them, and everything starts shaking, and these people start panicking, because they see something happening. And I love what happens next.

Verse 16, it says, the watchmen of Saul and Gibeah, Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude was dispersing here and there. And then Saul said to the people, you know, he finds out, hey, who's over there? What's going on over there? And when they count the people, they go, man, the only two people missing are Jonathan and his armor bearer. He's going, man, it's just Jonathan and his armor bearer, and he sees that God is stirring, and so he says, let's go, let's go, and he brings his group, and they join in the fight.

But what's funny is then later, as they were fighting, then the Philistines start to retreat. And in verse 22, this is a big point, it says, likewise, when all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they too followed hard after them in battle. So then there's this other group, and I just, I go, man, I don't want to be in that third group, you know? What? Okay, so Jonathan and his armor bearer, I still don't want to go.

Saul and his guys are there now, I still don't want to go. Oh, now they're running away? Okay, yeah, we showed you. Yeah, come on.

You know, it's just, what? That last group, that once the enemy is fleeing, they decided to run after them. And when I look at that story, there's so many things I hadn't noticed before. It's just, you know what? It's that leader, right? It's that guy with his armor bearer.

And sometimes, man, we're alone, and we just go, man, I just believe this. Like, I read the Bible, and it seems like we can do this, and there could be no one else with you, and you forge ahead. And then once the spirit begins to stir, what happens? Then people jump in, right? And then when it becomes a movement, then people come out from the rocks, go, yeah, I always believed in you.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, it's just, I look at that, and I go, wow, that's the strength of a leader. That's the type of person I want to be.

God, I want to be on the forefront. I think God's wired some of us to be that way, and yet we can get beat down, and we lose some of this courage. Man, when I look at that, and I go, wow, that's what Jonathan did.

Could I have done that? Do I have that much faith in my God? I want to be like him. I'm not like him yet. I want to be that person.

See, I think of, you know, even being here at Brooklyn Tabernacle. I mean, we're here. Why? Because we've seen what God's done in this place, but I'm sure there were days when, you know, it was pastor, and not very many with you, that just thought, we're going to follow this guy? You know? Where did he go to school? Are you kidding me? His wife's going to lead a choir? Where'd she get her degree? Where'd this come from? And there's going to be times like that, but then once the spirit begins to stir, it's like, oh, yeah, I always knew, and we got to take those steps of faith, and I know every year it gets harder to be this guy.

And the older we get, and the more that we have to risk, the harder it is to say, come on, let's just go. Let's just go. Let's just make it happen.

I was also reading in 1 Samuel 30. Maybe it's not there. Oh, yeah, it is.

Okay. 1 Samuel 30 about David, and verse 1, it says, when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites made a raid against the Negev and against Ziklag. They'd overcome Ziklag and burned it with fire and taken captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great.

They killed no one, but they carried them off and went their way. And when David and his men came to the city, they found it burned with fire, and their wives and sons and daughters were taken captive. And then David and the people who were with him raised their voices and wept till they had no more strength to weep.

David's two wives also had been taken captive. Don't pay attention to the two wives thing. Ravi will explain that later.

So David's two wives also had been taken captive, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. And David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. And then look what it says.

But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God. Man, when I read that, I just had to repent. Because I'm looking, I'm going, how did he do that? How did he do that? I mean, can you imagine coming to your hometown and finding it burned with fire? You and your army, all these guys, yeah, you come back like, what just happened here? And then you hear reports that they took your wife and your kids, and they're doing God knows what to them.

Can you imagine, man, coming to a place like that, going, they took my wife, they took my kids, where are they? And that's why it says they cried. They just all, they didn't know what to do. Every guy in there with all their feelings for their family, they're going nuts.

And it said they cried until they had no more strength to weep. You can picture that, can't you? Just go, man, that's what I would do. You just start thinking about each one of your kids.

And you're going, what are they doing? Where are they? You know, the anger, like you just want to kill, you want to, all of the flesh, everything, and then just the pain and the cure. You're going nuts, and everyone's going nuts. And then not only that, as David is just as the leader, he's going, what's happening? What are they doing? What's happening to them? And then you see that all of your men start looking at you and going, it's your fault.

And then they all start talking about stoning you to death. And then David, who's just done weeping for his own family, now has to look at the circle of men who are ready to kill him, and now he's all alone. And David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

I go, wow, that's tough. That is a man right there, who just says, okay, God, it's back to you and me. You can get me through this.

You can get me through this. I'm losing it emotionally. I've just lost my family, and now my men want to kill me.

And many people, many commentators say that's when he wrote Psalm 40. I waited patiently for the Lord. He inclined and heard my cry.

