

Never, Always, Sometimes, Not Now!

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual maturity and the detrimental effects of fear on faith.

Duration: 49:48

Scripture: Exodus 14:1, Isaiah 7:9

Topics: "Indecision"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the importance of growing up and maturing spiritually. He uses the story of Moses and the Israelites to illustrate this point. When the Israelites were faced with the approaching Egyptians, they became terrified and questioned Moses' decision to bring them out of Egypt. Moses reassured them, telling them not to be afraid and to stand firm in their faith. He also instructed them to be still and trust in the Lord's deliverance. The speaker emphasizes the need for believers to move from a state of fear and immaturity to one of faith and maturity in their relationship with God.

Transcript

Exodus is the book, the chapter is chapter 14 and I want your undivided attention for these next few moments as we discuss a vital subject and we're going to start reading in chapter 14 verse 1. Would you look at it with me? Choir look along, worship with your giving and let's read chapter 14 verse 1. Then the Lord said to Moses, tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi-haharoth between Migdol and the sea and they are to encamp by the sea directly opposite Baal-zephon. Pharaoh will think the Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion and hemmed in by the desert and I will harden Pharaoh's heart and he will pursue them but I will gain glory, you could turn that fan off please, for myself through Pharaoh and all his army and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord. So the Israelites did this.

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds, by the way that's about the tenth time they changed their minds, about them and said, what have we done? We've let the Israelites go and have lost their services. So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. He took 600 of the best chariots along with all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them and the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites who were marching out what? Boldly.

Notice that, who were marching out how? Boldly, but not for long. The Egyptians, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they encamped by the sea

near Pi-Ha-Ha-Roth opposite Baal-Zephon. As Pharaoh approached the Israelites, as Pharaoh approached the Israelites looked up and there were the Egyptians marching after them.

They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. No longer marching out boldly, now they're scared to death. They said to Moses, was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? They're ready to die already.

What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, leave us alone, let us serve the Egyptians? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert. Moses answered the people. I want you to divide the next little narrative into four little parts.

Moses answered the people, do not be afraid, say that with me, do not be afraid. Stand firm, say that, stand firm, in other words in faith, and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again.

The Lord will fight for you. Here's the third one, you need only to be still, say that, you need only to be still. Then the Lord said to Moses, why are you crying out to me? Say that, why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on, raise your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water, so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.

I want to talk to you, look up here for a moment now, I want to talk to you about a very important subject. I want to talk to you about growing up. I want to talk to you about maturing.

I want to talk to you about getting out of baby stage and moving into a growth cycle with God, so that we are mature and not like children perpetually. This is a very important subject because maturity and growing up is important physically, emotionally and spiritually, very important. And just like emotionally, you don't grow up automatically.

You can be 40, 50, 60 years old and be a baby. Emotionally, mentally, you can act like a baby. This is why a lot of marriages have such stress and strain.

It's because one or both are acting like children. Sometimes the children act more grown up than the parents. Now, I want you to notice by the name of this message is a very strange title.

You can get it in tape at the end of the service. Maybe you need to listen to it once or twice or give it to someone. It's called Never, Always, Sometimes, Not Now.

Never, Always, Sometimes, Not Now. Say that with me. Never, Always, Sometimes, Not Now.

And those are categories of speech and action which we'll talk about in a moment. Even though the Israelites were God's people and had been saved by the Passover night. You know the context of this story.

We read chapter 13 when we took communion on Tuesday night. Chapter 13 is one of the most important chapters in the Old Testament. It gives the instructions for the Passover night.

Why were the Israelites saved from the destroying angel? For only one reason. What was the reason? When I see the blood, I will pass over you. That became the first month of their religious year.

The new first month. And the month, the year had begun in the fall and now would begin in the spring with Passover. And we know that's all a type or a shadow or a symbol of Jesus Christ who came to shed his blood as the ultimate and only cure for sin.

To take away the sins of the world. Well, after 10 plagues had hit Egypt and Pharaoh kept changing his mind and hardening his heart, the 10th one took the firstborn away, except for the Israelite firstborn. If they did what God said, which was to take a year old lamb without defect or fault, slay it, pour out the blood, take hyssop, put it in the blood and then put the blood over the doorpost.

