

Easter Passion

by Jim Cymbala

Faith is a living relationship with God that requires us to leave what we're used to and trust in His goodness.

Duration: 1:04:43

Scripture: Genesis 12:1, Genesis 12:3, Matthew 6:33, Acts 17:11, Galatians 1:8-9, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Topics: "Passion Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a powerful testimony of a man who was delivered from a life of addiction and despair by the power of Christ. The speaker emphasizes the simplicity of the gospel message and the importance of sharing it with others. He recounts a moment when he felt a strong urging from the Holy Spirit to go and preach the gospel, despite his initial doubts. The speaker also briefly mentions a personal struggle he had with stepping out in faith and how God can provide guidance and help in uncertain situations.

Transcript

I feel very much at home here tonight, not just because the music is so familiar to me. But just from the first time I visited here, and my friendship with the late Crawford Moody, too, and actually visited here once before Pastor Mac had become senior pastor here. And then we came back after he had just been here a few weeks.

And my wife and I feel a great love and affection for this church and for the Christians that are here in this great city of Dallas. I want to talk to you about something that I trust will challenge you, challenge us. You know, during Holy Week, and our services are every, it's 12 o'clock noon, right, every day this week.

As you remember what our Lord did for us, you want to show your love and your devotion more to Him. You feel like you, at least I do, like, oh, Jesus, I want to do more for you. I want to display my love for you in a greater way.

I want to please you more. How many love the Lord Jesus tonight and want to love Him more and show Him that? Could you just lift your hand? Yeah, that's how you feel. Because as you remember Calvary and what He did for us on the cross.

Well, one of the great things, the primary thing that the Lord wants from our lives is what I want to talk to you about tonight, which is faith. That's not something that we think of in that term. We think of it, we're justified by faith.

We're saved by grace through faith. But faith, the Bible tells us, has an effect on our Lord, makes Him so happy. And the Bible says that without faith, it's what? Impossible to what? Please, God.

Imagine that. You could come to this altar tonight and cry a river of tears. Or the choir could sing beautifully.

By the way, choir, I never heard you better. Great choir, wonderful, beautiful, orchestra too. But unless you have faith when you do these things, it loses its importance to God.

For without faith, it's impossible to please God. There's something about faith, about depending on God, trusting God, that touches God like nothing else. God doesn't want us to climb mountains for Him and beat our bodies like Martin Luther did before he understood the grace of God.

He doesn't want us to do penance and all those other things. What God is looking for is, He doesn't want us to have church. In the traditional sense of praise God, we're going to have church.

You know, a little of that goes a long way. What He wants us to have is faith. He wants us to trust Him and lean on Him when there's nothing else to depend on but His word.

There's something about trusting God, I'm learning more and more, that is just so vital to our walk with Him. For the Bible says, the just shall live by what? By faith. Not get saved by faith.

Live by faith. Not only start by faith, but the just shall live by faith. As Paul says in another place, we walk not by sight, but we walk by how? By faith.

We walk by faith. So when you get saved, you go into school. You're in a school right now if you're a Christian.

It's called the school of faith. And if you get left back, He'll just make you do the year over again. But God has His hand on my life and Carol's life.

And He wants, He's going to teach us to trust Him. He's going to bring us through valleys and over mountains. He's going to knock out props from us.

But He will teach us to have faith. Because without faith, it's impossible to please Him. Now, the Lord laid down as a first principle that according to your faith, so be it unto you.

Great faith, great experience of God. Little faith, little experience of God. Is that amazing? According to your faith, so be it unto you.

When people talk about, oh, well, God's going to do what He's going to do. That's not... where would you find that in the Bible? According to your faith, so be it unto you. Jesus went to His own hometown.

And the Bible tells us He could not do many miracles there. Not because the demons were too strong or the sicknesses too complex. No, of course not.

He was hindered because of their unbelief. There was no faith. Imagine that.

Jesus, the Son of the living God, had, as it were, His hands tied by their unbelief. That's how critical faith is. And you can go to church and have faith.

Or you can go to church and not have faith. Just be sitting there and be part of the American church, Protestant culture. White culture, black culture.

But without faith, there's no vibrancy. Without faith, it's not pleasing to God. Since we moved into a new facility about a year ago, year in May it'll be.

Oh, my, has our faith been tested? Not only because God led us into a project in New York City involving dozens of millions of dollars. We don't have any. Trying to do some good in the hood.

When you're down in the hood, there's not a lot of money in the hood. And since we've gone there, this is a building that was built in 1918, a theater seating 4,100 seats. Largest theater in North America when it was built.

Since we've gone down there, we have services at 9, 12, and 4. We have more, I would say thousands of more people coming, but poorer and with problems like you can't believe. HIV positive, crack addicts. Three weeks ago, a transvestite cross-dresser got saved in the service.

Listen, before he came forward to receive Christ, he wanted to use the ladies' room, and we said, no way, you're going in that ladies' room. What is that about? You're not going in that ladies' room. We don't care you got a dress on.

You're not going in that ladies' room, friend. Who would have dreamt it? Isn't Jesus wonderful? But boy, do you need faith. You can't see things the way they are.

You have to see things the way they can be. You can't just do the same old, same old, as you'll see in a moment. Now, Peter says it this way.

Christians are kept by the power of God through faith. What keeps us every day victoriously? The power of God. What activates the power of God in our life? Faith.