He lifted me out of this pit, set my feet on a rock. You know, I want to sing this new song to him, because God did that all for me. And I just read that.

I go, God, I have fallen apart over things far smaller than this. You know, one bad email, I give up, right? Why me? And then I read this, and I go, man, he's strengthened himself in the Lord his God. And that's why I just began to repent.

I go, God, I have not believed in you as much as I should. I have not found strength in you like I should. And in this day and age, people don't even push that anymore.

They, you know, it's all about, I mean, I am all about the family. That's what this is about, right? We encourage one another, but there are times when it's got to be just you and God. No one else can do it for you.

No one else gets you. You're the leader. No one's going to understand your mind.

They're not going to understand the way you love your church. That's your baby. It's like no one loves your kids like you love your kids.

They don't get it. And people give you flipping answers for your children. Oh, just do this.

You don't get it. I've lived with her. My wife gave birth to her.

You don't know. And in the same ways, there's just times in the ministry, people you've led to the Lord that are now against you for whatever reason, and they don't get it. And there are times when you just say, okay, Lord, I can't get frustrated with people because they don't get it.

I just got to strengthen myself in you. And I don't hear people talk about this a lot. It's like we don't believe that we can really get that strength from God.

And even well-meaning Christians will tell you, you need something else. And really sometimes the best thing for us is just to get alone with Him, absolutely alone with Him. It's when I'm alone with Him that I'm opening up the book.

It's weird. I mean, I love Bible study. I love hearing from other guys.

And I learned, don't get me wrong, I love all of that. I am just saying there's just something special when no one else is around. And it's just me and this book and the Holy Spirit and these words jump out of the page for me.

And I was going, wow, wow. Is anyone else reading the same book? Because I'm getting these things from this book. And then it's just this courage where it's like, okay, God, I don't care what they think about me.

I want to be like this guy. I want to proclaim this. And so I'm going to go out there in your strength, and no one's going to understand me, but I'm going to do it.

Man, is that still you? You're still having those times with God that are just so rich in His word where you alone are studying this book. And He's speaking to you as a leader. He may not be saying it to everyone else, or maybe no one else is hearing it.

But He's saying, no, you could just climb up there. I know it's you against a quarter million, but at least you got your armor bearer. You can tell jokes along the way.

And it's like, okay, let's go, Lord. Let's go, Lord. Or maybe you're one of those armor bearers that's saying, you know what? I believe that the Lord has anointed this man of God.

And I can't even tell you how huge of a role that is to give your senior pastor, your leader, someone who believes in you and believes that you're a man of God. You're still strong. Because something I've noticed over the years is people almost encourage weakness.

I can only think of two times when a man or woman of God came up to me and reminded me of the strength that was in me and said, suck it up. You're bigger than this. You've got power over this.

You don't have to. I've seen you. I know who you are.

You're at a moment of weakness right now, but you are stronger than that. The Spirit of God is in you. Suck it up.

And it's hard to hear. It's like, what, are you calling me a sissy? You know, whatever. What are you saying? But it's every bit true.

It's like I lost some of that strength I had. There were times in my life when, and I just remember, you know, when someone was saying, gosh, I know it's got to be getting to you. He goes, because you're a sensitive person.

I remember I was just so offended by that. Are you calling me sensitive? I'm not sure you're sensitive. And he could tell I was taken back by that comment.

Because he says, you've got to have thicker skin than that. You're a sensitive guy. Oh, and I hate that.

I mean, it's bad enough being named Francis, you know. And then it's, I'm Francis, the sensitive guy, you know. And he could just tell, you know.

He's a good friend of mine. He could just tell I was a little offended by that statement. But he made the comment.

He goes, understand what I'm saying. He goes, the opposite of being sensitive is being calloused. You don't feel anything.

Because I've been with you overseas. I've seen when you look at the poor and the lost and the way you just break. You can't lose that sensitive side.

Like you care. You care about people. And so the flip side is you're going to care what they think about you.

You care. You don't want to lose that. And yet at the same time, somehow to be strong through it all.

And so that's why, you know, we can try to play tough and go, no, the criticism doesn't get to me. You know, none of that gets to me. I'm a soldier of God.

But no, if you're a sensitive person and you care about things and you care about people, it's just going to happen. You're going to care about what they say about you. You feel.

You experience. You don't just go, I don't care what anyone says about me. No, you do.

And it hurts. And it stinks. And you do have to learn how to develop some thick skin.

And you do have to learn to be like David and say, you know what? They all want to stone me right now. And yet I'm going to strengthen myself in the Lord. I still have him with me.