And God made a promise. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. And that night also began the feast of unleavened bread.

And we know that they marched out of Israel, out of Egypt. And that was the first time they were a nation. The nation of Israel begins with Passover because they went down 430 years before, just a handful of Jacob's family, his sons and extended family.

And now they came out on Passover night as a nation. Not only that, God gave him favor with the Egyptians and they spoiled the Egyptians, the Bible says. They took all their gold and silver and valuable things because God gave them a combination of fear and respect among the Egyptians.

So the Egyptians said, take what you want, just get out of here. We can't take it anymore. The land has been devastated.

Even though they were God's people and they had been saved, quote unquote, that doesn't mean they were mature. In fact, they were babies. They were immature.

You know what immature people do? They fluctuate. One of the sure signs of immaturity in all of us is fluctuation. In other words, they fluctuated.

They were marching out boldly, weren't they, it says in the Word of God. Why were they marching out boldly? Because there were no problems. They had been set free, the plagues had come, Passover night.

But the minute they see Egyptians coming after them, which God permitted, God was setting up a situation where He would show how strong He is at the Red Sea. Do you think they understood that? No, they were babies. Babies under pressure, immature people under pressure do one of three things, or all three things, which is pictured by how the Israelites reacted.

The first thing they did was they got into fatalism. That's a sign of immature people. The minute problems come, they give up the ghost and say, we're going to die.

That's the first thing they said. Smith, they said, we're going to die. We're going to die.

It's over. We're going to die. Weren't there good enough graveyards in Egypt? Now we're going to die.

God's done all this for them, and just because they see Pharaoh and his chariots coming, we're going to die. It's over. We're going to die.

That's what we do when we're immature. We give it up. We get, you know, into fatalism.

It's all over. I'll never get through this. Life is ruined, as if there's no God, like He's never helped us before.

But that's a sign of immaturity. They did another immature thing. They blamed Moses.

Moses, didn't we tell you? That's one of the sure signs when we're immature. We blame people around us for our own hardship. We have to vent, and because we're immature, we blame people, usually leadership, sometimes a husband, a wife, sometimes a mother-in-law, whoever.

Moses, didn't we tell you to leave us alone when you came with all of this, let my people go stuff? Why couldn't you just leave well enough alone? Imagine how God felt when He heard that. See, immaturity is a very painful thing to God, just like it is to parents who have immature children, snippy little children or immature little children, who give up the minute there's a little hardship, who quit, who then blame others because they just can't take a little pressure in life, as if you're going to get through life without pressure. Kevin, can you be a cop without pressure? Come on.

Can you get through the police academy without pressure? What in the world in life can you do without pressure? But immaturity, you just blame someone. Moses is the problem. Moses, why did we have to listen to him? And then finally, they said something which must have been a sword into God's heart.

They said, you know what? It would have been better if we stayed in Egypt. Why do we have to obey God and go worship Him? We had it better back there. Imagine, after all God did for them, imagine how God felt.

That's how God feels with our immaturity. Imagine some of the things we say when we're immature. How painful they are to others and to ourselves.

How many marriage counseling sessions I've done, where I heard what a husband and a wife said to each other, because they're babies. They're absolutely babies. They can be 50 years old.

They're babies. The minute a little pressure comes, they go overboard. Well, we're going to see a little bit about growing up, but I want to talk about the counterpart to emotional immaturity, which is spiritual maturity.

Just because you're a Christian and quote, been born again, doesn't mean that you grow up. In fact, we all start as babies, don't we? The only problem is some of us stay as babies. Paul writes to one church and says, when I was with you, I had to give you milk.

I couldn't give you meat. You know why? You're a baby. You don't even have teeth.

You haven't developed anything. In fact, if I was with you, I still have to give you milk, because you're babies. You're immature spiritually.

See, brothers and sisters, when we get born again and become Christians, a process begins, which is called maturation or maturing or growing in the Lord. If we use God's means, if we eat the right food, exercise properly, if we go according to God's word, we will mature, but not everybody does that. Some people stay perpetual babies.

They've been in the church 40, 50 years. They're babies. Why do you think there's so few laborers for the cause of Christ? Why do you think Jesus said, the fields are ripe unto harvest, the laborers are few? Why do you think pastors and churches across the land are short on workers? Because people are immature, and immature people only want what they want when they want it.

