



Message **Transcript**

Faith is Key

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This morning I want to talk to you about why it is that some people who call themselves by the name of Christ flourish and continue to accelerate and yet some just tend to peter out, some tend to not continue on the journey, some think that they're doing okay, but they never quite flourish.

Some people think there's some magic formula, or they'll say something like this, I'm not really the real Christian type, that's for those people out there. For some reason, my Christian faith has not really been working for me. For some reason, my experience isn't like somebody else's." And how we love to read about missionaries and different missionary biographies and those who the Lord use greatly over time.

We love the stories of the Bible and how God used people like that. And sometimes we'll even hear a pastor talk and say that God can use you like that but we think in our heart, "Yeah, right. Not me. I mean, I'm just one of those average people that sit here. I'm not supernatural in anyway." What is it and why is it that some people flourish and accelerate all the way to the finish and yet others come up a little bit shorter, others never develop into what God fully wanted them to be?

And that's what we're going to take a look at this morning because the answer is this, it's faith. It's faith. This entire chapter in chapter 11 is going to be dedicated and devoted to what faith is and how faith works. And chapter 11 sometimes is called the hall of faith or God's honor roll or all these other things where we look at what faith is, how faith is applied, how faith works, how faith worked in the life of others so that we can be motivated to continue on our journey in faith.

If you're here today and you would say, "I know I love the Lord, I've placed my faith in him, but my life with Jesus doesn't seem to be accelerating the way that I read about in the scriptures, it doesn't seem to be moving the way that I see God move in the scriptures and I see him do things with others, but I'm not watching him do that with me," I believe that God has a word for you today in how you can apply faith to your life, what faith is and how faith works.

And we're going to take a look at five elements of faith today that can be helpful to you in your journey with Christ. Perhaps it's to get unstuck, perhaps it's to keep going, perhaps it's just the belief that God indeed wants to use you for greatness. So if you oblige me today by opening up to Hebrews chapter 11, I'm going to read through the first six verses today. And as I do, then we will highlight five elements of faith that God makes very visible to us right from his word.

He says, now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, for by it men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous. God testifying about gifts and through him, though he is dead, he still speaks.

By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death and he was not found because God took him up for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up, he was pleasing to God. And without faith, it is impossible to please him for he who

comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him.

And here in this text, in these six short verses, we really see what it looks like to have a faith life and what some of the elements of faith are. Now, church, we talk about faith all the time. Matter of fact, in first Corinthians, we talk about faith, hope and love abide, but the greatest of these is love. And the reason that we won't have faith in heaven is because we'll see faith.

The reason we won't have hope in heaven is we'll experience hope, but love will continue to abide. Faith and hope are for the time being. And so what we want to talk about is how faith is the key. Faith is the key element to what God wants. And when you purchase a new house, you can't just use the current keys you have, you have to get a new key. When we purchase new buildings for a church, we have to get a new key because the key is what opens the door and unlocks the potential of what is there so that we can use what is available to us.

Faith is the key that opens up everything for us to experience what it is we read about in God's word. And so as we take a look at five elements of faith today, let's take a look at the first and that's this, that faith firmly believes in what cannot be seen with great hope. Faith firmly believes in what cannot be seen with great hope. Now at the end of chapter 10, we see, but we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to preserving of the soul.

He said we're not like those that are going to shrink back, we're not like those that are going to apostate. We're truly born again because Christ has awakened our

hearts by faith. We believe he died on the cross, we believe he rose from the dead. He's in us, we belong to him. He's given us the faith to believe. Therefore, we're not going to shrink back. We're going to continue to live this journey of faith. And here's what he says.

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Now, what is assurance? Assurance is the substance, it's the elements, it's the exact representation of faith. I think about it like if you are a chef and you're cooking a certain food, perhaps you're making cookies, there's a key ingredient in baking cookies. Maybe it's baking powder. And if you forget to put that in, your cookies, aren't going to be the same.

They might have a lot of the ingredients, but they don't have everything they need to become what they are. In the Christian world, you can have a lot of different elements, but without faith, you miss everything. Faith is essential for being all that God wants you to be. It's by faith that we believe in Christ. It's by faith that we grow in Christ. It's by faith that we apply the word. Faith, faith, faith is everything. It's the faith in Jesus.

And notice what he says. It's not only the assurance or the substance of things hoped for, it's the conviction of things not seen. Conviction is the absolute certainty of a thing. It's the absolute certainty of a thing. If faith is the assurance of things hoped for, faith is the assurance of what we hope for. In this world we need hope. How do you have hope in this world? How does that child have hope in this world?

How do you have hope in this world? Right? We have hope in this world because of what our faith is put in. I saw a while back a thing that was put out by campus crusade that looked like a train and it had faith in the engine and it had... I'm sorry, had facts in the engine, it had faith in the middle and had feelings as the caboose.

Facts is the truth that drives everything. Truth drives everything if you want to have hope. Faith is what puts that truth into practice which fuels the train and then feelings are the outcome. It's so important that we understand that because we live in a world today where feelings tend to drive everything we do. I don't feel like it.

If we're looking for a new job, we tend to trust our feelings. If we're looking for a mate, we tend to trust our feelings. If we're looking to do something else, we trust our feelings. It's all about feelings. Here's what I would encourage you. Don't trust your feelings, trust the truth of God's word. It's the truth of God's word that we can bank on.

How is it Pastor Jeff, that you can be so certain and have such assurance that even though the world is spiraling out of control, that you have great hope? Because the truth tells me that I do and by applying that truth in my life, that brings the feelings of hope in my heart, right? That's what he's talking about here. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction or the evidence of things not seen.

Now, why is that important? Because we live in the world that says seeing is believing. Once I see it, then I'll believe it. I'm not believing that till I see it. One of Jesus's disciples, Thomas, even after he had risen from the dead, even after Jesus

had appeared to all the other disciples, even after the disciples told Thomas, "We've seen the Lord," he said, what? Unless I could put my hands into his scars and see him face to face, I will not believe it.

