

If you have your Bibles, turn to Luke 7. We're going to get back into the never ending series on the book of Luke. In Luke 7, we're going to find a story or one of its versions that occurs over and over and over again in the gospels. Starting in verse 1, here's what it says. "After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, [Jesus] entered Capernaum. Now a centurion had a servant..." Now I can stop there and tell you this is a Roman official in the Roman guard, in the military system, who is high up in that system. We know this because a foot soldier is not going to have a servant. Most foot soldiers for Rome were mercenaries, basically conquered people who were given food and a sword. So this man is high up in the Roman guard. "Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue." And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go;' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." So here's what just happened. His servant is sick, he sends word to Jesus asking for Jesus to come heal him, thinks better of it, sends another group of friends that says, "Don't worry about it. I didn't even come to you myself. You can heal him where You are. You don't have to see my servant, You don't have to come to my house. You can say the word where You are and my servant will be fine." So look at Jesus' response. "When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well." This story or a story like it takes place over and over and over again. In fact, you'd be hard pressed to find a chapter in the gospels where Jesus is not addressing either strong faith or a lack of faith.

Let me show you what I mean. We'll fly through the book of Luke very quickly. Go to Luke 5. In Luke 5, some men have a friend that's paralyzed. And they're trying to get him to Jesus, and they can't get him to Jesus, so they lug him on top of the roof, they rip out the roof, tie ropes to his bed and lower him down into the middle of the room. And look at Jesus' response to this in verse 20. "And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." So He's recognizing their faith. In Luke 7, Jesus is having dinner with the Pharisees, who are the ruling religious elite at that time. They are hyper-religious men, and they have deemed that anyone who has a certain physical disorder or had a certain job that they considered of ill repute were sinners and they shunned them and wouldn't have anything to do with them. And this woman comes in who the text describes as "a woman of the city" and that doesn't mean she's urban. That does not mean she lives in a flat downtown. And so she comes into the Pharisee's house, which is unbelievably courageous, falls at the feet of Jesus and just begins to weep. And the Pharisees say that if Jesus knew what kind of woman that was, He wouldn't let her touch His feet, because that woman is dirty and shouldn't even touch Jesus' dirty feet. And Jesus grows enraged at this. And so He goes, "Hey, I've got a story to tell you punks." That's a paraphrase. I added that. And He tells this and when He's done with this story, He looks at the woman and says, "Your sins are forgiven." And that blows up the room, because man can't forgive sins. And so that blows up the room and there's this fiery debate over who this guy thinks he is. But He doesn't even address that. He pick up the woman's face who's just sobbing, and look at what He says in verse 50. "And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace.""

In Luke 8, the disciples and Jesus get in the boat to go to the other side. They're on the high seas when a storm picks up. Now these aren't greenhorns (for you fans of "Deadliest Catch"), these are experienced seamen. They have grown up on the sea, they have lived on it, they have fished their whole lives. They're on this boat and the Bible says the wind and the rain and the waves pick up and start throwing around the boat. They start worrying about perishing. They think they're going to die. The boat is actually taking on water. And I love this story because Jesus is just sleeping in the middle of all this. Now it's not like they're on a cruise ship. It's not like He had a state room that he was in. He's just laying up on the bow asleep. And so they're terrified, crying, thinking they're going to die. So they wake up Jesus and go, "We're perishing." Jesus gets up, wipes the sleep out of His eyes, stands up on the bow, rebukes the wind and the waves, they all obey Him and just stop, the whole water's calm and He just goes back down and goes back to sleep. Before He does that, He says something to them. Look at Luke 8:25. "He said to them, 'Where is your faith?'" He's saying, "I'm here. Who do you think I am? Do you really think we're going to die out here on the water? Seriously? You think I came and that's how I'm going out? We're all going to drown together in the ocean? Do you think that's My plan? Yeah, you of little faith." Also in verse. Also in Luke 8, there's a story of a man named Jarius. His only daughter is dying, so he sends word to Jesus. If you've got a daughter, you can feel the weight of this. When the doctors have nothing more they can do, the girl is going to die. In fact, she's on the day of her death. And they send word to Jesus, and you can imagine that, since Jesus has all these powers over diseases, He's very popular. And so everywhere He goes, there's just massive crowds that just kind of press into Him and want to touch Him. And so He's walking through this mob of people, and a little old lady who has a bleeding disorder reaches out and touches Him and immediately she's healed. And Jesus stops and goes, "Who touched Me?" And the disciples even try to reason with Him. They're going, "Everyone. Literally everyone touched You." And He was like, "No, no. One in particular, because I felt the power go out." And then the woman freaks out because she knows she can't hide. Look in Luke 8:47. "And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.'"