So how are you going to get workers when they're always in a mood? Because that's another sign of immaturity. People are always in moods. Somebody said something.

I would have stayed in the prayer band or the choir or ushering, but you know what? Someone looked at me wrong. Well, let me get this right. They crucified Jesus, but somebody looked at you wrong.

Oh, I follow that. But babies are like that. Babies get thrown off by any little comment.

There's cliques in the choir. I can't stay in the choir. There's cliques, and I'm not in the clique.

They're babies. Just babies. You don't reason with people like that.

They're just babies. Babies always find a reason to do what they want to do. They're children.

Spiritually immature. Now, what people do when they are little, children do when they're four or five, can be cute. Even at five or six, kids can say certain things.

But if somebody's acting like that at 20 or 22 or 19, 25, you got a problem. It's very painful. It's painful for parents to have children who are immature, who do the wrong thing at the wrong time.

It's painful to be a grandparent and have your children having their children and still see immaturity in them. I'm sure that's so. In other words, never growing up, because growing up isn't automatic.

You might grow up physically, but you can remain a baby for a long, long, long time, fluctuating one day one way, the next day another way, saying inappropriate things, having a snippy little mouth, having a little mood, pouting, fooling around. Just, you know, what's cute when people are little, it becomes very painful and irritating at times. It's like when I was preaching at 12.

A baby started to cry. They started to take a baby out in the last row. I stopped them and said, how old's your baby? They said a year and a half.

Nobody cared. We all took the noise for a little while and the parents pulled them out. But what if she started crying? Feola's my secretary today.

She's helping in so many ways. What if Feola started crying and we had to carry her out? People would say she wouldn't stop. And then you see one of the altos, you know, Natalie gives her a bottle and, you know, they just take Feola out.

You go, wait a minute, wait a minute, I've got some deep problems. You say, no, they just did that to that kid. I know, but that's a year and a half.

This is someone in their 20s. Very painful. This is why more people don't know about more about Jesus because of the immaturity of God's own people.

This is why blessings are missed. And this is why people aren't involved in service. Because, for example, you can't work for Jesus if you're given to moods.

Oh no, how, in other words, most of the other people in the world are in moods. How would you get them out of a mood if you're in a mood yourself? Right? So, so, but babies go in moods. They like to do something.

Some days they're all psyched up. The only trouble is don't get excited. Tomorrow they won't want to do it because they're immature.

Immature people only do what they want to do when they want to do it. And you can't do anything in life. How would you raise a child that way? You only fed the baby when you felt like it.

You only got up in the middle of the night when you felt like it. How many know there'd be a lot of starving children? Now, one of the signs of growth, maturity, is categories, are categories. One of these, these signs are categories of action and words that you understand, you understand what the categories are.

And the categories are never, always, sometimes, not now. What I mean by that is, as we'll see in the story, there are some things that mature people never do. They never do.

There are some things a mature person, just a child, they did it, but now they just never do that. There are some things that they always do. They always do.

They, a mature person, shall we say, can never, never forgets to pay their bills because they know the consequences. Right? A mature person always takes care of their personal hygiene. They didn't care as a child.

They walk out with all stuff hanging out of everywhere there and, but, let's not get nasty, but you know what I mean. But as an adult, you don't sometimes take care of your hygiene. You always take care of hygiene.

You don't sometimes pay your bills. Do you Blanche? You sometimes forget to pay, but you never forget to pay your bills. Then there's other situations that are more complex in life that bring out your maturity, which is, when is it not a right-wrong situation with never and always? When is, when is, like, when is it a choice between good options, but there's a best thing to do at the moment? That's another sign of maturity.

Because there's so many things under the sun to do, as we'll find out, one of the signs of maturity is to choose what that moment calls for. The wisest thing to do. It's not right and wrong.

It's just, you know, like, like, like talking and listening. Listening is in the Bible. Talking is in the Bible.

When do you talk? When do you listen? Well, only mature people learn when to talk, when to listen. We're all learning about that. And then finally, not now, sometimes God gives unique opportunities and the only way to take advantage of them is to change your course, even what you're doing, even though what you're doing is excellent, excellent.