And if he's with me, yeah, let's go. Let's fight. Let's scale this wall.

Let's make it happen. Are you still strong? Another question I felt like the Lord really wanted me to ask you, and it may sound strange at first, but are you still in ministry? Or are you just in meetings? I think you get the gist of what I'm saying. You know, when we first got into ministry, I don't know what it was like for you, but I was just in high school, and I came to the Lord, and I just started telling everyone about Jesus.

I was just freaked out. Public school, all my buddies, everyone. I'm just thinking, they're going to hell.

I got to say something. I got to do something. But it changes over the years.

Once you get a position, and then once you get maybe elevated to a different role or a different role, you get more and more separated from looking someone in the eyes, and just talking to them about Jesus, and then really discipling them. But now you're in meetings with the people who do that, and you get more and more and more removed. I was so blessed this morning.

Pastor Jim was talking about a gal that he met, and just a young gal, and how he just said, well, just walk alongside of me through the Sunday morning services, and let me just hang out with you, and let me just show you Jesus. And I just go, man, see, that's what got us in at first. And somehow we can get distance from the real, I don't know, it just feels very corporate, very like I'm going to work, going to the office today, and I'm going to, I got this meeting until this time, and you know, the secretary, go, you do this, this, this, this.

And where is that just looking at a lost human being, and just grieving, and crying, and going, God, you've got to save this person. You have to, I actually love him now. I actually love her now.

And somehow you got to do something supernatural in me, because they're not going to believe unless you do something. And we start getting more and more distance from that. And yet we're busy.

We're crazy busy some weeks. But at the end of it, it's not that same ministry that we started with. And how do we get back to making disciples? Last Sunday night, oh, wait, what day is this? No, this is the Sunday night before.

I'm in this point where, let me just share where I'm at. Some of you guys don't even know who in the world I am. I pastored a church, a church that I planted, I shared with you, you know, like with my wife.

And that was about 18 years ago. And about a year ago, I just felt like, man, there's enough pastors in this city. It's a small town, and I've discipled, you know, there's elders, they're strong, a lot of good churches in the area.

And if I left, what would really happen? You know, a couple people would switch churches and go down the street where there's a better, well, whatever. You know, it's just different. But they're not going to fall away from the Lord.

You know, there's just so much going on here. Why don't I go to a place where there's just not a big church presence or just overwhelming number of unbelievers and went overseas mainly to learn. I wanted to see what's going on over there.

You hear about these movements, but also in every country to pray with my family. You know, we'd sold everything and said, we could stay anywhere. And so every, you know, country we went to, we just held hands as a family.

I mean, there's six of us, and my wife was pregnant at the time, and so now there's seven. But, you know, we just said, okay, God, is this it? Is India, is this it? We're good here. And I don't think so.

You know, and then it was like, okay, let's go to Thailand. And, you know, I worked in some orphanage, and no one wanted to leave Thailand. I was like, wow, this is awesome.

We love it. We love it. We love it.

But I just, I don't know how to explain it. It's not it for us. Sorry, kids.

You know, and over to China, you know, and then to Hong Kong. And once I got into Hong Kong, I'm going, this feels like home. I mean, obviously.

But it's, food's good. You know, just going, wow. And we started looking at apartments, houses, everything else.

But then at the end, I was still like, as much as I think I'm supposed to be here someday, there's a couple things I'm supposed to do in the States. I don't feel like my job is done. There's a couple things I'm supposed to do, and I'm going to go hard after those things first, and didn't know where I was going.

Ended up in San Francisco, which isn't really known for Christianity. And I thought, let's go there. And so we've just been experimenting with different things, and been spending some time in the inner city, and just talking to people.

We just now are starting this thing where, and where I live, it's like one, where I minister, it's like a mile by a mile called the Tenderloin District, and it's 586 apartment buildings. I mean, it's just jam-packed with low-income type housing. And so what we do is we just get a group to pray for one address.

They say, you know, forget the other 585 buildings. Let's just pray for this one right now. Let's spend a couple weeks just praying.

I want you to walk around the building. I want you to lay hands on it. I want you to just walk through the halls praying for it.

Just pray, pray that something happens here, that God moves. And then we have a grace team, you know, which I'm a part of. The grace team, we come in, and we just start knocking on every door, and just say, hey, is there anything we can give you? You guys need food? You need groceries? You need hot meals? You need medical supplies? We've got a thrift store down the street.

You need clothes? You need kids? You need a school? You need an after-school program? Like anything. What do you need? You need a job? You know, you need medical help? We just, we will never ask you for anything, because according to Acts 17, our God doesn't need anything from us. He doesn't need to be served by us.