Who are kept by the power of God through faith. What happens when people backslide? They lose their faith in Christ. They start to drift and they lose sight of Him.

They get caught up with other things. And you start seeing them slipping and sliding into all kinds of things. Because as you lose your grip on faith, you lose your grip on the power of God working in your life.

Faith. Jesus was never amazed at anything but faith. You never see anywhere in the Gospels, do you, choir, where Jesus stopped and said, you see this man over here? This is the holiest man I've ever seen.

Or this is the most righteous man. You'll never see that one time in the Bible. You'll never see him be impressed by somebody's smarts or wisdom.

He never said, boy, look at Matthew. Boy, that guy is good with numbers. We want him on our team.

No, no, no. But remember when the centurion came to him and said, would you come and heal my servant who's in my hole? And Jesus said, I'll go. And he said, oh, no, you don't have to go.

I know who you are. You just speak the word. You don't have to take a trip to my house.

Just say the word, because I know I have power, authority. I tell people to go, they go and come, they come. Just speak the word.

And Jesus said to his disciples, I've never seen faith like this in all of Israel. You know what the Lord is looking for in this building? The eyes of the Lord are right now running through this whole building right now. He's just looking on whose behalf he can show himself strong.

What is he looking for? Faith. Faith. What is he looking for? Faith.

What made Luther stand out and be the great reformer he was? Or Moody made Moody, Moody. Or Finney, Finney. Or all these great men and women of God who have served General Booth and his wife.

Faith! Go into the east end of London and start preaching, as General Booth did and his wife, and found the Salvation Army. Faith! Where's the money to do it? No money. We're just going to trust God.

Faith. Little faith, little expression of God. Big faith, big expression of God.

The Lord said when he comes back to earth, will he find faith? Where is your faith? Look through the Bible. Go home and get your concordance and look up the word faith. See every place it's used and start to analyze its context.

It's an incredible study. How God is looking to get his people to believe that just shall live by faith. Well, what is faith? Now, don't go by what maybe you heard growing up in church, or I heard growing up, because otherwise we'll never learn anything.

To learn, you have to be open to the word of God, which we're going to read right now. But what is faith? Some people think it's the conviction in your mind and mental ascent to certain truths about God. That's what they think faith is.

I believe in God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. I believe he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised on the third day, etc. But the devil believes that.

Not only believes it, he knows it. He was there. So if to say mental affirmation of certain truths about God is faith, then that wouldn't separate us from the demons who believe and tremble at the name of Jesus.

So what is faith? How does faith come? What is this thing that God wants to develop in Jim Simbel and my wife Carol, and the church called the Brooklyn Tabernacle, and First Baptist Dallas, and every other church? What is it that he's after in us? What is he trying to develop? How does it happen? What are the characteristics of real faith? Not go-to-church-on-Sunday faith. That's not something that's mentioned in the Bible. We're talking now about the real deal.

In other words, where's the beef? Where's the faith? What does it look like? If you saw it, what would it look like? Well, to know about faith, I want you to go back to the very beginning. It's so interesting that yesterday a conference was held in Iraq to try to put the country back on its feet, on democratic principles. And the conference that was held in Iraq of returnees, Iraqis who had left the country, and then some who had been in the country during the war and had survived the rule of Saddam Hussein, the conference was held in Ur.

Is that a trip or what? Ur. And Ur, of course, is the birthplace of Abraham. And to know about faith, what we want to do now is just go back and see how did the father of everyone who believes get faith and what

was his faith like? Forget what you and I saw growing up again.

What did Abraham's faith look like? Because the Bible, although Jesus said, don't call anybody father in that sense, Paul calls Abraham, Father Abraham, because he's the father not only of the Jewish people, but he is the father of everybody who believes, Jew and Gentile. Because of Abraham it said, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. What was counted to him for righteousness? His faith, not his good works.

Read the life of Abraham. He lied like a rug sometimes, sold his wife down the river to Pharaoh. It was a mess at times.

So Abraham wasn't justified because of the way he lived or else he would never have been justified. Did some very sad things there in the Bible. But he was justified and counted righteous by his faith.

Well, how did he get this faith? We read in Genesis, the twelfth chapter, just a few verses. If you have your Bibles, turn with me. Long introduction, but just a few verses because I want to get right to it.

Genesis 12, and we return to that part of southern Iraq and we read in Genesis 12, the Lord had said to Abraham, verse 1, Genesis 12, the Lord had said to Abraham, leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. Now look at all these promises. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you.

I will make your name great. You will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you, I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

So Abraham left as the Lord had told him and Lot went with him. Abraham was 75 years old when he set out from Haran. All right, this is the beginning of the whole deal.

This is the beginning of the covenant that God made that the law never superseded. The law was added 400 years later, but it never was added to help anybody except to see our sins. Paul says in Romans and Galatians that the covenant that saves us is the original covenant that God made with Abraham.

In other words, trust me, have faith in me. Where did this faith come from? What were the characteristics of it? Do we have it? Is it around us? How would we know if we're growing in faith? Which Paul says, I'm so happy to the Thessalonians that you're growing both in love and in faith. How do you know if you're growing in faith? Well, first of all, I just want to give you three characteristics of the real faith.

The faith that God loves, that pleases Him. Number one, faith comes from a living word from the living God. How did faith begin with Father Abraham? The Bible says, and the Lord said unto Abram, that's how the whole thing began.