But God says to you, if you're sensitive and mature, stop doing that. It's not the right thing right now. So let's start with never.

As they came out of Egypt and they were acting like babies, Moses started to teach them and talk to them. And the first thing he said to them is, do not be afraid. I would like you to know today that the first sign or the most, one of the most important signs of spiritual maturity is you can never be afraid.

You can never be afraid. Not most times not be afraid, not sometimes not be be afraid. You can never be afraid.

No place in the Bible is there ever, ever any allowance for fear. I want you to know today that it's impossible to serve God and grow up if you're going to have intermittent seizures of fear, anxiety, nervousness, biting your nails, worrying about tomorrow when you don't even know if you'll wake up and see tomorrow. It's impossible to walk by faith and live in fear.

It's impossible to please God and have fear. For the Bible says God has not given us a spirit of what? He has not given us a spirit of fear. And don't say fear is just anxiety and worry and, and I don't know, don't, don't, don't even go there and just say it's something you're passing through.

It's an attack of the enemy. It's something demonic. It's something that's not of God.

For the Bible tells us that these same people who came out of Egypt, they never saw the promised land, the mature adults, because of fear. The spies came back and gave a bad report about the land, that there were big armies and strong opponents that they'd have to face and because of fear they began to doubt and they missed. For 40 years they missed God's will and had to wander in the wilderness.

You know what fear does? Fear destroys faith. Fear grieves God. Fear forfeits the blessing that God has.

Fear is deadly. Cancer is nothing compared to fear, although they're finding out that fear can lead to cancer. Isn't that amazing? Anxiety and fear just messes you up.

No matter how bad it looks, the first rule of spiritual maturity is that we can never be afraid. You can never be afraid. You can never be afraid.

No matter what you see, no matter what you hear, no matter how it seems, God wants to bring us to a place of maturity where we know who He is and what He has promised. And you say, Pastor Cimbala, that's easy for you to say. You don't know my situation.

Well, how about this situation? Do you got a worse situation than this? Listen to where David came to in God. God is our refuge and strength and ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

We will not fear, Psalm 46, 1 through 3. David says, even if the earth begins to crumble and the mountains fall in the sea, then God must be up to something. But that's okay. He's got everything under control.

We will not be afraid because God is with us. Can we put our hands together and affirm that God is with us? You can't be afraid and serve God. You know, when you were little, you're afraid of sleeping alone.

My children were afraid. They went through stage. Some of them, they wanted somebody to stay in bed.

Stay in bed. Just stay with me, Daddy, until I fall asleep. Then there's... Okay, they're kids.

Then keep the light on. You know, there's some people, when they're kids, they... Well, maybe when they're adults, they can't sleep without the light on. Why? They're afraid.

I used to be afraid going to the basement of... on Parkside Avenue, of that house when I was a kid. It was dark. Afraid.

Afraid of this. Afraid of that. Well, when you're a kid, you say, yeah, that's okay.

But when you grow up, you're not afraid of the dark. Afraid of sleeping alone. Afraid of this.

Because you've grown up now. Same thing spiritually. When you're afraid, you're out of God's will.

When you're afraid, when we're living with anxiety and fear and nervousness and tension, something is wrong between us and God. Satan has gotten some wedge in there because it's impossible to serve God. There's one never in life that you've got to remember.

You never can be afraid. Never. Not for a second.

Because what God was saying, listen, as I bring this part to a close. What God was saying, He wanted the Israelites to think, now wait a minute. I sent Moses to deliver you.

I sent 10 plagues that you saw on Egypt. I divided you apart from the people that I sent the plagues on. Because if you read carefully the record in Exodus, God set a mark and a division between the land of Goshen, where the Jews were, Hebrews were, and Egypt.

I sent 10 plagues. Then on Passover night, I gave you instructions on how to be delivered from the death angel. I told you how to slay a lamb.

And I let you out. And I gave you favor. I delivered you.

And I brought you out. And I gave you favor with the Egyptians. They'd given you all their gold and silver.

And then when you left, I put a cloud during the day, so you'd know that I was before you. And then at night, so you could know I'm with you, I gave you a pillar of fire. And now because you see a few miserable Egyptian chariots, now you want to die and go back to Egypt? Is that what you think of me? After all I've done for you, you think I'm going to let you fall in a black hole and be destroyed? How would any parent feel if their child acted like that? And how about you, my brother? How about you, my sister? You weren't looking for God.