And I said, we're tired of religious people, you know, always trying to get something from you. That's not a good picture of God. God doesn't need anything from us.

So I promise you, I will never ask you for anything. Let me just give. Tell me how I can give to you.

And they tell us a couple things. Like, okay, let me just, how can I pray for you? I know you don't believe in God, or I know you say you believe in a different God. Just try me.

Just try my God. It could be crazy. You could be missing a toe.

I don't care. Whatever. Just try me.

And, you know, and a lot of them give us their prayer requests. And so I go back to the prayer team. I go, pray like crazy, okay? Maybe you'll have six toes by the time I get back.

You know, like I want, because when I look at scripture, that's how God showed himself. It's like, yeah, your prayers, that's great. You believe that, but it didn't work, did you? You know, he didn't really hear you, did he? I mean, maybe he was on vacation.

Maybe, oh, you know, it's the whole Elijah thing. So we can come back the next week and say, I'm just curious. I mean, here's your groceries.

I'm curious. I had 20 people praying for you by name. Was this week different? Anything happen? It's such a vulnerable place to be in, because if God doesn't answer, then they go, no, nothing.

And then if he does, it's like, wow, it's all dependent on God. See, I'm so used to other situations where even if God doesn't show up, it was still fun. You know, I mean, with a killer band, you know, I told the story at the end.

I knew they would cry, you know, and I just, at the end, yeah, that was amazing. The Spirit of God moved whether or not he did. And to be, I just want to be in a place where it's like, okay, God, show yourself.

I see the way you showed yourself all through this book. I want to see it again. And the things that are happening that people can't deny, like we did a little conference and we just invited believers out.

We said, well, you know, we're just going to go and serve all day. I'll preach in the morning, but then we're going to spend the next six to eight hours, we're going to be washing feet, cutting hair, just showing grace to the whole community, block party, hot meals, everything. And then I'll teach again at night.

And so, you know, so many believers showed up. We had to turn away a couple hundred believers. It was wonderful.

All day, you know, I'm watching my 15-year-old sitting there, washing the feet of these homeless people for like four hours, doing their nails and telling them about Jesus. It's like, wow, it's so beautiful. You know, just all through the day, everyone's sharing their faith.

But the thing was, it was Wednesday and the conference was on Friday. And on Wednesday, the leader of the rescue mission says, we have to make 10,000 meals because so many people want to come and distribute this stuff. We're going to make 10,000 hot meals and we have no meat, like not one slice of bologna, you know, nothing.

We have no meat and we have no money. And then he started looking at, you know, his son. He goes, man, can I borrow your credit card? I can, you know, order some chicken online cheap maybe.

But they'd been fasting and praying all week. An hour later, an hour, hour and a half later, Trader Joe's, the local supermarket, calls them, calls the rescue mission, not knowing anything, goes, all of our freezers just broke down. Could you guys use all of our meat? And they come with this big old U-Haul filled with like marinated pork chops and chicken and steak and ribs.

And you can imagine as that truck just pulled forward and that sense of awe, that rush of, then you're passing out this food going, this is supernatural. This is awesome. You know, this came from God.

You know, I got a text, you know, like two weeks ago from one of the guys who was, you know, knocks on doors with one of my armor bearers. And he was asking this one kid, this is, you know, this one guy says, hey, if you want to show me your God is real, have God make my dog not afraid. I have this pit bull and

he's scared of everyone.

It's a bad pit bull. And so I get this text, hey, get on your face and pray for this guy, you know, for his pit bull. I'm like, all right, you know, I'm like, Lord, come on.

You can't just make him mad. Just, you know, like I just want to see it. I want to see this power.

You got to show him that you're the real God. And so the next day I check and, hey, what happened to the pit bull? He goes, I just called him. He's still scared.

And so we're sitting in an office and I'm just, I'm starting to question, you know, me and my friend Sean and my friend Chris, I'm going, that is so weird to me. Like I prayed in faith. You prayed in faith and nothing happened.

I was worried about this, you know, like, let's just go back to the old system. You know, it's like, man, why, why, why? And then Chris was like, ah, you know, honestly, I couldn't take it seriously. I'm like, really? We're going to pray for a dog? What's your fault then? Man, where's your faith? Dude, you know, and so we're talking about this and, but we were, we were just puzzled because I've seen God work in such amazing ways that it surprises me when something doesn't work in prayer.

And I go, God, I would have thought you would have done this to show your glory. So at least he knows he's rejecting you and not just us. Like you got to show your power.