Abraham was uncircumcised. I'm going to call him Abraham for the rest of the evening. We know his name changed halfway through his life there as recorded in the scripture.

Abraham was uncircumcised, was a pagan, and the Lord said something to him. And that's how faith began. For faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word.

But brothers and sisters, they had no Bibles then. They had no Bibles. Abraham couldn't study the books of the law because they hadn't been written.

Moses hadn't been born yet. So we know that Abraham got some spirit communication from God. The Holy Spirit, God, spoke to him, and that's what generated faith.

Now, for us that are living today post-Abraham, post-Calvary, in the New Testament era, the word of God is contained in the 66 books of this Bible. This is our only rule of faith, our only rule of doctrine and morals. Anybody preaches from this pulpit, including the speaker, or anybody who sings, anybody says anything, the minute you hear someone speak, you should be taught, and we should all be ready to judge it according to the word of God.

Is it in the Bible? Because if it ain't in the Bible, get out of here. If you go home tonight and an angel comes in your room, just flies right in there, don't get too excited, let him talk first. Because if he says something that's not in the Bible, kick him out of your room and out of your house and say, angel, you are not a true angel from God because you've said something contrary to the word of God.

This is the only rule that we have of faith. No manifestation, no purported work of the Holy Spirit can come from God if it can't be judged by the word of God. How can I judge something and test something if it's not in the word of God? People are doing all kinds of weird, bizarre things that are not in Scripture.

Isn't there enough in the Scripture to aim for? I mean, if you're going to get excited, why don't you raise a few dead people or heal a few sick people, if you're going to do something. But don't be howling like a lion or crawling around or running into walls or whatever they're doing now. There's a lot of wonderful things in the Bible, but the Bible is our perimeter.

That's what tells us where we're going. Now, brothers and sisters, here's the point. Faith, though, does not come by merely intellectually reading the Bible.

This Bible has to become a living word from the living God, just like Father Abraham. You've got to take time when you read the Bible. You've got to be prayerful when you read the Bible.

Can I get a witness here tonight? You've got to lay the Bible out and say, God, talk to me from this word. Because just to read it like you read Time Magazine or the Dallas Papers, you'll never get faith. This word has to become living or else you'll become a Pharisee.

Just remember, the people that crucified Jesus 2,000 years ago had the biggest Bibles and knew the most Scriptures. So, Bible knowledge does not equal faith. They crucified the Lord of glory.

They plotted His death. And they were quoting verses while they did it. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Our Father is Abraham.

Jesus said, no, your Father is the devil. So, when we read the Bible, we've got to come with an open heart and say, God, make this living in my heart, or I'm never going to have the faith that I need to have. This is why George Mueller, the great man of faith who had those orphanages over in England, although he was a German himself, he had these orphanages where he fed millions of people.

His autobiography and his writings have been a blessing to many generations. I keep them near me in my study at home because they're just so refreshing to read. He would say in the morning, sometimes my heart couldn't pray because I had no faith.

And I knew it's the prayer of faith that heals the sick. It's the prayer of faith that gets answers. Jesus said, when you pray, believe.

Not just pray. What's the sense of praying if you're not going to believe? We just think that by saying prayers that'll work. No, faith works.

So Mueller said, I'd have to lay out my Bible and get on my knees. And I'd have to look at these scriptures and I'd have to just wait on the Lord and say, God, as I'm reading through this, Holy Spirit, make this alive to me. Make it a living word from the living God.

Give me some promise and make it alive to me. Because that's how faith comes. Faith comes from God making this a living word from His own mouth, His own heart.

How many of you have ever read the Bible and hit a verse that you've read maybe 20 times and suddenly as you read it again, the Holy Spirit just goes like, and it comes alive. How many know what I'm talking about? Lift your hand. And you go, wow, I never saw that.

That's a living word from the living God. You can understand Greek and Hebrew. You can have a master's in divinity.

You could be a theologian and not have the faith of a slug. And you could be a simple dropout from high school and be full of faith. Because faith doesn't come by intellectually dissecting the word of God.

It comes by reading it with a childlike open heart. God, speak to me through your word. So faith comes and is birthed by a living word from the living God.

And oh, how we need to live in our Bible. How we need to live in our Bible. I hope you all read the Bible every day.

You've got to live in your Bible because this is how faith is born. And this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Well, the second characteristic of faith is that when you have the faith that Abraham has, you're always leaving what you're used to to go to something better than God has for you.

When you have faith, listen, you are always leaving what you're used to, ready to follow God's something better that He has for you. Now, follow me on this. The Lord has shown this to me some years ago.

It really has kind of changed my life and really gotten to some deep areas that needed some getting into. The first word that God ever said to Abraham is leave. The first word that Abraham ever heard from Almighty God was, Leave your country, and your household, and your family, and your childhood friends, and your culture, and what you're used to, and your food, and your neighborhood, and your area of the country.

Leave, er, of the chaldees, and go where? I'll show you later. Go to a place that I will show you. Boy, now we're really getting down to faith.

People who have faith are always leaving. Not just geographically, although that sometimes happens. This is how the great missionary movements happened.

People were ready to leave what they were used to, and the comforts of America, especially back in the 1700s, 1800s, early 1900s, going to parts of the world where disease was so rampant, and we didn't have

all the drugs we had now, and transportation was so different, and communication was so backward. Why did they do that? Why did Hudson Taylor go to China? By faith! Everything that anybody does for God, Hebrews 11 says, they did it by faith. Noah built the ark by faith.