In Luke 9, the disciples try to cast out a demon. I don't know if you've ever tried that before. It's much more complex than it looks in the movies. They're trying to cast out this demon and it's just not working. It's just going bad. It's not as bad as it does in Acts 17 when a demon turns on them and beats them bloody and naked, but it's going pretty bad. And so they can't drive out the demon, they're doing what they've been taught to do, but it's not working. So let's pick it up in verse 14 of Luke 9. The man whose son is possessed says, "And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not." Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you?" So He's been going so far, "Your faith has made you well...Your faith has saved you...Your faith has worked in you...Your faith has done this..." And then there's been, "Hey, where is your faith?" And now it's moved on to, "You're faithless altogether. How long am I going to put up with this faithlessness?" And so He's saying, "You doing the external action correctly but not believing in your heart is not what I'm after. Just because you can externally do what's right outside doesn't change the fact that you do not believe." Let's keep going. Turn to Luke 12. In Luke 12, He's giving a sermon on anxiety. And He's just talking to them about, "You don't have to be anxious." And look at what He says, starting in verse 27. "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Solomon is an Old Testament king, the wealthiest that's in the Scriptures. He is as hedonistic as it gets. He threw parties where they had food for over 20,000 people at his parties. He had 700 wives. So your hedonism is Jr. Varsity compared to Solomon. And for all of Solomon's egotism at times, He just says that "Solomon in all his glory can't compare to what doesn't compare to what I've done in the flowers." Let's keep reading. "...even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!" So He's saying, "Listen, the reason anxiety plagues you is because you don't believe in the end I'm going to take care of you. This is a faith issue. You don't trust Me."

Okay, let's go to Luke 17. In chapter 17, the disciples start to get that this is a theme with Jesus. Hopefully you are too. So they're starting to get that over and over again He's commending strong faith and rebuking a lack of faith. And so after another sermon around faith, look at their response in verse 5. "The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" And so I can resonate with this because I've been in that scenario where I know I lack faith and I want to have more faith, but it's just not there. So they've tried to turn it on. I mean, by this point in the gospel story "O you of little faith" is like their nickname. So often are they hearing this that now they've switched and have gone, "Okay, help us then, Jesus. Because we want to believe and we want to trust and we want to be all in. Help our unbelief. Help us. Increase our faith. Also in Luke 17 ten lepers came by and Jesus healed them after they left. And only one comes back and he's a Samaritan. He falls at the feet of Jesus weeping and look at Jesus' response in verse 19. "And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.""

In Luke 18, He tells a parable of a persistent widow, a widow who continually comes before a city official and pleads and pleads and pleads. And He wraps up the parable in verse 8 of Luke 18. "I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" Also in chapter 18 there's a great story. Starting in verse 35, "As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me recover my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well." Do you see what I'm saying?

Turn to Luke 22. In Luke 22, the disciples really prove that they are getting the gospel message. It's right before Jesus is going to be arrested and crucified. And so they're revealing that they're starting to buy in by having this great argument over which one of them is the greatest. And then Jesus is going to pull Simon Peter aside and He's going to talk to him. Here's what He says. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." So Jesus goes, "Look, tomorrow's going to be a really long day for Me, but for you too. It's going to go bad early and often for you tomorrow. But here's the thing. I've prayed for you. I've prayed that your faith would be strengthened. And after you fail Me and you turn again, strengthen your brothers."