I don't get it. I get a text a couple of days later from Sean saying, hey, guess what? His dog's still scared, but someone mysteriously came up to him and said, can I give you a dog? I'm like, and, and he told, you know, sold him on this dog and, you know, the, the owner went to jail or something and needed someone to take his pit bull. And he says it is the coolest.

He got rid of his other dog and he took this. I know it's kind of funny. And he said, this dog is not afraid of anyone.

He goes, I love this dog. And he says to my friend, Sean, I know he came from God. I know this was from God.

And he got baptized on Sunday, just this past Sunday. And my friend Sean said, no, I made sure he knew the cost of following Jesus is not just about a miracle. This was just God showing him something.

But do you understand what it means to follow Jesus? Do you understand what it means to die to yourself? I mean, all this stuff you've been doing and saying, no, I found something better. And it says, Jesus, I've been telling you about who died for you, you know, who loves you. Do you understand that knowing all that you still want to get baptized? Oh yeah.

Yeah, I do. I do. See, I love this.

I've been so alive lately again, just knocking on doors, not knowing what's on the other side. Is this guy going to fall in love with Jesus? You're going to shoot me. I don't know.

I'm just, but it's, it's the thing is, a couple Sundays ago when we had, you know, we gathered a few of us together, we just experiment. Can we do this on a Sunday? You know, is there a rule that says we can't serve also, you know, and see what happens. And then worship afterwards.

Let's just try, see what happens. And it was such a powerful time. And it's just a small group of us, you know, maybe, maybe, I don't know, 60, 80 of us.

And to hear the stories afterwards, you know, just a couple hours knocking on doors and walking around the streets and sharing our faith, the stories, the excitement, and then the worship. And the greatest thing was when I was driving home and, you know, asking my wife and my kids and, and I said, Hey, what'd you guys think? And my oldest daughter loved her statement. She goes, Dad, that was weird.

It, I don't know. I felt like I just popped right out of the Bible. Like, those were her words.

It felt like I popped out of the Bible. Like, it felt like the New Testament. It's from a 15-year-old girl.

And I go, yeah, that, that is what it felt like. It felt like this is a continuation of the Book of Acts. Like, these people we're with, it felt like a body, like we're serving together.

We're doing something together. These people we're pleading for. We had people on their faces just praying as others were knocking on the doors, you know, and, you know, others in the hallways just praying as, you know, two were sharing their faith.

And it just felt like, wow, we're all doing something. It was this movement. But that phrase, I just loved it because I think that's been my struggle ever since I first became a believer is like, there seems to be this dichotomy, you know, here's the Bible.

And every time I'd read the Book of Acts, I would get frustrated because I would never read it and then just go, wow, that's just like us. You know, I would put it down and go, it's so different there. And I don't like that difference.

I want to think biblically. I want to end my life feeling like I popped out of the Bible. Not like I popped out of the Bible belt, but it popped out of the Bible, you know, where it makes sense.

And I'm going, man, I'm seeing the power of God. I'm moving that way. And it's scary.

It puts you in these vulnerable positions where, well, but I don't know if this job's going to give me the security. And just like, wait, wait, I'm not thinking biblically, biblically, biblically. Am I seeking the kingdom of God first? I mean, he promises.

How much has he already shown me? He's good. He's good. He's going to take care of me.

I'm not going to starve to death. He promised me that. I'm going to be okay for all of eternity.

So I want to live like it looks, you know, I want to live like I believe this, like I really did pop out of this book. But sometimes it just feels like I'm going to another meeting. I'm going to my job again.

And I don't know what it's going to look like for you to somehow mix the responsibility of what you have with your people. And I praise God that you're serving faithfully. And yet sometimes what I realize is I've got to be on the front lines.

That's where I see God moving. And I enjoy that. And it encourages me.

Because if you see God move, not just a successful event, but just see God move, that encourages you, right? And no one can stop you then. Then it's like, I don't know. God's with me.

God's with me. I can do this thing. I mean, isn't that what this book is all about? Isn't that what Jonathan was saying? Look, if God's with us, we can't fail.

It's not like he needs two, you know, 200, 2,000. It's just God by himself. I mean, he confused the army by himself.

He could have done that without Jonathan and his armor bearer, but it was just, but he went. It's just that type of faith and getting back on the front lines again. You see God move and that type of trust.

Then it's like, okay, criticize me all you want. Yeah, it'll hurt. But you know what? I've seen God.

I know he's with me. And that's at the core of everything we do. You're still believing.

You're still believing in your prayers. I mean, really believing in your prayer life. I mean, I want to publicly thank Pastor Jim.