Abraham went out by faith. Moses, by faith, identified with God's people. Everybody did it by faith.

But Abraham, Abraham's first word from God was, leave. And he had to pick up and go, not knowing where he was going. Think of, we live, we're so used to this story.

Think of it, brothers and sisters. God, who he had never had any contact with, spoke a word into his heart and said, leave the only world you know and go to God knows where. And Abraham did it.

Oh, our idea of faith is so wimpy. Our idea of faith is so churchified, so Americanized. Listen to what pleased God.

Abraham pleased God. Now, he was ready to leave. And he left.

And everyone who walks by faith is always ready to leave. That's why Abraham never settled in a town. You know that verse, he always lived in tents.

Why? Because he was looking for a city whose builder and maker was God. Now, what does that mean, leave? What does it mean that men of faith, women of faith, are always ready to leave? Let me start by saying this. Brother right here, where were you born? Pennsylvania.

Play of strings, right? My brother here was born in Pennsylvania and he's white. Before he was born, he had no prior existence where he said, I want Pennsylvania and I want to be white. He just woke up screaming like all babies do.

He came out of his mother's womb. He was white and he was in Pennsylvania. That was the accident of his birth.

Just like you have an accident of your birth. My mother's Polish. She's 88 years old.

My late father is Ukrainian. I woke up screaming in a hospital in Brooklyn to Eastern European parents. Not something I requested.

It's just the accident of my birth. To make a big thing about being Polish, to make a big thing about being Ukrainian, to make a big thing about being white, if I did that, would be a sign of two things. My ignorance and my pride.

Because it was the accident of my birth. I didn't earn it. I didn't strive for it.

I just woke up. Don't you get it? People born in Nigeria are saying Nigeria. People born in France are saying France.

People born in Philippines are saying Philippines. So to make a big thing of your color, your blackness, your whiteness, it's a sign of ignorance and pride. Pride because we only exalt what we are.

You never hear black people saying how great white folks are. And you don't find white people having marches that black is beautiful. No, no, no, no.

It doesn't happen that way. What it is, is because of our egotism and our smallness of mind, we don't see the world the way God sees it. We're locked into these little cultural prisons where we make a big thing about being from the South or being from Texas or being from the Big Apple.

Don't you get it? It's just because you were born here, you live here. If you were born someplace else, you'd be waving that flag. Don't you get it? How many get it? Say amen.

So to be locked into that is very damaging. You have to be willing, if you're going to serve God and walk by faith, to leave the strictures of your culture so that God can use you, so you can look at the world the way God looks at it. Enough with this white thing.

Enough with this Baptist thing or Pentecostal thing or black thing or Latino thing. Come on, let's put our hands together and affirm God's truth. But let's go further, brothers and sisters, because this is critical.

Come on, let's think critically about our country now and about the body of Christ in our country. Two major denominations in our country, two of the leading denominations, are at zero growth domestically. Zero growth in our country since 9-11.

They're still not winning more souls than they're losing people. One leading denomination, I talked to their leaders, for every two churches they start, they close down ten. The mega churches have given a false impression to the Christian public.

They've closed up all the, just like CVS and the big drugstore chains. What do you have here, big drugstore chain? Walgreens? All of those? They closed down all the mom and pop drugstores. So the mega churches are closing down the little churches, but we're not making converts, we're just moving Christians from building to building.

The angels don't rejoice except when the pastor gives a report, like he did tonight, that people are coming to Christ. Angels rejoice at water baptisms, not when you have Membership Sunday. We're in a membership, God's in a salvation.

And this is what has built hostility among pastors and ministers, because everyone knows the game is stealing someone else's members. That's the truth. I didn't go to seminary or Bible school, I didn't even know this existed.

I grew up playing in basketball. I was a city basketball player in New York and went to college on a basketball scholarship. And when you play basketball, you have a concept of teamwork.

It doesn't matter who scores or who dishes off the ball for the assist. You just want to win, but not in the Christian church. No, we're not rooting for each other, you can be sure of that.

But now, just like the accident of my birth, how about the accident of our spiritual birth? When you got saved, you found yourself in a church. Yes, you did. Either your mother and dad drug you there as a kid, like my mother did, by the ear, or you got converted as an adult and you found yourself in a church.

A Nazarene church, a Baptist church, a Charismatic church, a Lutheran church, a Presbyterian church, a Church of Christ, whatever. Before you got saved, you didn't make a prayer one day and say, God, I want to get saved one day, and when I'm saved, I want to be a Baptist. No one does that.

No one says, when I get saved, I want to be a Lutheran. Nobody does that. You just get saved and you find yourself in a church, in a culture.

Now, just as color and ethnicity has a powerful influence on us, and it's very hard to break away from that and really walk by faith and see the world the way God sees it, this other leaving is even harder, I'm finding. When most people read the Bible, they do not read the Bible to be taught. They're just looking for verses to back up what they already believe.

You know what most people say? This is the prayer I hear around the country, and this is what's implied in it. People are praying, God, do a new thing, but I ain't changing. That's what they're praying, Pastor.

I ain't changing. I'm going to go through my black ritual every Sunday. I'm going through my white Southern Baptist ritual.

I'm going through my Pentecostal ritual. That's the only thing I know. But God, do a new thing, but we ain't changing.