What was he saying? Seeing is believing. If I see him, then I'll believe. When Jesus shows up a week later, what happens? Said, "Hey, Thomas, peace be with you. Hey, put your hands in my hand, put your hand in my side, stop doubting and believe." And then he says, "But you believe because you've seen, but blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

We live in a world that says seeing is believing, I'll believe it when I see it. Faith works the opposite. I'll believe it and then I'll see it. Believing is seeing. When we believe, then ultimately we'll see it. It works exactly the opposite of how we've been trained our entire life. Faith must come first before we see what God wants to do.

There are so many things in the scripture that God shows us this is how it operates and we say, "Okay Lord. Well, if you show me that, then I'll do it." And God's like, "No, that's not how it works. You have to come to me first and believe what I'm saying and put that into practice, then you'll see the result, then you'll see it." Second Corinthians 5:7 says for we walk by what? We walk by faith and not by sight. It's the reason David says in Psalm 27:13, "I would've despaired had I not believed I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

In other words, I'm believing that God's going to show up, I'm believing he's going to do what he says he's going to do and then I know I'll see it. Now some people have

a hard time with this and they give faith a bad rap. They give churches a bad rap. They say, "You always talk like that. It's just blind faith. We like tangible things." Friends, everybody to some extent has blind faith.

If you've ever eaten at a restaurant, you have blind faith. We don't walk back into the kitchen, we don't know if the person actually washed their hands, we don't know what they did before they came to work or after they went to the bathroom. We don't know. We're believing that it's all good when they serve us that food. Some of us will say, "Well, I got to see it first."

Some of you have had surgeries where you've allowed somebody to put a mask on you and put you to sleep for a number of hours. You've never even met them before, you don't even know their name, you don't even know where they graduated in their medical class or what they do in their spare time and you're laying there saying, "Yeah, go ahead, give me drugs, put me to sleep. I believe you'll wake me back up." Right?

So why is it when it comes to faith that we have a harder time? Here's why, because we have rebellious hearts. God gives us enough evidence to believe, he gives us enough in his words so that we can believe. He lays out enough that if you're really willing to come to him, you can know that you can know that you can know that he is. We have a hard time with it because we want him to show us first and then we'll believe and faith doesn't work that way.

For some of you who are not believers in Christ, one of the hardest steps of faith

that you'll ever take is believing that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, believing that he's the way, the truth and the life and he's the only way to the father, believing that he actually laid down his life on a cross in your place for all your sins, believing by faith that he rose from the dead, believing by faith that he's still alive, believing by faith that if you come to him, he'll impart his very life into you, that takes great faith.

And if you've done that, then continuing on the journey with Christ takes great faith. I mean, I've said it from this pulpit many, many times, the hardest step of faith you'll ever take is what? The next one. I mean, God wants us to keep on faithing. So it doesn't matter where you are on your journey, God's desire for you is to keep walking by faith and not by sight. It's backwards from how we see things. We want to see the outcome and then we'll do it. And it works that way in every aspect of our life.

Lord, if you show me that my marriage will be put together well if I acted like this, I'll act like this. God, if you show me that by tithing you'll open up some new doors for me, I'll tithe. God, if you show me that you're going to provide for me in a certain way, then I'll do this. God doesn't work that way. God works in such a way where you see the truth in his word, and then you begin to apply it and when you begin to apply it over time, you will see the evidence of it.

Your emotions will always catch up. Emotions are important. Feelings are important. They just shouldn't be the driver in what we do. They shouldn't be the driver. Faith firmly believes in what cannot be seen, but not only does it believe in what cannot be seen, but with great hope. Friends, I have great hope. I have great hope because

of what the word of God says and I have great hope because the longer I apply it, the more I see that the word of God is true, right? Faith firmly believes in what cannot be seen with great hope.

Secondly, is this. Faith firmly believes your personal witness matters. Faith firmly believes your personal witness matters. In verse 1 he says, now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Verse 2, for by it the men of old gained approval, they gained approval, got approved of what they did.

The word approval really comes from the word where we get our word martyr. It means they bore witness to the truth. They testified that faith was real. And he's talking to a group of Jews who have now been converted, are now under the new covenant and he's saying even in the old covenant, faith was recognized. Even all of our ancestors that walked with the Lord, faith was being recognized.

Under each covenant, old and new, faith is this essential key ingredient to what God recognizes. This is why men of old and women of old gained approval from God, because of their faith. We're going to read in verse 6 that without faith it's what? It's impossible to please God. But here's why it's so important. Your personal witness matters because sometimes here's what I find in church, we like to go to a church that's considered faithful.

We want to go someplace where there's a faithful pastor and a faithful congregation and faithful elders and it makes us feel good to be around faithful people. But here's what God's saying. Are you faithful? Right? Because not are you around

faithful people? That's great. But are you being faithful with what God's entrusted to you?

This made me think of the parable of the talents in Matthew chapter 25. You can read it this week. Matthew 25:14 to 30, where Jesus tells a story about going on a journey and giving talents to three different group of people. A talent was an incalculable amount of money, a large sum of money. One talent was a large sum of money.

To one he gave five talents, to one he gave two talents, to one he gave one. And then he went away and he came back to see, what did you do with the talents that I gave you? And the first one that had five said, "Well, you gave me five, I went out and earned five more, here's 10 talents." The one with two said, "Hey, you gave me two, I went out and earned two more. Here you go."

The one he gave one said this, remember what he said? I knew you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow. I knew you weren't worth pleasing. So what I went and did as I went and dug a hole and I buried my talent in the ground. What did he say? He said, "Here I gave you something to steward. I gave you something by faith to do something with and here's what you said, 'I don't want what you gave me. I put it in a hole. I'm giving it back to you. You take it. I never wanted it to begin with.'"

What does he say to that guy? You wicked lazy servant. Take from him and give it to the one who had 10. What'd he say to the one who had five and the one who had

two when they gained two more? Well done good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things, I'll put you in charge of more. See, I don't believe they were faithful because they earned twice as much. I believe they were faithful because they took what was given to them and invested it all to the full.