God was looking for you. How many say amen? While we were yet sinners, who died for us? Christ Jesus. And every sin you've ever committed has been washed away.

Better yet, like a woman who goes to our church, who had three or four abortions before she became a Christian, there's not one record of one abortion up in heaven. Not one record of one sin against any of us. All because God loves us so much.

And He gave us a new life through Christ Jesus. And He gave us His word and His promise. And He said He would never leave us nor forsake us.

And He put His Holy Spirit in us. And He's given us the Bible. And Jesus went to prepare a place for us.

And He said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. And then we're going to be nervous and afraid, because it looks bad? And there's some anthrax in the land? Oh, come on. How many believe we serve a mighty God who can take care of us? Come on, let's put our hands together and thank the Lord.

And thank the Lord. And thank the Lord. No, you can't be afraid.

When you make decisions, when you're afraid, you'll miss God's will. You never make a decision when you're afraid. Never.

You can't tolerate fear. Mature people know that letting fear exist in their life is like playing with anthrax virus. It's like handling letters that have been affected by it.

That's what mature people know. Immature people say, yeah, but I'm afraid. And they feel sorry for themselves.

As if, as if that's some kind of out. Now, the first rule for maturity is never, you never be afraid, because God's done too much for us to let us go now. Oh, praise God.

Come on. I mean, after all God has done for us, He's going to let us, He's going to let us go now. But it's not just never, it's, it's, it's always.

The Bible tells us that Moses said, stand firm. In other words, i.e., trust God, stand firm, have faith in God. It's the other side of the coin of never fear, always believe, always have faith.

Mature people grow up not into seasons of faith, days of faith, high moments with God in a meeting where they believe, but then 24 hours later, they have no faith for anything. That's, that's immaturity. Either God is real and can be trusted or He's not.

And maturity, spiritually speaking, means that we come to a place where our foundation is, we can wake up in the morning and say, you know what? Praise God, He's with me today. Hallelujah. In fact, goodness and mercy are going to follow me today.

How do you know that? Where do you see that? All the things going on in the world? Yeah, because His Word says, surely goodness and mercy will follow me. Praise God, He's going to help me today. Yeah, they're laying off people on your job.

Well, I can't change that. But one thing, no matter if they lay me off or keep me, God's going to be with me. He's going to help me because the Lord is with me.

So, this has to be a mature development. Remember, you can't grow overnight. Oak trees aren't made overnight.

Certain gifts and things can happen from the Spirit in a moment. Healings can occur in a moment. You can get saved in a moment.

But growth, no, it's a process. And God wants to develop faith in us above all things. That's the only thing Jesus marveled at when He was on the earth.

He never looked at Matthew and said, what a smart little guy I have here as one of my disciples. You never hear that. Or He never looked at anyone and said, what a kind person.

You never hear Him say that. But when He saw faith, look in your concordance one day. Get a concordance.

Look at all the times faith is mentioned in the New Testament. All the times Jesus said, behold, I have never seen such faith like this in all of Israel. Your faith has made you whole.

Only believe. Did I not tell you when you pray, you must believe? Believe, believe. Have faith.

Isaiah said it hundreds of years before in Isaiah 7, 9. If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all. Listen, Isaiah 7, 9. If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all. We stand by faith.

So immature people, they're standing for a moment, but they're going to trip again because their faith fluctuates with how things seem. While mature people are able to say with Paul, I know in whom I have believed, and I'm persuaded that he is able, praise God. They could throw me in the slammer, whatever they do.

God is with me. God's going to work this thing for all things work together for good to them that love God. Brothers and sisters, we're going to have great chances to witness to people in the days and months should the Lord tarry to come with this ongoing war and terrorist threat.

How are we going to witness to people strongly who are bothered by fear if we're afraid ourselves? How are we going to help people if we're nervous? I'm not talking about just talking the talk. I'm always trust him. I will always trust him.

I'm not going to fluctuate up and down. See, there's some things that always have to happen if we're going to be mature. And that's why Paul says at the end of his first Corinthian letter, stand firm in the faith, be men and women of courage, be strong.