Well, how in the world will that work out? You've got to be ready to leave. Tell me, what church, what movement is so full of God and is so sweeping the nation with converts that we should be so proud and say, I don't have something to learn? How many know we all have something to learn? Come on, lift up your hand if you know you have something to learn. Yes, we do.

When I was a kid, I went to a church where I learned about Jesus. My mom and dad drug me to that church. It was on Quincy Street in Brooklyn.

And they talked about Jesus there enough that I could get saved as a little kid, get baptized. But they didn't want a black person within 100 feet of that church. So what should I do, brothers and sisters? Should I follow the traditions of my elders that were passed down to me? Is that what Carol and I should do? Have that mentality of that church where I happen to be born into? I didn't ask to go there.

My mother drug me there. Trust me, if I had that mentality, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing now, my wife and I, in downtown Brooklyn. I had to leave.

And I'm finding that I still have to leave. I have to come to the Bible and say, God, save me from what I think I know. And teach me what you want to show me so that I can be what you want me to be.

I don't want to have a Baptist church. I don't want to have a charismatic church. I want to have a Christian church, preaching the word and seeing Christ glorified and people's lives changed.

Now, whatever it takes to get there... Come on, let's put our hands together. Amen. Let's do it.

But it's very hard for us to leave the spiritual cultures that we were accidentally born into. People have it very strong. I was born in Nazarene, I'm going to die in Nazarene, praise God.

I was born Kojic, I'm going to die Kojic. Brother, we're going to have church, praise God. And it's so predictable.

Oh, brothers and sisters, church gets so predictable when it's cultural. Oh, you know what's going to happen before it even happens. And it has no effect on the population.

And Jesus said, you'll know a tree by its fruit. Don't go by what it says. Look for the fruit.

Look for the love, look for the converts, look for the prayer meetings. If that ain't there, he isn't there. No matter what they say, they can thump the Bible till 2 in the morning.

Jesus said, don't go by that. You'll know a tree by its fruit. It's very hard, though, to leave.

Very hard to get pastors to leave. A man wrote me a letter from a southern state. I forget, it doesn't matter the denomination.

He said, brother, I want you to pray for me. I read your book, Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire. I got very convicted that our church is prayerless.

So I made up my mind, we're going to have a prayer meeting. This is not ever practiced in our denomination. But it is found in a few pages in the Bible.

Pastor Mack, he went to his deacon board and said, we're going to have a prayer meeting. We're going to devote a night to just calling on God. There's a lot of promises that if a church calls on God, God will do great things.

Split the church. Half the deacons left. 400 people walked out of his church.

Why? They didn't want to sell drugs. They didn't want to have bingo night. Wanted the people to pray.

And deacons were saying, honey, tell the pastor, this boy is innovating. Do you ever remember in 40 years we've been in this denomination, having prayer meetings? No, we never saw that. Brother, what are you doing? Is that tragic? Must make the angels cry.

But it's so easy to go by what you're used to. Instead of leaving. So tonight, as we get ready to close, we want to ask God for the faith to leave.

I need to leave. That doesn't mean being crazy and fanatical. And, you know, force a move.

But you know what? Some of you here, you're not even in the ministries that God wants you to be. You're not even working the way God wants you to. You're just going through some tired ritual.

You're not stepping out by faith to the thing that God has asked you to do because you're afraid to leave the comfort zone of what you're used to. And God sent me here tonight to tell you the body of Christ is going to suffer until all of us are ready to leave like Father Abraham did and go out. And this is the third point.

You have to be able to go out even though you don't know where you're going. We are control freaks. Services are programmed down to a second.

Nothing spontaneous. As if the Holy Spirit doesn't exist. It's all programmed.

Where would we get that? It's certainly not found in the Bible. Can you imagine Paul saying to, you know, Peter in Antioch, or Peter saying to Paul in Antioch, look, you can get up. You've only got 11 minutes.

We've got to go. The chariot races are beginning soon. But listen, brothers and sisters, we've taken this in with our mother's milk.

We're so used to this that we wouldn't know the real thing if it walked by. It would be radical to us because we've got developed now over generations an American Christianity that I'm afraid in many places is not found in Scripture. It's not found in Scripture.

You show me that in Scripture, I'll be happy to look at it. It's developed in this church culture, this group, or this camp. But I'm saying I don't want to go by any culture.

I want God to have His way and I want people to be changed. Why did God put this church in downtown Dallas with how many languages within 40 blocks? Over 100. What did God put you here to do then? It must be something phenomenal.

All due respect to Dr. Criswell and Dr. Truitt and all of that, that's nothing. You ain't seen nothing yet. God really would just move and have His way.

There'll be lines outside this building to make everybody forget anything that ever happened here in this church because that's what God can do. Come on, how many say amen to that? That's what God does if we're willing to leave. But if we're willing to be locked in and just stay with our cultural thing, praise God, and some it's quiet culture, you know, shh.

The Bible says be still and know that I am God. Another group is just, yeah, the Bible does say that. There's a time to be still.

But they're going to make that their church, that one verse. And then other people are, make a joyful noise, praise God. The louder it gets, crank that organ up and get the people going and going, come on now, and all that.

So tired, played out. The average crack addict, the average person in the street, they wouldn't even understand what you're doing. They don't even understand what you're doing.

But we're playing to the choir. We're just talking to people who have this in-house language. But Paul says when the stranger and the unlearned come in and God is really moving, the secrets of their heart will be revealed and they'll fall on their face and say, surely God is in the middle of those people.

