

## Growing in Faith

Series: Daring Faith  
Brad Bailey – September 23, 2018

### What is Faith?

*"Faith is \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ reality of God's purposes and power. It's not avoiding what is at hand... it is daring to seek the larger God inspired potential... the intersection between the finite and infinite... and stepping into it."*

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. - Hebrews 11:1 (NKJV)*

**Faith is something which we can all gain and \_\_\_\_\_ in.**

*"Let your roots GROW down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so that you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous..."  
Colossians 2:7 (NLT)*

1. We will grow \_\_\_\_\_ of the familiar

2. We will grow deeper in \_\_\_\_\_ hardship.

*"When your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you'll be strong in character and ready for anything!" - James 1:3-4 (NLT)*

3. We will grow in our \_\_\_\_\_ with others.

4. We will grow in gaining \_\_\_\_\_  
for our lives

5. We will grow in fulfilling our \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

*"What we're hoping for is that as your lives grow in faith, you'll play a (greater) part within our expanding work." - 2 Cor. 10:15 (Mes)*

### What can I do to grow in this Daring Faith venture?

1. Get the Daring Faith Guide... available now in the Book Nook.
2. Join an 8 week Daring Faith Group (with video studies.)
3. Read the Daily Inspirations in your Daring Faith Guide.
4. Memorize and meditate on the weekly Bible verse.
5. Listen to the Weekend Messages.
6. Allow God to help shape what He wants to do in your life.

### How Can I Grow in Faith?

Jesus feeds a multitude

1. Focus on serving \_\_\_\_\_.

*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. - Matthew 6:33*

2. Recognize what I cannot \_\_\_\_\_ or accomplish in myself.

*"When Jesus . . . saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them . . . so he began teaching them. By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came and said, 'This is a remote place. Send the people away so they can go and buy something to eat.' But Jesus answered, 'You give them something to eat!' They said, 'That would take eight months of a man's wages!'" - Mark 6:34-37a (NIV)*

3. \_\_\_\_\_ God by \_\_\_\_\_ Him what I have.

*"How many loaves do you have?' Jesus asked. 'Go and see.' When they found out, they said, 'Five small loaves of bread and two fish.'" - Mark 6:38 (NIV)*

**Growing in Faith**  
Series: Daring Faith  
Brad Bailey – September 23, 2018

Intro –

**It's a joy to welcome** you into our **official start** of our **fall venture** which we are calling **Daring Faith**.

**Last week** was an **introduction** to our **focus on faith**.

**By way of recapturing** what we are engaging...lets **take a moment** to **recapture what faith is**.

### **What is Faith?**

**Let me offer this way to summarize what we engaging...and seeking to grow in.**

***“Faith is trusting in the larger reality of God’s purposes and power. It’s not avoiding what is at hand... it is daring to seek the larger God inspired potential... the intersection between the finite and infinite... and stepping into it.”***

Faith is not simply optimism ... or wishful thinking. As we were reminded last week... perhaps the most Biblical description is what is given in the Book of Hebrews.

### **Hebrews 11:1 (NKJV)**

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

It speaks of what is hoped for...that is ... longings. And human longings are correlated with something to something of substance. If we feel hunger...it's because food exists. If we feel tired...it's because sleep exists. Faith is the substance...the reality that lies within our longings. And it is evidence of things unseen. When we realize that there may be realm that created this realm...that supersedes this realm... not bound by this realm...we are living by faith.

Faith is seeing that there is more at work in any given situation.

It is **seeing more**. It's **not denying** what we may **face or feel**...it is about **realizing there is more at hand**.

**And we focused on how faith is the antidote to fear**. Fear makes us presume that the potential at hand is smaller... faith presumes the potential at hand is larger.

**And today...what we need to realize is that....**

**Faith is something which we can all gain and GROW in.**

Faith may begin with a special moment... a moment we realize there may be more... but it is then something that can be developed. In other words... faith may begin with a moment we

sense God's divine presence... or we hear of God's love in coming in Christ...and something in us says this is true...but the trust we have in that truth can grow. And it can grow in ALL of us.

This is really significant. Some of us really need to hear this. Some of us think we will never be able to have faith because we just don't seem to have the same open disposition as others. Some of us may feel that we are too cautious... too given to doubt.

**Here is the good news...we can all grow. As the Scriptures describe...**

*"Let your roots GROW down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so that you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous..." Colossians 2:7 (NLT)*

We can **all develop larger roots** in God... and that **connection to God grows** and **with it...** our **connection to the larger reality**.

**Trust is something that develops. Trust develops by exercising trust.**

A **muscle** only gets stronger by stretching it. A muscle only gets stronger by developing it. A muscle only gets stronger by putting pressure on it, putting some weight on it. We're going to put some weight on our spiritual muscles.

Let me list a **few ways** we can **expect to grow** through this venture and beyond...

### **1. We will grow beyond the bounds of the familiar**

When we seek what God may have for us to fulfill in our lives... we are opening ourselves up to what may lie beyond the familiar.