Here's the point of the parable. The point of the parable is God has entrusted special things to each and every one of you, some of you specific gifts, some of you are relational, some of you have the ability to earn money, some of you are good upfront in front of people, some of you are good calculating things, some of you are good at math.

All of us have different strengths, all of us have different weaknesses. And guess what? Our creator, God made you just the way he wanted to make you so that he could entrust to you certain things in this generation, in this season so that he could be glorified. Here's the question. How are you stewarding everything that he gave you?

See, this is what men of old gained approval for, was their witness. This is what people in this generation gained approval for, for their witness. The words you want to hear when you meet Jesus face to face are these, well done good and faithful servant. Everything got entrusted to you belongs to him, all the money you have, all the gifts you have, all the looks you have, everything you have, it's his.

Here's the question. How are you stewarding that? What does it look like for you to give it all back to him? What does it look like for you to take all those things and say, "God, this is for your glory. How can I use what I have for you?" That's what it looks

like. That's what faith really looks like. Put into practice. It's when you believe in what can't be seen and you have great hope knowing that God's going to show up just at the right time and you're very concerned about your personal witness.

The Bible tells us in John 3:3 you must be born again and when you are born again by repenting of your sin and trusting the Lord, Jesus Christ, the Bible tells us a little bit about some things that go on for us. We've been given a new nature. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. Old things have passed away, behold, all things have been made new.

You've been given a new creation, a new DNA, so to speak. Galatians 2:20 Paul says I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but what? Christ who lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by what? Faith in the son of God who love me and gave himself for me. I'm believing what God is going to do and I'm living now even though I can't see it as though God has told me this and I'm trusting the truth even though I haven't seen the outcome yet, that's how I'm living, right? That's what God's calling us to do.

It's a challenging word for many of us because for many of us, we don't care so much about our personal witness, we care about other people's personal witness. We care about our spouse's personal witness. We say things to God like this, "Lord, if she would just change, then I'd be willing to change too. We care about our kids' witness. Lord if they behave, I know I'd be a better parent."

Our kids say, "God, if you gave me better parents, I'd behave better too." We

want to change everybody else's personal witness. If my boss treated me like this, then I'd treat him like that. Faith says I'm going to treat people the way God wants them to be treated whether I ever benefit from it at all, that's faith, that's my hope that God sees me, right? It's our personal witness. It's living in such a way where we know that we're living for an audience of one and God sees us and we're going to hear him say, "Well done good and faithful servant."

I did what God wanted me to do. This is how people have gained approval from God all throughout the Bible, old and new testament and in our generation today. Let me give you a third. Faith firmly believes God's word is trustworthy and authoritative. God's word is trustworthy means I can trust his word and his word is authoritative, which means it's in charge of everything in my life. Notice what it says.

Now we're going to read a lot about different people. We're going to read about Noah and Abraham and Moses and Sarah and all these people. But before we read about any of them, we're going to read about God. It says by faith, what? We understand that the worlds, which is another word for universe, were prepared by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

So how do we know how this world, how this universe we got was created? By what? By faith. Non believers will say, "Well, that's your idea. Christians always say God created everything. You guys have to believe by faith, we believe by science." Well, what does science say? Science said there was nothing that bumped into nothing that created something. That takes way more faith. And it takes way more faith to believe because it didn't happen that way. And it goes against everything that the Bible

teaches.

The challenge is we don't believe that the Bible's trustworthy all the way throughout. We pick certain passages. For too long, for decades in the church, for too long, for hundreds of years, people have said, "Well, Genesis is just kind of an idea of a story. We really can't know what Genesis means. And Revelation is just kind of a fanciful story about the end. We really can't know what that means, but John 3:16 is true." No, Genesis 1:1 is true. Revelation 22:21 is true and everything in between is true. It's all true.

The word of God is trustworthy and authoritative. If there's one error in the Bible, there may as well be 10,000 errors of the Bible and if there are it, didn't come from the God of truth. God says in his word God cannot lie. So if one part's off, then God's a liar. And if God's a liar, then the Bible's not true. I mean, it's either all true or it's not true. We don't believe that many of us.

See, for many of us, we read the Bible as though it's just kind of a book of good ideas about how to live a little bit better life. It's not. It's a book that's completely trustworthy that shows the authority of our God who's ruling and reigning over the universe who soon is coming back to take over planet earth. I mean, here's just a few scriptures, I just picked six today. They're all over your Bible.

Second Timothy 3:16 says that all scripture. Now how much is all scripture? That's all 66 books. All scripture is God breathed. It's God's very breath. When the word of God is read and spoken and faithfully proclaimed, it's God who speaks. Faith

comes through hearing and hearing through the word of God, the word of Christ. All scripture's God breathed and useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting and training and righteousness of the man of God or the woman of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

You want to know what it means to honor God? Read this book and put into practice everything God begins to show you, right? You say, "Well, Pastor Jeff, this book is just made up by men. I mean, people just made this book up." People that say that have never read the Bible. But if you had, you would know it says this.

In second Peter 1: 20 and 21, it says, but know this first of all. Before you know anything else about the Bible, know this. That no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. Everything in this book was penned by the Holy Spirit. God used human agents and their personalities to write it all down. But at the end of the day, this dual authorship first and foremost comes from the Holy Spirit. Everything written in here is true.

When I hear people say, "Well, there's errors all over the Bible." What errors? I haven't found any. I've been reading this for 30 years. Are there things I don't completely understand? Yes. Are there things I have questions about? Yes. But will I believe what God says? Yes. I believe it, right? The word of God is true. Jesus says it's true. How about this? How long is this going to last?