How many want a church like that? I want a church. I want a church like that. That's the church I want.

I don't want fanaticism. I don't want emotionalism. I don't want anything outside the Bible, but I don't want dry orthodoxy.

I don't want dead formalism. God wants us to leave that and go, well, where are we going? That's the point. You got to have faith to not know where you're going, but just be happy that he's holding your hand.

Do you realize, Pastor Mac, that when Abraham, let's get the map. If you're looking at the map, Ur of the Chaldees would be here, and straight west would be the Promised Land. So Abraham begins, I'll close with this, he begins with his caravan, and after he's traveled in a day or two, can you imagine if somebody would have walked up to Abraham and said, hey, old man, where are you heading? I don't know.

You what? I don't know. God just told me to leave and go to a place he would show me. Well, how will you know if you get there? He didn't tell me.

Listen, old man, the way you're heading, you better run this through your software, your computer, because the way you're heading, there's Hittites, Amorites, Jebusites. There's some very nasty people. You have no weaponry.

You have no soldiers. Who will protect you when you get there? He didn't say. We're chuckling, but this is the way it happened.

See, we're used to just reading this story. What will you do when you get there? Are you a farmer? How will you earn a living? I don't know. Will you build a house or will you live in tents? He just said leave and go to a place that he would show me.

To walk by faith, you have to be willing to go out not knowing where you're going. You have to follow the Lord wherever he leads you. You can't buy a house or sell a house or change a job without checking with the Lord and see if that's part of his plan for your life.

I know it's commonplace now. Christians just do things unilaterally. Pastors are looking for nice cities to get it.

I wonder where would you find that in the Bible. I'm going to serve in this little town here just for a couple of years, Brother Jim, but I'm planning to make my way to California, you know, because I love the climate there. Wow, Christ died on a cross so that you could get to a nice climate.

Oh, isn't it sad, brothers and sisters? It really is. We've lost that faith, that simple childlike faith, that God won't always show you the end result. He will just let you know enough to know that his hand is leading you.

And if you're a controlled person who has to know everything like I tend to be, I don't like surprises. God says, no, that's not the faith that pleases me. You've got to be like Father Abraham.

You've got to hear a living word from the living God. You've got to step out. And you know what? Who cares what the church growth, what the pastors that are here, who cares what the church growth magazines say? They're not going to judge you in the end.

You're going to stand before Jesus. And who cares what your peers say? Carol and I are going to stand before the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and he's going to judge the quality of our faith. You know, as the piano player comes or organist comes, let me just tell you a battle that I once had with this stepping out, not knowing where we're going and how God can help you.

This will just take a second. I don't know how many years ago it was. Carol was afternoon service.

We were in three services then. We went to four services for six years. Can you imagine? Until we moved in this building.

That's why I look so old and tired. I'm really 16 years old. It was an afternoon service, and the choir, Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, was singing.

By the way, my wife is amazing. She still can't read or write music, and three Sunday nights ago, she won her fifth Grammy Award. Her fifth Grammy Award.

There's no room for me in the house. There's no room for me in the house anymore. There's no room.

Well, anyway, she came up, and you know you pray at the beginning of a service. Lord, have your way in this service. You know, sometimes the Lord will take you up on that.

You know, we... Lord, have your way. Now, here's what you do. You do, you do, you do here and there, and we've got to get them out by eight.

But Lord, have your way. You know, it's like we're dancing with ourselves. It's really sad.

But we're so used to it. Very few people want to leave. So my wife walked up, and I said to her with the microphone, we just come out.

We don't know what we're going to sing. We have a kind of... We figure stay slightly disorganized because then the Holy Spirit can move in. That's our motto.

So I said to Carol, what are you going to sing? She said, I'm going to sing two songs. I said, okay. So I didn't want to be seated in front of the tenors or the altos on that side of the sopranos the way she has it, so I don't hear the choir that way.

So I figured I'll walk off. So I walked off the platform, and I took a seat right down in the front row, right over here. And I just sat down, and they started to sing a song about God's grace, and a former crack addict who was in the choir, a great soloist, he was doing the solo.

And I was there for about 30 seconds listening to the song, and suddenly I felt the Holy Spirit. Now, if I say anything wrong or if I'm exaggerating anything, let God judge me. You can now discern whether I'm telling you the truth.

I'm telling you what happened to me. I felt the Holy Spirit start to trouble me and impress me in my heart. And I said, Lord, you know, what do you want me to do? And the best I could sense was I felt the Holy Spirit saying to me, go quickly and preach the gospel.

Go quickly and tell them that I love them. Go quickly. Go now.

Go quickly and tell them that I love them. Well, I thought, no, no, no. This is the devil tempting me to do something crazy.

Maybe I ate something wrong for lunch or something and this is coming up on me or something. But the thought of not doing it, brothers and sisters, was like a knife going through my spirit, my heart. Go quickly.

Just tell them I love them. Quickly. Go quickly.

And this is all happening as this song is going on and people are being blessed by this song. And my heart starts to pound as God is my holy witness. My heart is pounding.

And my name is, I don't want to do weird things. I don't like weird things. You know, some people think that the only way God moves is if you act weird.

You know, that's not right. But there is the leading of the Holy Spirit. Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, could not go certain places but was led to go to another spot.