And then the beginning of his second letter to Corinthian church, he says in 2 Corinthians 1.24, it is by your faith that you stand firm. So if we're going to grow up, we have to ask God, God, I want to never be afraid. Bring me to that place where I don't walk in anxiety just because I hear some bad news or I see some things happening that are that are a little bit out there.

I am not going to live. I'm not going to panic. How many want to come to the place where we live above fear? Wave your hand at me.

Come on, wherever you are. I want to live above that. I mean, what a heartache that must be to God to see the kids, see his children afraid.

Ask any parent. Come on, go over to Wanda and Warren and ask them if they saw their kids not being able to learn at school because of being distracted by fear and anxiety. Ask them how they would feel.

Ask Jerry and Leroy Legions raising their children if they saw them all nervous and biting their nails. How do you think that makes a parent feel? How do you think God feels when we're afraid? And he has already said, I'll never leave you. Are you kidding? I'll put you around.

I'm going to watch out for you like a father pitieth his children so God will have mercy on his children. You've got to always believe. Never fear and only believe.

Now let me close. There's another distinction which is more subtle because it's not so black and white, evil and good as fear and faith. And that is, the Bible says there's a time for everything under the sun.

But one of the signs of immature people is they do the wrong thing at the wrong time. What they're doing is not wrong. It's just the timing that they choose is so wrong that it makes everybody awkward and can even be painful.

In other words, when you meet someone who's very, very smart, like if you would meet the Secretary of State Colin Powell and you would meet him, you wouldn't start saying, you know what Secretary of State Powell, I want to talk to you about international affairs. I got to tell you my opinion on this. Probably be better if you say, how are you, sir? Tell us what's happening around the world.

Wouldn't that be better? In other words, immature people talk when they should listen and they listen when they should be talking. They get led astray by people who don't have a clue, but since they're immature, they should be speaking up themselves. Or for example, the Bible has contradictory commands.

And how do you know when to practice one or the other? For example, the Bible says that we should talk to our children and reason with them along the way, right? We should teach our children, right? The Bible also says, spare the rod and what? So what should you do? Should you talk to your children or should you beat them? That's another illustration of my message. I'm on a roll, I'm telling you. So what should you do? Should you beat your children and say, spare the rod, spoil the child? Every time a kid gets out of hand, just whoop them.

Or should you just say no? The Bible says reason, talk with your children, let me talk with them along the way. Well, what should you do? Probably both, right? But when do you ping and when do you pong? When do you do one, when do you do the other? Immature people just have a knee-jerk reaction. They just do one thing.

They're not going to wait and pray and ask for wisdom as to what's the best among two good things. They just do one thing, like my late father. He wasn't a lot into talking and reasoning with me.

His policy was just, let me whoop that little boy. You know, he did talk to me sometimes. He always used to tell me, I don't know what he thought the meaning of this was to me, but maybe you heard your parent tell you, before he would whip me and he would whip me, he would say, he'd say, you're right, he'd say, I love you and this hurts me more than you.

And I would go, oh, yeah? Well, why don't I just do it to you and then, well, you can really feel it. Let me spare you all that pain. So when do you spank? When do you talk? See, only wise, only mature people try to differentiate that.

How about churches that are immature? See, there are churches that think unless it's noisy, you're not having church. Because the Bible says, make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Doesn't the Bible say that? So anytime there's a lull and there's a lack of noise, the minister gets nervous, the people get nervous.

So Jonathan, help me. So if somebody's preaching and he said, and the Lord said, that God is faithful. And thank you.

And he could do that all day. You know that, right? So the minister, if he hears nobody, just everyone quietly listening, he'd say, y'all don't want to hear me preach. Come on, somebody say amen.

In other words, if it gets quiet, then God's not working. It's very immature, right? Because the Bible also says, be still and wait a minute, make a joyful noise and be still. Which is it? Depends.

But immature people don't want to know that. They just want to know. They want a formula.

There are some people who worship silence. You go to their church and there's no noise. Nobody can praise God.

Nobody can lift their hands, even though it's in the Bible. Immature. Just making another kind of single category when God has a wonderful word and a variety of things that he says, I want you to respond to me depending on what I'm saying.