Isaiah 40 verse 8 says that the grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word

of our Lord stands for how long? Forever. 10 billion years from now, everything in this book is still true. John 17:17 as Jesus praying his high priestly prayer, he said sanctify them in the truth, thy word is truth. In John chapter 5 in verse 39 and 40 Jesus says you search the scriptures because you think that in them you have life yet these are the very scriptures that testify about me yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

He tells a group of religious people it's good that you're reading the word. You think that in the word you'll learn about how to have eternal life yet here I am standing right in front of you and every word of this book testifies about me yet you refuse to come to me to have life. The written word is a representation of the living word of Jesus Christ. To say that you don't agree with some of the word is to say I don't agree with who Jesus is. It's all Jesus.

I heard a politician this week about came unglued talking about trying to be creative and say, "Here's what Jesus said about homosexuality." And then he paused for effect for about 30 seconds and said, "Thank you, I turn it over again." As if the only thing Jesus said is read letters. And even if he knew his Bible, which he clearly didn't, he could read Matthew chapter 19, which quotes Genesis 2:24 and 25, which talks about for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two will become one flesh.

Marriage is between a man and a woman according to Jesus, that's it. But because we live in a biblically illiterate culture that doesn't believe the word, we have a hard time defending the truth of God's word, the gospel that was once and for all entrusted to the saints. And it's an indictment upon many of our pastors. I mean, I think

about Luke chapter 9 and verse 26 when Jesus was talking about who he is and how people are going to respond to him.

In Luke chapter 9 in verse 26 he says this, "For whoever is ashamed of me and my words." Well, what are his words? All 66 books. Ashamed means embarrassed. It means I'm not going to own that. Or if I'm a pastor, I'm going to be a PR agent rather than preach the truth of the word, I'm just going to water it down. Whoever's ashamed of me and my words, the son of man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and the glory of the father and all of the holy angels.

It's tragic friends to have people, pastors in pulpits that refuse to preach the truth of God's word for fear of what man might think of them. I'm human, I want to be encouraged. I hope you like me. I get all that, but I'm way more afraid of what God's going to say if I don't tell you the whole truth than how you feel about me.

And let me just tell you this. I mean, if you know how to read. Some kids learn to read at age six, some kids learn to read later in life. We just have different reading, but if you know how to read and comprehend and you read Genesis chapter 1 verses 1 to 31 and you say this is trustworthy and it's authoritative, it would solve a lot of problems we have in our world right now. I'll let you in on a little secret, you may not know this.

We're having some problems in our world right now. Our culture's challenged by some things. Some people have a hard time realizing where it is that we come from. Like how did we really get here and whose are we and to whom do we belong? I mean, all it would take is reading the first 31 verses of Genesis chapter 1 and you

would realize there's a God in the universe that created everything out of nothing and did it in six literal days and then rested on the seventh to give us a pattern for what a week should look like.

You say, "Pastor Jeff, you really believe that?" 100% absolutely. I will never stand in a line in heaven saying, "Well, God I could've believed that, but this great, brilliant man said these things." And Jesus would say, "Well, who's that? Was he there when I created everything? I was the only eyewitness to all creation and I told you exactly what happened." God created us. He created us in his image.

Psalm 139 highlights that, says we're fearfully and wonderfully made, that the human condition and who we are in Christ, we're image bearers of God. We're different than any other part of all of his creation, which means human beings are valuable, human being lives matter because God created everybody, right? We have school systems that are secular humanists. That just means this.

Based on the evidence that they think is right, they're pushing a theological agenda that's hostile to the gospel. You say, "What's that mean?" It means this. They would never hire me to be an adjunct faculty member in a public high school. Because if they would and they would let me bring my Bible in and teach, I could solve a lot of the world's problems because I wouldn't indoctrinate kids with lies, I would teach them the truth. Amen?

See, we see that God created everything out of nothing. You say, "Well, how do you know that?" Well, Genesis 1 tells me. And then Hebrew chapter 11 verse 3 says

by faith we understand that the world or the universe was prepared by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of that which is visible. Genesis 1 also answers a question that we have problems with in our culture, which is gender identity. We have a problem with that in our culture.

God made it clear that he created two genders, male and female, right? And I know there's people that struggle with that. I know the enemy has confused people. I get that, it's painful. But the truth of God's word tells us that whether you were created in utero as a female, then you're female for the rest of your life. And if God created you as male in utero, you're male for the rest of your life regardless of what pills you take or operation you have or what you choose to call yourself.

Gender is not a social construct, it is a God designed entity. Let's talk about marriage. Can't get out of Genesis 1 without understanding marriages between a man and a woman for life. And there's so many things. And what about race? There's one race.

The human race.

The human race. And yet we have different pigments of our skin. We get that because of genetics and where we live geographically and all these different things. And some of us have lighter pigment and some of us have darker pigment. And yes, because of our sinful evil world, different pigments at different times have been treated differently but God doesn't see us that way. He sees all the beauty of the different colors we are and he says there's one race.

I mean, you read Genesis 1, you come to the conclusion there's one race, two genders, six days to the glory of God. Amen? And we don't need to sit down and discuss critical race theory and all this different stuff. I find it's interesting because we have every kind of shade of skin that comes to our church. And sometimes we that are lighter skinned like to go on vacation to Florida or Hawaii so we can darken it, right? And sometimes people who have darker skin, they like to put on lotion so they can lighten it.

I mean, we tend to not be satisfied with whatever God made us. Here's the reality. Whatever skin color you have, God gave it to you, enjoy it and never, ever apologized for it, right? See, that's the authority of God's word. The authority of God's word looks different than yet Genesis is in my Bible, but you really can't understand it. Friends, I'm here to tell you if you can read and you're 10 years old, just read it, trust it, make it authoritative, it'll change your world.

I mean, it means you don't have to twist other scriptures in the Bible too. And I was just thinking about this as I'm preaching right now, but Genesis chapter... Or I'm sorry, Psalms chapter 33 verse 6 says by the word of the Lord, the heavens were made and by the breath of his mouth all their hosts. How was the world created? Jesus spoke. Let there be, bam, there it was. I'm not going to take that away from him, I'm going to celebrate that my God is that powerful to be able to do that.