Well, it's all happening quickly and I'm saying, Lord, I want to be obedient, but I don't understand. And then I started to argue with this very thing that I preach. This is why I began to say to the Lord, Lord, how can I

give an invitation and preach? We haven't taken the offering yet.

Sad. Sad. Lord, don't you know how it works? You sing.

You do announcements. Come on, you're laughing, but you know you'd do the same if you were me. You know, because we're locked in.

These things are not found in the Bible. What I just said, they're not found in the Bible. But when you do it year after year, decade after decade, you think it's thus saith the Lord.

You can't break away. You can't leave. What God was saying to me, leave, leave today and do this.

So as the song was ending, Keith, they were resolving the last chord. I come out of my seat out of my seat and I was nervous. I was nervous because I don't want to.

I want to be led by God. I don't like to do anything unless I feel this is right. This will edify.

This is what the Lord wants. I come walking up and Carol finishes and she sees me coming and she's wondering like, what's he coming for? I thought he knew we want to sing two songs. The choir just stood at attention and I grabbed the guy as he was putting the mic down, the soloist.

I said, you got four minutes. Tell everybody. You know, the service had begun like at three o'clock and we had put the choir on very early for some reason.

Maybe it was 3.20, 3.25. And he gets up and he grabs the microphone. He begins to testify like he was ready to do it. And he shares, I was in crack houses for days at a time and he just messed up my life and I was away from my wife.

I saw women sell their children to men, their daughters to men for \$5 just to get crack. And he's sharing how the pollution that Christ pulled him out of. It was powerful.

And I'm just standing there. When he gets done, I grab the microphone. I took eight minutes, seven, eight minutes.

I just gave the gospel. You know, it's not brain surgery. It's just the gospel.

You don't have to complicate it. It's just the gospel. It's the good news.

I preached it and I made an invitation right there. The choir standing at attention. They're soldiers.

And people start, this was an afternoon service, they flood in from the lobby where we had overflow from the balcony. They're coming from downstairs. People, there's a kid crying over there.

There's some people over here. I mean, good things are happening. I'm just rejoicing.

I just started to weep for joy. I saw how the word of God was working. All this is happening.

And we prayed over them. We said, we're going to take your names and now you may go back to your seats maybe five minutes later, seven minutes later. They go back to their seats and I said, well, what do I do now, congregation? You know what? Let's take the offering and the choir will sing to the offering and we'll wait on them later.

You know, you don't have to have a big fancy service. If they want a show, they can go to Broadway. Church is not Broadway.

Church is church. It's a house of prayer for all nations. Come on, do I get a witness? Somebody say amen.

So to put on the way we do services, is that the way you do when people come to your house? Do you give them a bulletin and say, now look, for the first five minutes we're going to talk and then we're going to sit down? No. You just kind of go with it, right? One day we'll learn. Well, the meeting went on.

I preached a little, maybe abbreviated, and then had a wonderful service and then did a night service and hey, what do you do? You just keep doing it for the Lord the best you know how. On Tuesday, Monday's a rest day, Tuesday I came in the office and my daughter Susan was working in the orchestration department and she walks into my office and I saw that she had been crying. I said, Susie, everything okay? She said, Daddy, God is awesome.

I said, I know Sue, what's up? She said, Daddy, God is awesome. I said, tell me. She said, well, a man just called me from this city in Dallas and he wanted to get a song.

He wanted the sheet music of a chorus that we sing in the church and I told him, sorry sir, we don't have sheet music. Oh no, I've got to get the sheet music for that song. I've got to hear that song.

She said, well, I'm sorry, we don't have sheet music. The only books that are ever made, word music makes when the choir makes an album. We don't have our own music printing business and all of that.

So the song you're talking about, it's never been recorded, so we have no sheet music. Oh, I've heard that song in your church and I wanted to teach it to my church and oh, I wish I could get that song. And then my daughter slipped and she said, well, you know what, I'll tell my mom and maybe she'll record that song.

He said, you'll tell who? She said, my mom. He said, who are you? She said, I'm Susan Symbola Petrie. I'm Pastor Symbola and Carol's second child.

And he started to break and get a little emotional and he said, tell your daddy something. We were in your church on Sunday. The reason we were there was because we have an 18-year-old boy or 17-year-old boy who's not the boy we raised.

He's drifted away from God. He's drifted away from us. Running around with the wrong people.

Got a hard look on his face. We're so concerned about our son. So my wife and I prayed together and we made a plan.

I'm a businessman. I had to go to New York, so we said, son, come with us to New York. We'll do business on Friday.

We'll give you a tour on Saturday of the city. We'll see some of the sights and the Big Apple and then on Sunday we'll go home. But Pastor Cimbala, we planned to bring him to your church on Sunday because we just were hoping God would somehow reach him.

Well, everything went well. Friday, business. Saturday, we saw the city.

On Sunday, we're leaving our hotel and we're taking the cab to your church, our old site on Flatbush Avenue. And I looked at the watch and I looked at the tickets and I thought, oh, goodness. The travel agent made a mistake.

We're not going to be able to stay for the service. She made the flight too early. We're going to have to get to LaGuardia.

We're only going to be able to stay for like 45 minutes. We'll never hear the word of God. We'll never hear a sermon.

We'll maybe hear the choir. He said, we got into the church. Tell your daddy we went up to the balcony.

We're sitting there. And for some reason, after just a few songs of praise and worship, the choir got up to sing. But after like one song, your father shot up there like a cannonball.