For example, some things are good, but if they're done at the wrong time, immature people can hurt someone. For example, what's your name, brother? James. Stand up, James.

See, if I meet James and I go, James. I don't remember meeting him. Hey, come on, James.

Give me a hug. What's up, brother? Hey, how you doing? Everything's fine. Good to see you, man.

Good to see you, James. You may be seated. You say, is that a good thing to do what I just did to James? Wouldn't you think that's good? Am I correct? What if he just found out five minutes ago his mother died? Would that be the right thing to do? No.

Why wait? You just told me it was the right thing to do. Isn't it good to greet someone and say I love you, brother, and what's up? No. It's the timing.

It's the timing. But immature people don't want to know timing. They just want to know.

You know, it's like recreation and work. Let me say something to you young people that are here. There's a place in life for recreation, but there's a time if you go to school and you want to develop your mind and not be just an airhead, you've got to study and read.

But immature people, they're not going to study. They're not going to discipline themselves to read anything because they feel like working out or playing or doing whatever. That's a sign of immaturity.

No balance, no finding out what the divisions are in life. It's just, yeah, but recreation is good. It is very good.

But if it so absorbs you that you have no time for other good things, then you fall into another realm of immaturity. So God has to teach us. How do we learn this? Moses, listen, as I close, the musicians are coming.

Moses says to the people, God's going to fight for you. Just stand still. That's all you have to do.

Did they fight all their battles that way? How did they fight, let's say, the battle of Jericho 40 years later when they went into the land? How did they fight Jericho? Did they stand still and were quiet or did they march around and shout? Well, wait a minute. After Jericho, did they fight other battles like that, like the battle of Ai and some of those other battles? Did they fight marching around and shouting all the time? Did they do that? No. They went out and fought.

When they fought the Amalekites, Joshua fought in the valley and up on a hill, Moses lifted his hands up and Aaron and Hur would hold his hands up and they would actually fight like this. Then someone says, yeah, but I read in what happened to King Jehoshaphat. God said, just let the people sing and I'll give the victory.

That's the way God gives the victory all the time. Just sing. Sonny Argonzoni and I met a minister out in California one time and he said, God has shown me the new way to win the loss.

Just get on a high place overlooking LA or San Francisco and just sing over the city. Look in the book of Acts and see if they ever did that. In other words, there's a time to sing.

There's a time to be still. There's a time to fight and strain and keep in the name of the Lord and pray, grit your teeth and say, I'm hanging on to God no matter what. How many know life has all different kinds of battles of all? And it's a sign of immaturity to just say, this is the formula.

This is what you do. You just praise God. No, you intercede.

Oh, okay. Let's just intercede. No, sometimes you praise God.

That's why in a meeting you have to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit because there's a time to just be praising God, thanking God. There's a time to be still. Then there's a time to just worship him like right now, just thinking how good he's been to us.

Would you lift your hands with me, everyone? You're not embarrassed, are you? To lift your hands up to God. Could you praise him with your mouth right now? God, we praise you that you are with us and you're going to divide things for us and show us what to do, and we're not embarrassed to lift our hands. The Muslims are praying five times a day out loud, prostrate, and we're going to not lift our hands.

Never, Lord. We will lift our hands as long as we have breath to you and pray. We bless your name.

One last one. So do you get it? Never, always, sometimes. Depends.

Depends. Got to walk with God. That's how you grow up.

Mature people are able to distinguish between the better thing to do. Last one. Not now.

Sometimes God opens the door for ministry or for a miracle, and even though you're doing something very wonderful, he tells you to stop it, because although that thing is very wonderful, it's not the thing you need to do now, and if you don't change and do what he tells you, you miss the whole thing. Where do we get that from in the story? Well, after Moses got through talking to the people, listen to what God said to Moses and the people. Why are you crying out to me? Now, brothers and sisters, I dare you to find too many places in the Bible where God tells people to stop praying.

Look, you won't find too many. Religion began when men began to call on the name of the Lord. God is rich in mercy to everyone who what? Calls upon him.

The Lord says, call upon me in the day of trouble and I will what? And I will answer you. He says, when you call, I will answer. Jesus said men ought always to pray and not to give up.