If we believe the authority of God's word, a lot of the problems in our world that we're debating go away because there's really no debate. I'm not going to debate

politically what the word of God says if the word of God says is the truth whether you believe it or not. It's just truth. We as Christians need to hold onto the word of God and say, "No, you can say whatever you want, but we're going to hold onto this word and we're going to believe it with all we have because the word of God is trustworthy and true.

It's authoritative. It represents who our Lord Jesus Christ is. And we will not, for any reason, change one jot or tittle of this book or dumb it down or water it down or apologize for it because this book is glorious revealing the king of kings and the Lord of Lords." Amen? Faith believes this. When we can't see it, we believe it with great hope. We believe our personal witness matters. We believe God's word is trustworthy and authoritative.

But here's the point. Number four really highlights it for us because not only do we need to know the truth and clap for the truth and say, "Brother preach it, I love that you're saying that." Faith also firmly believes applying God's word is necessary. It's not just hearing the word, it's applying the word. Sometimes evangelical Christians have a problem with the book of James because it's like it doesn't compute with our grace only faith only understanding.

Because James says stuff like this in James 1:22, do not merely be hearers of the word, but what? Doers of the word. Do something with it. James 2:17 says that faith without works is...

Dead.

Well, what are you talking about pastor? Works or faith? Which one is it? Faith, real faith that has been given by God and his grace results in good works. If you've truly been saved by grace through faith, it will produce in you a desire for good works. You're not saved by your good works, but you are saved for good works.

And there are too many people in the evangelical community like, "Oh, it's just faith, just believe and sit on your rear end for the rest of your life until you get to Jesus. Just believe you're going to heaven. That's it." No, it's not. If you believe, you will have a conviction in your heart that you must live out the fullness of what God put in so that you can experience his peace and experience his grace and experience what he does. See, the application of the truth is what faith is all about.

That's right.

I mean, think about the old testament when God delivered the Israelites from Egypt and he had him slaughter a lamb per family. And then what did they have to do with the blood? From that lamb? They had to apply it on the door post. They couldn't just say, "Well, we're from Israel and we did what he said, we killed the lamb. But it's kind of embarrassing to paint blood on our doorposts. I mean, I just got done painting it the other day, that's just going to make it look icky."

When the angel of death came to pass over it, pass over those who had applied the blood, they went public with their faith and they painted their faith in a public way so that when the angel of death came and said, "They're for real, they're real ones, I'm going by." Many of us refuse to apply the word and we wonder why our faith is not

working. It's the application of the word.

I pray pretty much the same prayer before I preach every time for those who are gathered for those who want to hear the word of God, who will believe what he says and will what? By faith put into practice what he shows you. That means every time you're hearing the word, God is showing you something to stop doing, start doing, start doing something differently. Hey, I'm proud of you for the way you're doing that. Hey, keep going on that. What is God showing you in his word?

If the only thing you do when you come to BRAVE Church is hear preaching and you walk away and say, "I like the message," but it doesn't get applied, you'll never grow to the fullness of what God wants you to do. See, faith says that your actions are speaking so loud I can't even hear a word you're saying. Faith doesn't quote Ephesians 5 and say wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord and everything, or husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.

Faith says I heard it, I'm working on doing it. That's what faith looks like. It's belief into action. And so he's going to tell us about two men. We're going to hear about a lot of different people as we go through this chapter. But notice this. By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts and through faith though he is dead, he still speaks.

Now you remember the story about Cain and Abel. They were the first sons that were born to Adam and Eve after they had sinned. And in Genesis chapter 4 versus 3

through 5, we learn about this offering, we learn about their worship, how serious they take their worship. It says so it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground and Abel on his part also brought the firstlings of his flock and other fat portion.

And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering, but for Cain and for his offering, he had no regard. So Cain became angry and his continence fell. So Cain is a farmer. He's farming the ground, he's tilling the ground. Abel is a shepherd. They both bring their gifts to the Lord. Whatever they brought, apparently Cain's gift, God's like, "That ain't nothing." And for Abel's gift, he said, "That's what I'm talking about."

Now a cursory reading, you may think, well yeah, of course. I mean, Cain brought him kale. I mean, God doesn't want to eat kale. I mean, I already have that. But that's not really what he was saying. Basically whatever happened, Cain was just gathering, "Yeah, I got some leftover stuff, I'm farming, God, here you go, you can just have some of this." Whereas Abel says, "I'm going to give you the firstlings. I'm giving you the best that I have."

And by the way, how did he present them? Dead, so there was a blood sacrifice. He's like, "I'm giving you a sacrifice of what is my best so that you can know how much I care about you." There was a sacrifice in his worship. There was a desire to do something that cost him something to show God how valuable he was. Everything competes for your sacrifice of worship.

We live in a culture now where it didn't happen when I was growing up and now it

happens all the time, there's games every single Sunday for your kids, I get it. There's things going on every single Sunday that make it difficult to get here. There's that lie in your head says long as you're here two out of four Sundays, you're doing great, right? There's always these lies in our head that compete for our allegiance to give God our best.

And see, it's when you put into practice what you study in the word of God that you begin to see that the application of truth actually brings about what God says is going to happen. So let's just talk about some of them, shall we? How about tithing? I mean, this a sacrifice. Sacrifice says, hey, bring your first tenth, bring your first fruits, give it all to the Lord, give it joyfully. And if you do, you can't outgive God. He says, "Try me in this. You'll always have an abundance."

Now, when I worked a secular job before I went into ministry, I didn't tithe. I gave some to the Lord as I had need or had things but it wasn't a thing that I did on a consistent basis. But when I went into the ministry, I had studied the word long enough to see that all throughout scripture, I just see this idea of bringing the first to the Lord. And because I wasn't making grain as a farmer and I was earning a living, I told the Lord, "I'm just going to give you 10% of everything. I'm going to see what happens.