And he grabbed the microphone, gave it to this former crack addict who testified. And then he presented the gospel and he asked people to come to Christ. And our son was the first one who stood.

Listen. And he, wait. And he came down from the balcony and he was crying his eyes out.

And I remember him. And your dad prayed. And the meeting, they ministered to him.

They took his name. And then he went up back to the balcony. And as he went to the balcony, we already had our coats because we just ran out the door with him and got a cab and just made it to our flight.

But you tell your daddy we couldn't stop looking at him on the flight because as we looked at him, he's the boy we raised again. He had a glow on his face. God had done something wonderful in his life.

You know what I believe? I believe God stopped the meeting and intervened for a 17-year-old boy. Wouldn't that be something Jesus would do? But you know what? I had to be willing and it was hard for me. I told you the battles.

I'm weak. I'm a frail person. I had to be willing to go out not knowing where I was going, why I was going there.

And some of you, God wants you to do things, but you want to know how it's all going to work out. It doesn't happen that way all the time. God just wants you to step out and do that teaching, start that prayer meeting, start serving the body of Christ.

And you know what? It happened here again here. While I'm talking about that, let's just close our eyes. Everybody here who has a son or a daughter who's away from God, and while I was telling that story, you got a burden for your own son or daughter who you know is not doing well.

Let's have some faith tonight. If your son or your daughter is the one you want to pray for, I don't care if two people come forward or 22 or 222, it doesn't matter. If you have a son or a daughter or a grandson or a granddaughter that is not serving God, but they were raised in the ways of the Lord, and you want to step out in faith and believe God for a miracle in their life, a miracle in their life, could you just stand up? Stand up where you are.

And the minute you stand up, just come to the altar. Come on, come quickly. We're going to believe God for that.

Come on, come quickly. You can stand, please, if you would. If you wouldn't mind, please.

Sorry, just stand. If you're in the choir, you can come and stand behind me or if it's easier to get to the... We're going to believe God for something great here. With God, everything is possible.

How many say amen? Oh, with God, everything is possible. Lord, as the people are coming, we first want to ask You tonight to fill us with Your Word so that we can hear a living Word from the living God. We want to be men and women of faith, Lord.

I want to have more faith. I want to grow in faith. So all of us, no matter where we are sitting, we pray first of all that we would begin to wait on You and live in our Bibles so that that thing would become living to us and we would see faith birthed in our heart through the Word operating in conjunction with the Holy Spirit.

We pray, Lord, that You would give us the grace to leave what we're used to for the something better that You have for us. Help us to not be trapped culturally or religiously or denominationally or philosophically that we're not able to move to that something better that You have for us. And I confess, Lord, You have something better for the Brooklyn Tabernacle than what we're doing now.

And we ask You, please, Lord, lead us to it. Make our church godlier. Make the people more like Jesus.

Let there be a deeper love, more fervent prayer. Give us a harvest of souls. I pray for the same thing for this great church, Lord.

Lead them by Your Spirit and give them the confidence and the courage to follow You wherever You lead them. It doesn't matter what other people say or how others might even criticize. Lord, give confidence and boldness to the leadership here to go the way that You want them to go.

We don't want to play records from 30 years ago or 50 years ago or 10 years ago or 10 days ago. We want to be led by Your Spirit in the way that we should go. Also, Lord, give us the confidence to go out even though we don't know where we're going.

You said of Abraham in Hebrews 11, and Abraham went out not knowing where he was going. I confess to You, Lord, my lack of faith, my unbelief. I ask You to forgive me for trying to be too much of a controlling person and not to step out when You lead me.

I ask You to help me with that, Lord. I pray that every meeting and every time I preach, I will be led by Your Spirit and even though I don't know where it's all going to go or how it might end, Lord, that You will just vindicate me by Your Spirit helping me, Lord. And I pray for my brothers and sisters, too, that we'll be men and women of real faith and our giving will obey the promptings of Your Spirit even as Abraham obeyed the prompting that You gave him to leave everything.

And now, Lord, we bring to You tonight this matter of our sons and our daughters and our grandsons and our granddaughters. Everyone at the altar, just lift up both your hands to God right now with me. Just lift them up to God.

Father, our hands are lifting up our children to You right now. Look at them, Lord. Look at these girls and boys, adults, teenagers, preteens.

We hold them up to You, Lord, and we ask You, Jesus, to work in their life. Bring them back out of the dark that they've slipped into, the lies that Satan has convinced them of. Shine Your truth into them.

Send an evangelist to them. Send a brother, a sister. Send somebody.

Wake them up with a dream. Do whatever You have to do, God. But God, bring back our sons and daughters to us and to the faith to a close walk with Jesus Christ.

We're not going to quit. We're not going to give up. We're going to pray by faith.

We don't care how they're doing or what they say because we're not watching them. We're watching You and Your Word. And You said, Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will answer You and show You great and marvelous things.

So we stand on that Word tonight, Lord. Show us great and marvelous things by bringing our children back. Bring them back, Lord.

Wake them up even tonight. God, bring somebody back tonight so there'll be a testimony Sunday of a miracle done in somebody's life. And You can do it, Lord.

You can do it at the snap of a finger, Lord. And that's what we're praying for. For we ask it in Jesus' name.

We praise Your name. We praise Your name. Let's all stand.

Keith is just going to lead us in a chorus or a hymn right now. But let's all just stay in an attitude of worship. We'll follow Him.

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