I mean, many of us were impacted years ago. A fresh wind, fresh fire, and hearing a simple guy just saying, this is what happened when I started praying passionately. And he got us thinking about all the things we put our faith in.

And going, wow, it hasn't been a house of prayer. I know very few people that don't know about that book and the story of this church and what happened here, but it's been a constant reminder. There's been a consistent message because some of you probably are like me, where you'll go to a conference and sometimes you'll hear a speaker and you'll leave more insecure than when you came in because you think I could never be like him.

I don't have that kind of mind. And then you start questioning yourself and doubting yourself and, you know, because God's gifted certain people a certain way. Some of you have heard Pastor Ravi, you know, and you go, gosh, wow.

I'm dumb, you know. Okay, I see a lot of agreement out there because there's a uniqueness to him. Then you hear Pastor Jim, you're like, oh, okay.

I'm kidding. I'm kidding. It's just a different gift, but it was, but wasn't that what Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire did for you? It was just like, oh, okay, good.

Jim did it. Oh, okay, good, good, good. And so for me, I was so grateful because I was one of those guys where I would get, I would get discouraged.

I would start to question myself and go, man, I'm not this, I'm not that, you know, and I try, but I'll never, and I joke around about Pastor Jim, but I see his leadership and the way that God, the Spirit is anointed in him. And just even the five, 10 minutes I had with him this morning, it's just like, I just want to drink and drink and drink with, because it's just, it's Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. And then spending that time with Ravi and his encouragement and the grace that they bestow because I have been around scholars that don't show that kind of grace and they deliberately try to make you feel dumb.

He does it by accident, but others, it's just, it's like, wow, are you trying to make me feel worthless? But then, but to just see, man, even this morning, the love, the encouragement of him coming alongside and just thanking me for my ministry. And it's like, wow, that's so cool. You know, like, he appreciates this and that, and it's like, gosh, Lord, I want to be that for people.

I want to encourage. There's way too much criticism out there. And when we get together, it's got to be about this.

I mean, that's why it was weird being in Korea and just going, man, I felt so loved by the whole crowd. That's why it's like just a few minutes with these guys this morning. It's like, man, they love me.

I feel like they love me, like I'm on the team with them. And you would think, well, isn't that how you feel with all Christian leaders? I wish. And I try to look at my own life and go, God, do I make people feel like I don't love them or care about them? Like, do I just think to encourage and build up? Because we can't, we got to stay strong, you guys.

We got to keep believing this. We got to go back to these Old Testament stories and go, no, we got to go back to believing in prayer. I mean, just a couple of weeks ago, some Jehovah's Witnesses, I was working on some bricks in my front yard and a couple of Jehovah's Witnesses come by and they go, you know, so I do what any human being would do.

I engage them in conversation. I look them in the eyes and just start talking to them. And then I just say, hey, can I just tell you about some things God's done in my life lately? Let me tell you about some answered prayers just from last week.

And I told them, and the lady goes, you know, God doesn't listen to everyone's prayers. I said, you know what? You're absolutely right. That is very biblical what you said.

I said, James 1 says, if we doubt, he's not going to listen to us. You know, later in James 4, he says, you know, if we do it with selfish motives, he's not going to listen to us. You know, in Amos, he's like, I can't stand the noise of your songs.

Isaiah 58 says, you're just going to fast and pray. You think that's all I wanted from you, you know, to bow your head? Like, I'm not going to listen to you. First Peter 3 says, you know what, husbands, you better treat your wives as fellow heir of the grace of life so that your prayers may not be hindered.

I can't just treat my wife any way I want to and think that God's going to listen to me. And so you're absolutely right. All through the scripture, God doesn't listen to every prayer.

But he listens to mine. I go, let me tell you. I go explain this to me.

And she says, let's get out of here. Looks at her partner. So I said, I'm not done.

I'm going to follow you if you guys don't mind. I did. I walked with him like another block and a half, two blocks, just telling him, okay, explain the meat.

Explain the dog. Explain, you know, like, I'm telling you, God listens to me. This God of the Bible.

And she looks at me, she goes, what are you, one of those Pentecostals? And I go, don't worry about it. I go, all you need to know is I'm a guy that reads this book for myself. And I pray to the Jesus of this book.

And I pray according to his will, as well as I can find it in that book. And the way he answers me, man, I could sit all day and tell you stories where there's no way that wasn't God and you know it. And she says, you know what, that's your problem.

She goes, you read that book for yourself. You can't understand it unless one of our leaders interprets it for you. And I said, that's your problem.

I said, you're putting so much trust in these people. And I just wish you would just look at it. I mean, that's why God gave us his Holy Spirit.