We can keep going here. You can almost pick any chapter. Jesus is over and over and over again addressing and commending strong faith and rebuking a lack of faith. And so here's all I want to do with our time together. I just want to define what it is. Because I've had monumental problems with faith when I started walking into this building, not this building in particular but the church building. Like for whatever reason, around the age of seventeen I went, "Okay, I've got to figure out whether there's a God and whether or not I'm going to chase one. So, I've got to figure out if there is a God, and if there is God, you probably don't want to anger Him." So you want to be on His good side. I thought I was a good kid. And so I was going, "Okay, if there is a God, I need to figure that out." And a guy named Jeff Faircloth started sharing the gospel with me, I started going to church with him, and I had all these problems with Christianity. Like I just had problems with the Bible. There was just stuff in the Bible that seemed to contradict other parts, there was stuff in the Bible that I didn't understand. And so I would ask about it all the time. And here's the answer I would get, "Well, just by faith. You just believe it by faith." So I would be like, "Do you know what your Bible came from? No? Okay, so you're banking your on a book that you have no historic reference for whatsoever?" That would drive me crazy. I can't do that. And so I had legitimate questions. "What do you do with evil and suffering? If God is loving and gracious and great and is sovereign over everything, then somebody help me understand 50,000 dead in China and over 100,000 dead in Burma and over 200,000 dead in the tsunami two years ago, all by natural disasters, not man made disasters. So if God controls the universe and He's loving and good, someone help me with this." And nobody could give me an answer. Or here's one

that would confuse the mess out of me. Mostly in churches or even go rent "Bruce Almighty," there's always this "free will...free will...free will...man has free will." That's how people get around the trouble in the universe. But then there was this admonition all the time, that I should pray, I should ask God to do this and I should ask God to do this. Well here's my problem with that. If man has free will, and I ask God to do something and God listens to my prayer and responds and does something in the life of another, has He not violated their free will? That's the question I had. So I'm like, "Why do I pray if man has free will? If God does anything, doesn't He violate the will that He gave man?" "Please leave us alone, Chandler." I just couldn't get an answer. Nobody could help me. So I just had problems. And anytime anyone would give me that "just have faith" line, it drove me insane. Because I can tell you this. Blind faith is not biblical faith. A faith that says "I sure hope this works out in the end. I sure hope I'm right." is not biblical faith. It's not what Jesus is asking for, it is not what the bible commands. That's not biblical faith.

Two things. If you're not a believer in here tonight and you have questions, questions about the Bible, questions about evil and suffering, questions on how Christianity is any different than any other religion, those are legitimate questions. Anyone who tells you those aren't legitimate questions is not being honest with you. Those are legitimate questions that deserve an answer. The problem is Evangelicalism has gotten so watered down that honestly most of what you see isn't even biblical Christianity anymore; it's just something different. It's moralistic deism. But there's answers to those questions. And if you're a believer in here and you say that line to people all the time, please stop. You don't have to study and know all the answers, but just learn where to point them to. Because faith is not blind hope. That's not what it is. It's not what Jesus is asking, it's no what Jesus has required. Blind hope doesn't glorify Him at all.

So if that's not faith, if what Christ is after is not blind hope, then what is faith? If I was going to define what faith is biblically, if I was looking for somewhere in the Bible that faith just might be defined completely for us, where would I go? Hebrews 11. Hebrews 11 is going to define what biblical faith is as opposed to blind hope. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,..." Now I want to stop here because that doesn't make any sense. "Assurance (I am assured, I am convinced, I know this to be true) of things hoped for" is a very strange sentence, because it's saying, "It's not there at all, but I completely believe it. So let me try to unpack how this occurs. Ephesians 1:15-18 says this. "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,..." Now that's faith, that somewhere along the way something happens in our heart and mind that God gives, God pours out a spirit of wisdom and revelation in our knowledge of Him. And then look at what happens right after that. "...having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you,..." And then he goes on to define hope. This is faith enacted. This is faith is birthed in the hearts of men and women. So I think a bunch of people could get up here and tell their story and there would be similar pieces. Here's what happened to me. I start going, "Okay, let's go with the big religions first in my spiritual seeking. Let's go Christianity first. Let's knock that one out first." And I had read up on some Judaism and some other things like that, but I went to a Christian church and like I said there were all these questions I had, there was always confused. It seemed much more like witchcraft to me than anything else. Like the sinners prayer sounded more like an incantation, doesn't it? I mean, at the end of every service, "Come up here and pray this prayer. If you say this prayer, this is what God will do." I hadn't hung out with any witches, but in the movies that I've seen, that's what they do. They say a prayer and it gets a spirit to do something for them. And I had questions about that. I had questions about the front of the room, because everybody always had to come down to the front of the room. I mean, is this where God is? Is this where He hangs out? Is this where the incantation works? They were just questions I had that needed answered. So I would ask questions all the time, Jerry Hendrix my youth pastor would give me books to read. He'd go, "Go read this. Go read that" and I would get more confused and come back with more questions. And then he passed me off to Dr. Jay Gross. So I'm like this 17 year old boy going, "Tell me about prayer and the free will of man." And God bless him, he was patient and gracious, and he gave me books to read. It's what good pastors do. He's like, "I don't know. Read that and tell me when you find out." He'd hand me those books and I'm reading and writing and doing the journal. And somewhere