So prayer is as sacred a subject as you'll find in the Bible outside of Jesus Christ. But here God says to Moses, what are you praying for? What are you crying for? Tell the people to move and stretch out your hands. Stop praying for a second and do what I tell you to do, because when you stretch out your hand and the people move, the sea is going to open.

In other words, there's a time to pray and then there's a time to do it. For example, let's go back to Faola. If Faola says to the Lord day after day, Father, I want you to use me.

I want to be a blessing to people. God, use me in the gifts of the Spirit. Use me in praying and encouraging people.

Use me in winning others to the Lord. And she prays that and then she prays the next day and she prays the next day. She never leaves her house, just goes to work, prays, never talks to anybody, never steps out, never calls anyone on the phone.

Well, how would that work? There's going to come a moment where God's going to say, I've heard your prayer. Now call this person and say, you know what? I saw you on Sunday and you look a little down. May I pray for you right now in the name of Jesus and I want to give you a verse that's on my heart.

In other words, there's a time to pray and then there's a time to do it. And many times we hide behind, I'm praying, I'm praying, I'm praying, when God says, it's right to pray, but when are you going to do what I told you to do? When are you going to say what I told you to say? You see, brothers and sisters, serving God involves risks. And sometimes by just talking about, well, I'm praying about it, what our secret code language is, I'm afraid to take a chance.

So I'm going to keep in the safe place of just pray, pray, pray, pray, pray. And it sounds spiritual. Who's going to rebuke you when you say you're praying, but I got, I got to tell you something.

It's great to pray, but that red sea would have never gotten opened unless the people started to move and Moses stopped praying and lifted up his staff and the sea parted. Maybe you're here today and God is calling you to a ministry like you've never had before in your life. And you're afraid to step forward.

Do you think that I don't know what you're going through? Do you think I've never battled with that in my life? Well, for someone who's never gone to Bible school and who was brought into the ministry, the back door kicking and screaming at times, do you think I don't know about these things? Do you think I've never fought this battle and played games with myself and said, well, I'll just pray about it, pray about it. And God's telling you, yes, but I've heard your prayer. Now go through the door.

I've opened call that person, start that ministry, step out in faith and do what I've told you to do. Don't hide behind the veil of I'm praying, I'm praying. There's a time to pray, but then there's a time to step out and do it in the name of the Lord.

How will you never, how will you ever know, how will Blanche ever know and Josh ever know what God can do when they pray for someone unless they pray for someone and not just pray by themselves? How will she ever know what God might use, how God could use her mouth if she's alone, not talking to anybody, just praying about it? No, there's a time to pray and then there's a time to step forward. Say, I'm going to do it. Let's pray right now.

Father, I've been conscious all day long today that you brought people in here that you want to use in a greater way, but some of them are actually not able to discern some of these things of never, always, sometimes, but especially this last one, Lord, not now. There's certain times for action. There's a time to lift our voice.

There's a time to take a risk. And by your spirit, because I am limited, I'm just a frail human being. You're here.

Your presence is like a gentle cloud among us. And I ask you to speak to people, Lord, that you are prodding, like I used to battle with you and almost hid behind, well, I'll pray and I'll pray, and you were telling me exactly what to do. And I was afraid.

But we're not afraid today because you're with us. You're not going to hurt us. And no weapon formed against us can prosper.

If you're here today, I'm not going to even try to clarify what I've said. If some part of this message has your name on it, the fear, the faith, the perplexing difficulty of making choices among good things, or maybe this not now business where God is talking to you to step into a new place in him, but you've been afraid and been covering up with some spiritual talk like I'm praying about it, but you've been praying and praying and God's heard your prayer. So when will you do it? When will you do it? Maybe there's somebody who has a call to ministry on their life, call to the pastor and call to the mission field.

And now God's telling you, take that step that I told you to take, because you just can't pray, pray, pray. You've got to pray and do. If this message has been an answer to you in some area of your life and you know that today you want to just start afresh with God, growing, growing, becoming more like Jesus, who had perfect never and always and sometimes and not now.

Jesus understood all of that perfectly. If today the Lord has been talking to you, would you just stand where you are? You're a Christian. You love the Lord.

Just stand. You want us to pray for you.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2622.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jim-cymbala/never-always-sometimes-not-now/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net