That if you with a pure heart say, God, I want to know you. I want to know the truth. And you open up this book and just read.

Don't listen to me. Don't listen to your leaders. Just go for it.

I'm telling you, just one human being to another, this God of the Bible is so real. I experience it. Do you experience these things? I mean, you know what you've heard today.

This is the movement of God in my life. And I hope you look at it. But you know, I don't know.

I'm sure I'm out of time. But I got to say one more thing. Is that all right? Might be a little while.

Okay. Cutting into your time. But we can criticize other religions when they make statements like that.

Like, well, you can't understand that. You need one of our teachers to explain it to you. And I want to be careful how I say this.

But I believe that lately we almost have an evangelical version of that. Where some of us don't even believe that we can open up this book and understand it. Because I think I got to that point where I started questioning everything I thought the Bible said.

And that I'd need someone else who's smarter than I am to interpret it for me. And if I feel that insecure sometimes, imagine how the average guy or gal in the church feels. Like, let me read this book for myself? There's no way.

Pastor, you explain to me what it says. Because I thought it says I was supposed to love my neighbor as much as I love myself. But then, I don't know, someone said that word doesn't really mean love.

You know, or whatever. You know what I mean? You know what I'm talking about. It's like everything you read that seems so obvious.

When I was in seminary, one of the few lessons I remember was, if the literal sense makes sense, seek no other sense. That was like the first thing they told me in Bible interpretation. If it makes sense literally, don't try to figure out a way to make it say something else.

And so just kind of take it for what it says. Just take it literally. There really was a flood.

Okay, you know, let me just take that and run with it. I mean, I don't know, man. I remember as a kid when I first read this book.

I mean, this is how far I've gone with this, is I will read it. And I still remember this. I believe I was in high school.

And I read that whole passage about faith being able to move mountains. I remember reading that and then going into my bedroom, closing the door, and I just tried to move stuff. I did.

I just said, I'm just gonna start with that pencil. And I would just stare at it and go, God, I believe. I so believe.

I'm surprised you're not moving that pencil right now. I so believe. Okay, I want total honesty in the room.

How many of you have done that? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Okay, so it's just, you know, and later you realize, okay, the Holy Spirit wasn't really just so I could do tricks. It was to bring glory to Jesus. And there would be times when maybe I will need to move a mountain for his glory.

And it's not just, you know, you learn different things along the way. But I was always the guy that just says, no, I want to take this literally. He says, you know what, that I would do greater things than he did.

Like Jesus literally said that. And I look at it and I go, gosh, it really seems like I'm able to do what he did and even greater things than these. And it really is to my advantage that Jesus has gone away and the Spirit is with me.

Like I take that literally. And I try to, one of the big things I'm trying to do is just get people to believe that they can just read this book again. And otherwise people will explain things away.

And they'll explain away the power of God, the power of prayer. That I believe one day I will literally see God like Isaiah did in all of his glory sitting on this throne. Like literally the way John saw him where there was lightning and thunder and fire.

You know, the way that Paul writes about him in 1 Timothy that he dwells in unapproachable light. Like I take that literally and go, man, I'm going to face that God any second. And it's literally going to be forever with him.

And people are always trying to take away the literal nature of the scriptures. And they're saying, well, it wasn't a literal virgin birth. And he didn't literally become a man.

There's religions that teach he didn't literally die on that cross. You know, he didn't literally physically rise from the grave. He's not literally going to return.

It's not a literal lake of fire. And I go, look, I'm a simple guy. I read this book and I go, man, would you really get that from just reading this book? Or some supposed scholar come along and tell you, no, that's not what it literally means.

Because see, when it comes to God's wrath, and many of you guys know, I wrote a book about this. And I'm sure I'm stepping on some toes here, but I'm just, I have to say this. Look, I read this book and I go, when God said he was going to flood the world, I bet you that there were preachers at that time going, a flood.

Okay. A loving God is going to kill us all. A loving God is literally going to have water fall from the sky and flood us all and kill us.

What kind of loving father would do that? We would call the authorities on that type of father that would drown all of his children. It's not a literal flood. He's talking about the flood.

We're all in a flood right now. Problems are raining down on me all around. And then what happened? The flood came.

I bet you when Sodom was about to be destroyed, I bet you there were guys back then going, well, what's he going to do? Have fire from heaven? Just destroy us all? What kind of God would do that? I bet you there are people in Egypt. Oh, okay. He's going to kill the firstborn.

Firstborn of all of our households. He's literally going to do that. And I'm just going, man, every time he says he's going to do something like that.