in the middle of all this, I go to youth camp, which was confusing as all get out for me. It's like, "Why is everyone crying here?" I go to youth camp and a guy there is talking about the cross. And I had heard all about the cross. And he's talking about the foreknowledge of Jesus in the cross, basically that we were known by Christ before we went to the cross, all of our sins, all that we do, all the mistakes that we've made and Jesus still went to the cross. And for whatever reason, in the middle of that talk, despite the fact that I had a billion questions still left to be answered (by the way I still have questions that I struggle with, that I need Him to finish answering for me, that I need Him to work in my heart), somewhere in the middle of that night, something happened. A spirit of wisdom and knowledge and revelation of God was given to me, and I became assured in an instant.

I say that when it was more like a two year process, but that's when it turned on. It was two years of "I don't get it," two years of "That doesn't make any sense," two years of "Okay, how does this work?" But that night something happened and all of a sudden I'm assured. I was assured. And even when people would say, "What do you do with this?," I'm like, "Nothing. I don't know what you do with that." But I am assured in that moment, assured enough to, instead of going to law school, heading to Bible college. Instead of becoming a lawyer, becoming a pastor. I was assured enough to lose some friends over that. I mean, I pretty much came back from that camp wearing a shirt that says "I heart Jesus." You don't play stuff like that unless you're assured. And so I came back being absolutely convinced despite the fact that I could not answer a lot of questions in the atoning work of Jesus Christ in the cross. That was faith, it was born in me. It was created in me. I couldn't muster it. And if I could, I couldn't muster it for long. I could maybe muster it for a day or two. But no, it was born in me. Faith: the assurance of what is hoped for.

And then look at the next part of this. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." It's not just that this light comes on and we become assured. It's that it bleeds over into conviction, it bleeds over into how we live our lives so that we live our lives by faith, we live our lives in assurance that there is a Creator who, through the work of Jesus Christ, has justified us before Him, that it's not by our works, it's not by our acts, not by our cleaning ourselves up but by the wrath absorbing cross of Jesus Christ. That's the faith, and it begins to bleed into everything. If it doesn't bleed into everything, then it's not faith. And I know Luther hated this verse. He was one of the guys of the Reformation. Or he hated the book of James. He called it a "book of straw." But James says it, "Faith without works is dead." It doesn't exist. It's not saying that you do deeds to have faith, but if you have faith, deeds will come of it. Anybody who preaches contrary to that is staying away from the Bible. And I love Luther. He was a guy who studied the Bible like I think you should study the Bible. He was preaching through the book of Romans one summer in Germany, and so much of Romans confused him. It was written by the apostle Paul. And so Luther was quoted as saying, "So I grabbed hold of Paul and beat him until he submitted." That's how you study the Bible. And so faith leads to a conviction that makes us take steps, sometimes that we don't like. Let me give you a common one. When I preach, I preach to men. That's what I do. And if you're a woman in here and that angers you, I apologize. The Scriptures very clearly say that men are the glory of God. And what that means is that if men will do what God has commanded them to do, if men will be who He has commanded them to be, then everything else will work well and where they fail, everything begins to unravel. Which is why we need grace and it's why I preach I preach to men. With all that said, I think by far the most difficult command of God on humanity that exists in the Scriptures is the admonition for men to love their wives like Jesus Christ loves the church. Do you know why? Jesus Christ is sinless and yet reached out and reconciled His bride, the church. Which means He did nothing wrong, but He initiated reconciliation. It means when she did not respond to that reconciliation as He wanted, He let His life be taken from Him to make her right.