And by the way, Lord, I'm doing that because I don't know if it's actually going to happen, that you're going to bless me, but if I run out of money, I'm quitting the ministry." I'm still in ministry 30 years later. Now some of you would say, "Man, he's talking about tithing. Pastor Jeff don't you understand it's not about 10%?" The only ones of you that would ever tell me that are people that don't tithe.

If you tithe, you'd never make that argument. You couldn't get me to stop tithing. It's something I desire to do, something I want to do because I know that when I bring God my first fruits, he takes care of me and he blesses me in all sorts of abundant ways and I will not stop even if you told me I could, right? Well, if the Lord showed me, if you gave me a new job and I made more money, then I'll start tithing. It doesn't work that way.

Seeing is not believing. Believing is seeing. I can tell you story after story, after story, after story where you put your finances first in the worship of God and you see God do things that you can't otherwise explain. It's just a fact. You don't have to believe it. You can read your Bible all over, but you'll see it everywhere in there. Pastor Jeff, we give 5%, I'm mad at you right now. I'm not talking about that.

Don't be mad at me. I'm just saying be generous with the things of the Lord. We can't afford to tithe. You can't afford not to. If you're faithful with little, you'll be faithful with much. I mean, we could take a look at that with everything. You take a look at that in marriage, done enough marriage counseling to know. And I've even gone to some early on in our marriage where it's like if you change my spouse, I promise you I'll be a better spouse. Change her, change him, right? That's not how God works.

Faith is God changed me. And if you don't change anybody else, as long as you change me, I know I'll see your favor in my life. Singles, listen to me. Well, if God just showed me the right person, the right Christian person, if he showed me that he had that for me, I'd stop sleeping around, I'd stop doing all the stuff, I'd stop partying, I'd

stop doing all that stuff. Once he shows me my spouse, I'll clean up my act. It will never happen. And if you do meet someone, it's probably not the person God brought.

What God tells singles is why don't you just live as the person I want you to be when you're married as a single so I can bring the person that you need so that you don't have to change anything about yourself when you get married. I mean, we always want God... We want to make deals with God, God, would you give me a new job, then I promise I will. Hey God, you raise my salary, then I promise I will. Hey God, if you give us a kid, I know I promise I will. Hey God, if you...

God says, "Hey, how about you just do what my word says and you live for me and trust the outcome to me?" That's what faith looks like. The application of the word of God is what we miss in our culture. It's not the worship of God. I mean, for Abel, he desired it. He wanted it. He sacrificed it. It was the opposite of convenience. His life was a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:23 seek first what? The kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things will be added. It's just how primary is Jesus and the worship of Jesus and the things Jesus cares about in your life? And in case you don't know what those things are. He cares about his worship. He cares about his word. He cares about evangelistic fervor. He loved his church so much he died for it.

How is your speaking about your church and about your pastor and about your attendance and about your service and about your giving to your church? That's what he's asking. It was quiet in the first service too. And notice what it says about Abel who

was killed by his brother for doing what God wanted. So I'm not really being killed or persecuted. Maybe you need to go more public with what you do in your application of the word.

Pastor Jeff, I can't, I'm the only Christian at my school. Pastor Jeff, I can't, I'm the only Christian in my job. Go public with it. If every Christian would go public with his or her faith and speak the truth outside the walls of the church, our culture would change. And because Abel lived faithfully, it says his life is still speaking. Notice what it says though, he is dead, he still speaks. He still speaks.

I mean, here it is over 6,000 years later and we're still talking about Abel's faithfulness to God. We read about all the faithful servants we're going to read about in chapter 11 like Moses and David and all the others, they still speak. When you live a life that's faithful, your life still speaks. I went to a funeral service of one of my best friends for his dad about three months ago. His life still speaks.

I still remember the things he said to me when he was alive. And I still know that even though he died in his mid eighties, he was still putting together Bible studies to lead other men and putting together retreats to lead other men. His life still speaks. Faith leaves a legacy for people and faith is not for a select few to leave a legacy so we can talk about them.

So we talk about Billy Graham and we talk about those like Charles Spurgeon, we talk about John Wesley. Faith is so you live your life in such a way that those who know you are still speaking about the glory of God in your life when you go. It's a

legacy. It starts with your worship and how central your worship is. Then he tells us about a guy named Enoch. It says in verse 5, by faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death. And he was not found because God took him up for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up, he was pleasing to God.

You can read about this story in Genesis 5 versus 21 to 25. We just read about Enoch. He was seven generations removed from Adam. We don't know a whole lot about him other than this, he didn't die, he went to heaven. Why? Because he not only had a worship, he had a walk. He had a walk with God. Walk is an intimacy with God. Walk is a relationship with God.

When I say, how's your walk? I'm saying, how's your time with Jesus? Does he get to hear your whole heart? Do you get to hear all of his? How's your walk. Bible says in Ephesians walk in a manner worthy of the gospel, walk. How's your walk? How's your fellowship with Jesus? First John says, if we walk in the light as he is in the light. We have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all our sin. How's your fellowship with God? How's your walk with God? How's your intimacy with God?

Now some of you have a pet, some of you have a dog. You can take your dog for a walk, but you can't walk with your dog. And some of you think you can, but you can't right? I mean, you can't talk to the dog and get to know the dog and know the dog's feelings and the dog can know yours. That doesn't happen. But with God, we're talking about walking with him, knowing him. Does he know your heart? Have you poured out your heart to him?

Even though he knows a word before it's on your tongue, when you pour out your heart and God knows your heart, and you can hear back from him, there's a fellowship. Apparently, Enoch's fellowship was so strong that God just took him. The Holy Spirit tells us that God took him. Nobody in the Bible argues that God took him.

I mean, you would've thought like, "I don't know, my dad went hunting today, I never saw him again." Everybody knew God took him because he was pleasing to God before he was taken. And he lived in a generation that was rebellious. And we know that he was a preacher because the half brother of Jesus, one of the half brothers of Jesus, Jude tells us in Jude versus 14 and 15 about Enoch.