So why would I now at the end, when he talks about this, this, this lake of fire where there'll be tormented day and night forever and ever, I go, well, that can't be literal. I'm just saying with a simple mind, I'm reading this and going, man, I'm reading this over and over. It just seems to flow.

There's always those few that believe and then everyone else is under the flood. And yet really was those who believed in that Passover lamb. They really were the only ones that were saved out of that.

And it really was just lot. It really was just Noah. It really was just that small group.

And it's like, man, I know everyone's going to start thinking like this. And it says in the last days is going to be just like the days of Noah. And I know that, you know, ever since it Adam and Eve, what did Satan say? Come on, you're really going to die.

What's God going to do? Have you lived like, you know, a few years and then you fall over dead. Come on. That's not what he's saying.

That's not what he's saying. Just it's, it's, it's, it's just going to give you more knowledge. It's going to make you like him.

And I go, no, I'm not, I'm not falling for that. I'm going a hundred percent on this because just like I would say, look, no one would get that reading this book for themselves. And this is where I'm saying, we have our own evangelical version of this, where it's just like that lady says, you can't understand that.

I'm saying, no, I believe I can. I believe I just read it simply, you know, by the power of the spirit and just read it over and over again. I'll understand.

And I don't need a scholar to tell me it doesn't mean what it says. Man. And again, that doesn't mean we don't learn from those whom God has gifted in the body that have minds that are beyond ours.

Praise God for that. I'm so thankful that there are men who understand this book better than I do. I'm thankful for all four of them.

They, no, I'm kidding. I am joking. I am simple guy.

I, I am. And I go, you know what? I, I, I, I get so much from that. But at the end of the day, I go back to this book as a simple guy.

I get on my knees as a simple guy and go, I think I can scale that mountain and kill them all. I don't know. That's crazy, but I'm going to try it.

And people are going to talk you out of that. Smart people will tell you every reason why this ministry will not work. They will calculate and go, that's, there's only two of you.

Just, just do the math. But it doesn't work that way with our God. He takes people who believe, right? I just want to close in praying for your faith.

I want you to have faith because there are only two times I see Jesus amazed by a person. Everyone's amazed by Jesus, but Jesus was amazed a couple of times. In Mark, he was amazed.

It says that Jesus was astonished when he was in his hometown because they didn't believe. And so he can only do a couple of miracles there. He was like astonished.

Like, it literally says he was amazed. Like, wow, you really don't believe in me. And then in Luke 7, he was amazed at the faith of the centurion.

Remember that? He's like, oh my gosh, I've never seen faith like this in all of Israel. Are you kidding me? You really believe I could just stand right here and your servant would be healed? This is amazing. And he was amazed the two times, one at disbelief, one at belief.

And I just want to be one of these guys where if I'm going to err, I'm going to err on the side of faith and go, God, okay, I'm going for it. I'm going for it. This is so crazy, but I want to end my life knowing that I popped out of this book, that I'm one of those guys and I'm not going to play it safe.

And so I may die at the top of this hill. That may be your will and that's fine. You know, at least I can say, I just thought, you know, I went for it.

And I want, I want to restore, I want God to restore that in us. Like we were when we were kids, right? And you walked out of Sunday school class with David and Goliath and go, yeah, I can do that. I want us to get back to that because that's when we see God move and that's when nothing else will shake us.

So Father, I lift up these brothers and sisters of mine right now. God, I want to believe like you, like your word says. I want to be like David.

God, I want to be that strong. God, I want to be that strong, that close to you, that where I can strengthen myself in you. I think we all read that and we go, God, we want to be those types of people.

We want to be like Jonathan, just believe. We want to be like that armor bearer. God, we want this, Father.

Only you can create this in us. God, restore that to us. Make us like children again.

God, right now we confess if we have not seen ourselves as children. We confess that maybe we take our positions too seriously sometimes and now we're pastors, scholars, writers, speakers, and we forget that we're your children. We don't have faith like children.

We start having faith in our own giftedness, things that we've accomplished. God, I just want to be a kid, rest in you, just know that Dad will take care of this. And so God, even right now, let's pray that everyone in this room would just see themselves as your children right now.

Give us that image, Father, of us just being your kids all over again. God, if all the criticism or all the accolades have made us feel grown up, maybe we just humble ourselves again and go, God, what are we

thinking? Nothing good happens without you. Every good gift comes from the Father of lights.

So God, as your kids, strengthen us, give us faith in you, because we want people talking about you and your power. I pray that you encourage the faint-hearted that are in this room right now, God, and get us back to believing supernaturally, Lord. In Jesus' powerful name we pray, amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24080.mp3>

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