I'll put it in real life. At the end of the day, Lauren and I are going to bed. And let's just say this day she's just off, she's wrong. And I had a little bit of that, but she was 99.99% to blame. Then that means if we're in bed and she's facing the other way, that means it's on me, because the Scriptures say don't let the sun go down, that although I'm only 0.01% to blame, it falls on me to reach over and put my hand on her and go, "Lauren, I'm sorry. I'm sorry for my 0.01% of this." No,

I'm kidding. Don't say that. Let me just tell you from experience, if you do that, it's going to go really bad for you. That situation was already a little tense and it's just going to go really dark and bad. But what it means biblically is that I go, "I'm sorry." And I don't go, "I'm sorry. Do you have something you want to say to me?" No, I just say "I'm sorry" and then I roll over. And what I did was just diffused that root of bitterness. I can diffuse that and I can be Christ in my house. And it means when I'm loving her, to get her to do something and she doesn't do those things, I don't step off the path of faith that Christ's way is better than mine and get into my own. And if you'll think about it, men, most of the stuff we try to do to manipulate our wives is pretty stupid anyway. Verbal jabs for instance. "Oh, she's not doing this, she's not doing this. I know what will help. I'll throw a bunch of smart alec jabs at her. Because there's nothing that warms up a woman's soul to intimacy like jabbing at her." Or there's my favorite, the male pout. "I just won't talk to her for a couple of days." That doesn't really work well either. So in the end, this is one of those things where what ends up happening because my wife's a sinner and I'm a sinner is there are times when I'm doing what Christ is asking me to do and it's no going the way I want it to go and I'm very, very, very tempted to try to get what I want another way. So in that moment, I can take a step of faith and say, "I trust You with my wife. I can't change her heart. You can change her heart. I'm going to be the man of God You have asked me to be. That is on her even if she doesn't respond the way I want. Even if this goes bad, I'm going to do what You've asked me to do. I'm going to be what You've asked me to be. I'm going to be quick to forgive, I'm going to be quick to reconcile, I'm going to be the initiator in romance." And I walk that way, and I walk that way because by faith I believe that the word of God is true, that there is a Creator God and that doing it His way is a lot better than doing it my way. And if I do it His way, that's my best shot at deep, lasting joy. And if I do it my way, that's my best bet to make a mess of things. That's how faith works itself out. Because let me tell you something. The first three years of my marriage wasn't as simple as "Oh, I'll take a step of faith, and then everything's great." It was like a Bataan Death March of faith. It was step after step after step after step. And listen, there is a lot of reciprocity here. If she was up here with a face mic, she would be saying the same thing. Or with my kids, I'm not just trying to teach my kids right and wrong. If that's the level of morality you're trying to infuse in them, very quickly they will learn that God does not like them. Because if God does not like sin and this is what sin is, then your kids will very quickly get and understand that they fall short. Which is why on top of going, "This is right and this is wrong," you've got to impart to them the glories of Christ. My daughter loves the color pink. Go ask my daughter where pink came from. She'll tell you it came from God. Ask her why God created pink. And she'll say, "Because He loves me. He wants me to see Him, He wants me to know Him, He wants me to chase Him. So He created pink that I might do that." She's a little theologian, we're working on it. We read Jonathan Edwards before we go to bed at night. So this is how I want to live my life. I live my life in my home this way, life with my money this way, life with my relationships this way. Because being assured of has led to conviction that has started things in my life.

So so maybe you're in here and you don't believe at all, like you're skeptical and secular. I hope you feel welcome in here. You are welcome. I want to talk to you like you're here. I don't want to pretend that you're not. And maybe you've got legitimate questions, legitimate concerns and legitimate doubts about Christianity. Here's what I would just lovingly push you on. Your doubts about what we believe are actually based upon your own belief system. Your doubts about what we believe are really predicated by the fact that you believe this over here. And I wonder if you put the same scrutiny on what you actually believe that you're putting on us if your belief system would fracture a lot quicker than ours. Because I think if I would press you and go, "Why do you think that?," you would go, "Well I think this." And I would ask you where you got that, and you would have no history to point to. You would have nothing but your own conjecture...or maybe a special on the Discovery Channel. And so I'm wondering if you would have the courage to apply the same scrutiny to your belief system that you're applying to ours. And here's what I would tell you. This is a great place to do that. I promise you, you will not get a response of "You just have to have faith." We'll go, "Okay, I don't know. let's look...let's dig...check this out...go here...read this..." But even the most secular human being alive has faith. You can't be faithless, it's impossible. But here's who I really want to chat with. Let's say you're a believer in here and you've had that moment where, to quote Ephesians, "The heart has been enlightened, the spirit of wisdom and revelation