It says it was also about these men that Enoch and the seventh generation from Adam prophesied saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment upon all and to convict all the ungodly for all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

I mean, he preached to ungodly people about the need for repentance. That's what he did. And he was so faithful that God found it in his grace just to take him home. What a walk? Right? Do you have a fellowship with the Lord? Do you pour out your heart before the Lord? Does the Lord know you? Do you know him? Are you intimately acquainted with the voice of God through his word?

God wants to talk to you about each and every subject in your life. There's nothing that you need to hide from God. I mean, we live in a culture that's this Christian

conference culture. And I'm not against Christian conferences, by the way, I'm not. Sometimes you can hear things from a different speaker or a different group of people that can be helpful in your growth with Christ.

And that's fantastic, but there's some Christians that pop from conference to conference, to conference, to conference, to big festival, to big festival, what's next, but they're never rooted, they're just looking for somebody else to tell them what they need to do until they disagree with that person and then go to another conference. Why not just pour out your heart before the Lord about what you need in your walk with him and to tell them what you're disturbed about and what you're unhappy about and what you need to know about certain areas in your life?

See, it's the application of God's word that's necessary. When you hear the word today, what's God asking you to do? What do you need to start doing differently? What do you need to stop doing? What do you need to just pause for a second and just receive from the Lord that he's telling you, "Hey, I'm proud of you." Or you need to receive from the Lord of, "Hey, I'm not happy with the way you're doing that."

I mean, what do you need to hear and what do you need to put into practice? Because we have far too many Christians that love to quote the word without actually living it. And quoting the words great. I mean, Jesus has quoted the word to the devil and the spoken word has power, but it really has power when you're walking it too.

And I'm not talking about walking perfectly, I'm talking about walking in Christ increasingly, a desire to do what he wants to do. How's your application of the word? I

mean, you happen to go to a church where the word of God is going to be proclaimed. There's so much of the word that you get to hear on such a regular basis that even if you had just applied some of it, you would continue to grow in your faith.

And God wants you to continue to grow. And that's why the word of God is so important. I mean, we talked about the word just a little bit earlier, but people are always like, "Well, that's just made up by men." It's not made up by men. Men would never make up the Bible.

I mean, what book in the self-help section talks about how awful human beings are all the time and how desperate they are. I mean, this book is replete with there is no one good, no, not one, not one righteous. You are dead. You are going to hell, you offended a holy God, deal with it. I've never seen that book sell well.

But the Bible's the best selling book of all time because it talks about the glory of God and his grace and his compassion and what he did to make us right with him so that once we come to Christ and we can continue to apply Christ in every one of our circumstances in our life, we can bring Christ into our singleness and into our marriage and into our job and into our schools and into our families and allow Christ to transform us by his grace so that Christ is living through us in a way that's palpable, experiential and that those around us know that Jesus Christ is Lord. Amen?

Amen.

So let me give you a final one. Not only is applying the word necessary, but faith firmly believes that seeking God pleases him, seeking God pleases him and results

and rewards, results in rewards. Oh no, Pastor Jeff, you're talking about prosperity gospel. No, I'm not. I'm talking about God.

Listen to what the word says. And without faith, it is impossible to please him. If you listen to what I'm saying, like I'm not going to do that, I'm not going to believe without seeing, it's impossible for you to please him. Why? For anyone who comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek him. Well, I believe there's a God. That's not what it's talking about. You must believe that he is, that he is according to what his word says.

Anyone who comes to him must believe who he is according to what his word says about him. Not that you believe there's a God. Even the demons believe that and shudder. You must believe that he is according to the revealed word that he's given to us. Do you believe that? And then that he's a rewarder of those who diligently do what? Seek him. We falsely believe that faith is passive. If God wants to save me, I guess he'll just save me. No, if you don't repent and turn to him, you're not going to get saved.

Well, I guess if God wanted me to go into ministry, I guess he'd just let me go into ministry. If you don't pursue Christ, you'll never be in the ministry. I mean, every story in the Bible that we love involves the seeking heart after God. For I know the ways I have for you, declares Lord, plans to prosper you, not harm you, plans for hope and a good future. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

We love the story of the prodigal son. The younger son wanders away, we know

the father standing there looking for him. But when did things get reconciled? When the son came to his senses and started to seek the father. He came back to his dad. That's why Jesus said, "Come to me all of you who are weary and heavy laden, I'll give you rest." We don't like to seek God because we don't like other to know that we're weak.

We have problems in our marriage and here's what we say, "I'll work on it." How's that going for you? It can get worse. No it can't. Oh yeah, it can. Your singleness can get worse. I mean, when you get humble enough that you don't care when anybody else says and you hear the father say, "Come," and you're like, "I don't care who knows, I don't care who sees. I need God." You watch him pour out his grace. He rewards those who seek him.

We love the story about David slaying Goliath, cutting off his head, miracle upon miracle. Because Goliath came at him with sword and spear but David came at the giant, the name of the Lord, God almighty, praise God. Why? Because Psalm 27:8 says when you said, "Seek my face," my heart said to you, "O Lord, your face I will seek." David was a seeker of God.

When you seek God, when you want God and you want his face more than you want his hand and you're just going after him saying, "God, I'm yours, my life is yours. Everything I have is yours," you will see God do amazing things in your life. It's hard to get to that place, I'll be honest. I'm still working to get to that place. It's not a place that we arrive at. It's a place that we're journeying towards.

There's seasons in my life where I feel like Lord, I don't know if I could give you anything else, I think you have it all only to continue to live and realize, oh, you want that too? I didn't even know I had that. I didn't even know my attitude was bad there. I didn't even know I was holding that back from you. I just didn't know. I'm always on a journey seeking the Lord because I know he wants more from me than what I've given to him.

And when it comes to what God wants for your life, here's what I would say. The council of others is great. Bible tells us that having a plurality of godly council is good, nothing wrong with that. That's actually a healthy thing. But at the end of the day, when it comes right down to making decisions, stop listening to others and listen to Jesus. If you're going to get married, you don't need five people telling you who to marry, you better listen to Jesus.