and knowledge of God has been given to you." And if you are like so many others, what ends up happening is you take those steps. Very early on God says, "Okay, here," and we take that step and He's great, and we take that step and He's awesome. And then all of a sudden He addresses something that we don't want Him to have. So all of a sudden He goes, "Okay, at your money," and we suddenly go, "Oh, no no no. I love You, but the money part is mine. So my money is mine, everything else is Yours." And then God at that point just goes, "Okay," and it's just stopped there in terms of progressive sanctification instead of growing in power. So maybe it's not money. Maybe you're single and it's a sex issue for you. So Christ comes into your heart and you start taking steps, and then all of a sudden He goes, "Okay, let's talk about the sex part." And just for the record, I just want to say this because it's such a misnomer. God is very much pro-sex. He actually invented it. And in Song of Solomon, He says, "Eat and drink your fill, you lovers." So He doesn't sound very repressed either. But He definitely puts parameters around it, which are for your joy. So I've met a lot of young guys who are following the Lord, and then all of a sudden there's this area of sex that needs to be addressed. And they're going, "Okay, I'm not going to surrender in that area." And all of a sudden sanctification, the power of God, the movement of God, the presence of God just starts to dry up in their lives. Or maybe it's at work where you've made this decision or made this decision that maybe wasn't ethical and you were just going, "This is what guys in my field have to do. This is what it looks like." And God's going, "This is not how we're going to do it." and you're like, "This is what I've got to do." When you do that, when you stop taking those steps of faith, what ends up happening is we just continually keep coming to church over and over again wondering where God is, wondering where His power is in our lives, wondering where His presences is. Remember, wherever there is faith, there is the movement of God, there is the power of God, there is the presence of God. Where it lacks, things don't happen. It just screeches to halt. And so what ends up happening is there is a strong lack of faith that Christ is going to be enough to satisfy. So we go, "Oh, You can't take my money. Because if You took my money, maybe this would happen..."

And all that is is a lack of faith. That He is enough and He would provide and that He would take care. And we do that with sex, we're going, "Well, I don't think I could be happy if I gave this to You." That's a lack of faith in His goodness, in His ways, in His grace. You think you're smarter than Him. I know you wouldn't come out and say that. Nobody comes out and says that, but a lot of people live like that. And so I think if you're in that desert place, in that dark place, one of the first places you've got to look is "Has Christ been asking me to walk in obedience and I've refused?" I'm telling you, so many of you are wanting some kind of new revelation, and you haven't been obedient to what you already know. It's going to slow down your faith, it's going to bog it down. It might even stop it altogether. You can't say, "No, I'm not going to listen to You" and then come in every Sunday going, "Where are You?" You can't do that. It doesn't work that way. It takes these steps of faith. And maybe you're with the disciples today. Maybe you're just going, "Okay, help my unbelief then. Help my lack of faith, because I want to believe, I want to trust, I want to let go."

And so here I thought we would end. If Jesus is so serious about faith, and it seems that He is, if where it's present, there is power and vitality and depth of life and where it's lacking, there is pain, sorrow and destruction, if He's so serious about it, then I think it would be really crazy for us to rush out of here right now without taking a little bit of stock in where we are and what's going on in our heart. Is there an area in which I've refused to walk? Is there an area where God has said, "This is where" and I've just gone, "I can't do that?" Has He been saying, "Hey, this is a sin that needs to be confessed?" Is He saying, "Hey, this is a direction you shouldn't go?" In the end, and I'll preach this until the day I die, the commands of God and the direction of God are always about your joy, not about your begrudging submission. God is not glorified by your begrudgingly submitting to His power. He's glorified in your deep enjoyment in obedience. I promise you, He's not trying to take something from you; He's trying to lead you to something. I just want you to take a second here to say, "Okay Lord, where have I just refused? Where have I said I'm not going to do that? Where have I said that's just not an area of my life I'm going to trust You in? Where have I just refused to follow You?" Is there an area of your life that you're just saying, "No, I'm not going to follow?" Has there been something that the Lord's been leading you to that you've just said no to? Maybe it's a long time ago. Maybe it's been cold for a long time, because years ago, months ago, weeks

ago you just said, "I can't do that." Maybe we should just pray that He would increase our faith, make it stronger, that He would help our unbelief.

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