What job to take, it's good to get counsel, but at the end of the day, you better listen to Jesus. How to steward your money, it's good to hear what other people have to say, but better listen to Jesus. When it comes to your singleness, you better listen to Jesus. When there's fear or despair or uncertainty, you better listen to Jesus or where to live or what house to buy.

I mean, there's nothing you can't bring before the Lord. And what I've found over time is when I'm willing and humble enough to come before the Lord on every little decision or every major decision and say, "Lord, what do you want in me?" That in due time, God shows me what he wants in me. I remember when I was in college, I was

starting to feel a tug towards ministry. And we were at a conference one time and I was watching a video when the video ended, I was bawling, but I tried to wipe my eyes so my friend next to me wouldn't see that I was touched by the video.

It was so old. I mean, it was basically slide projection with music underneath. I mean, that's how long ago it was. And he's like, "What did you think of that?" And I was like, "That was pretty good." And then I told him, I was like, "Oh, man, bro, I don't know. I think I might be calling me to ministry." And he's like, "I told you, I've been telling you, bro, you got to do this." And I was like, "Get away from me."

So he went and got our campus crusade for Christ director who read to me first Corinthians 3, that I would still be saved, but I would lose all sorts of rewards, which didn't make me feel good if I didn't go into ministry. So I went up to our hotel room to get away. He followed me in. He kept saying, "Bro, you got to make a decision. I mean, Jesus is talking to you. What are you going to do?" I'm like, "Get away from me."

So I went into the bathroom and knelt down by the toilet in Indiana, in this hotel and here's how I prayed, "Lord, I'll do anything you want with my life, anything at all. I'll preach, I'll teach, I'll help you out, but I am not going into full-time ministry ever. Amen." And I got up confident that I had settled the deal.

But every day that I began to walk with the Lord, I was feeling more and more empty. And even when I did really well in my job, I just felt empty and I wish I wasn't selling people stuff, I wish I was sharing the gospel with them. And over time I got to a

place where I went to a church on a Monday and I said, "Lord, I'll do whatever you want, just show me what you want me to do."

And God show me, "Jeff, I've always created you for this so you can tell other people about me." Like, "Lord, I'll do it. I'm there today." And I felt peace like I never felt peace before. See, it doesn't mean that every time you get fired up for the Lord, you need to go into ministry. It means that when you get around the Lord, you listen to what he uniquely wants to do through you and how he wants to use you because you're fearfully and wonderfully made and you're unique and you don't need to do it like anybody else and any other way, you just need to do it God's way in and through you.

And as you walk that out, God will show you what it looks like. And he'll always show up in just the right way. About two years before, my wife and I moved out here to plant this church. I told her in our house one day, "I don't know what God's doing, but I know how he works in my life and he's stirring something in me and I know in two years we won't be doing what I'm doing now." And she said, "What do you mean?"

I said, "I honestly don't know, but I think there's a shelf life to what we're doing." And about a year later, it became clear in my heart that God was saying, "You need to plant a church." Now the challenge to that was I didn't want to plant a church. And the challenge to that was I had already told my wife when we got married, "I'm going to be in ministry, but don't worry, I will never ever pastor a church."

So she said, "You told me this." And I'm like, "I know I told you this, but God changed his mind apparently." And so we began to pray about it and got to a place

where I'm like, "If we don't go, we're not going to be obedient." And questions came, genuine questions like, well, how are we going to get paid? And where are the people going to come from? And how do we market for that? And if we don't have a building and we don't have people and we don't have money, how does this thing work?

And I was really clear to her on how it was going to happen. I told her, "I don't know, and God's going to do it and so we're going." Because I knew in my heart, that's what God was calling me to do. And if I didn't do it, I knew I would stand before him on judgment day and I wouldn't be able to give an answer for why I didn't do what he was prompting me to do in that season. And God's been faithful all the way through, and God's still faithful all the way through.

And God is speaking to you about things. And you don't need to be like anybody else. You don't need to do things like somebody else. You don't need to become something like somebody else. All God wants to do is fill you with this Holy Spirit to the full so that you can be the best you that God ever made you to be. He didn't make anybody else but you. We don't need another me, I can promise you that. We don't need another person next to you, I can promise you that.

We need the best you that you can be. And God wants all of his children to be on fire for him and all of his children to walk the walk of faith. And here's the beauty of the gospel of faith. None of us have done it perfect. None of us will ever do it perfect. But that's where grace comes in. When we walk with God and we stumble wherever we're at, God's like, "Hey, I'll give you fresh grace today to start all over again."

It's not too late today. If you're in your eighties or nineties and you've never trusted Christ, start right now and trust him. If you say, "Well, I knew when I was 20, I was supposed to do this and I never did it," start now. God responds when you seek him. God's willing to talk to you about anything, embarrassing things, joyful things. He'll celebrate with you, he'll mourn with you. Do you know him like that?

He's more than just a glorious God and savior, he's the Lord Jesus Christ that you can have a personal relationship with. Amen? He knows you, he loves you and he's given you everything you need to walk the life of faith. The way we're going to end our service today is by taking communion because really when we talk about the bread and the wine and the elements that this represents, we're talking about the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus.

See, faith is not, I'm good and I'm better than people. Faith is I'm dependent upon God. And this cup and this bread are representative of the fact that we haven't always been faithful, but that the Lord Jesus Christ has. As you hear this song sung over you this morning, I want you to hold these elements in your hand and be reminded of all Christ did for you. If he was willing to come to this earth for you, imagine how much more he's willing to do to live in and through you.

He loves you. He loves you. He loves you. As you hear this song sung, be reminded of his great love for you. Father in heaven, we just give you all the glory and honor for who you are. And Lord, as we celebrate this supper together, father, as we hear these words sung over us, Lord, do a work in our hearts and remind us that if you

were willing to move heaven and earth to reveal your grace to us how much more are you desiring for us? You paid the whole cost so that we could have relationship with you and Lord our desires to give you our best back. We give you all the praise in Jesus' name. Amen.