While we may find comfort in the familiar...many of us know that we have become too settled in our lives. So we will grow beyond the bounds of the familiar.

**That is why his venture is called "Daring Faith"...**because it means **confronting the power of familiarity**. Familiarity is good...it's a source of valuable comfort. But **one can never expand** unless we **explore what is not familiar**.

In this sense...**Faith is spelled R-I-S-K**. It is always stepping beyond what feels safe and certain.

### **2. We will grow deeper in power to endure hardship**

When we grow deep roots... we develop the power to endure. As James, the brother of Jesus explained in the Bible...

*"When your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you'll be strong in character and ready for anything!"*

James 1:3-4 (NLT)

None of us like the idea of "enduring"...but we all know that this world will bring opposition...life will bring some hard times. When we develop a connection to the bigger reality of God... and get through difficult times...we develop a stronger more centered life.

And it's something we do best together. We encourage each other. If trust is muscle we exercise... we can think of how we work out together. That is what being part of a Daring Faith Group allows.

### **3. We will grow in our connection with others**

Many of us may have visited the amazing Redwood trees in northern California...the largest living things on earth, the tallest trees in the world. Some are over 300 ft high and over 2500 years old. What allows that such strength? Their root systems are intertwined. They're locked to each other. When storms come, winds blow, they stand, they are not alone. All the trees support and protect each other.  
> This is a great picture of how we need to support each other and have the roots of our hearts intertwined.

### **4. We will grow in gaining God's vision for our lives**

Many of us may not have considered what God wants for us in a while. This series is going to give you that opportunity. God wants to establish a stronger sense of the purpose for you. He wants you to see more clearly that you were born for just such a time and place as this.

When we say... God...what do you have for me to believe you for... well believe me...he will...and it won't be to just watch re-runs of Friends.

And finally...

### **5. We will grow in fulfilling our common calling**

When people work from a common goal, when people work on a common ministry, when people give to a common cause, when people pray for a common reason it brings us closer together.

I believe God has a calling for the Westside Vineyard that will outlast our careers... our hobbies... everything else we do because it's going to last for eternity.

**Over the past month... believing what God has for us in the next five years. The Lord has given me a sense of focus on the next five years... and see what he has for us...and to commit myself to all that he desires.**

When we join in fulfilling something bigger than ourselves ... we are able to accomplish what we could never accomplish alone.

So as was said in the Scriptures...

***"What we're hoping for is that as your lives grow in faith, you'll play a part within our expanding work."* - 2 Corinthians 10:15 (Mes)**

So... let me quickly review...

**What can I do to grow in this Daring Faith venture?**

We are engaging in an **INTEGRATED** process... that will **allow us to sow** the nature of faith more fully...more naturally.

**1. Get the Daring Faith Guide... available now in the Book Nook.**

**2. Join an 8 week Daring Faith Group (with video studies.)**

**Make a commitment** to get in a Daring Faith Group. This is what will help you form real movement. **Most of us...if left to ourselves... lose momentum.**

Not only will it help you grow... but you will **get to know some new people.**

**By Thanksgiving** you will have a new group of people who have gotten to know you.

**3. Read the Daily Inspirations in your Daring Faith Guide.**

**4. Memorize and meditate on the weekly Bible.**

**5. Listen to the Weekend Messages.**

**6. Allow God to help shape what He wants to do in your life.**

**How Does Faith Develop?**

What's involved with building a life of faith?

We do well to realize that we live in a world that has been ruled by a spiritual enemy who wants us to believe that it is closed... that wants us to believe that God does not have more for us.

That is why Jesus speaks of a child's faith as that which we should emulate.

A child is born with a sense of being finite amidst the infinite... never presuming to be in control... or to know all there is. Then the culture of this world tries to convince otherwise.

So how do discover and develop a sense of what God may have? Well...we will be doing that **over the span of eight weeks** leading up to Thanksgiving.

**But God gives us a great lesson in an event with Jesus. It is often referred to as the feeding of the multitude...or of 5,000 in particular. [1]**

This is the **only major event that is noted by all four Gospels** along with the resurrection. [2]

**So what did unfold?** Jesus has been going throughout the Judean villages with his disciples... teaching and healing. **The intensity of the crowds** had reached a point that they **hadn't eaten...and needed a break...**so they **go across the sea of galilee...**but...the crowds saw where they were headed...ran around the lake and began arriving in droves.

It was nine miles round the top of the lake and across the ford, and they had made the journey with all speed. We are told that the **Feast of the Passover was near and there would be even bigger crowds on the roads at that time.** It is likely that the great crowd was swelled by detachments of pilgrims on their way to the Passover Feast.

Every account tells us that 5,000 arrived...and that only refers to the heads of households... .... so there were likely closer to **10,000 people**.

- A crowd as large as 10,000 would be half of Staples Center... or the total that could sit (in 3' x 2' space) on an entire football field (which calculates to 9600.)
- Like the fans of a rock concert... but the draw was the breadth of hunger that Jesus was meeting.

So Jesus cares for them...but as the day gets late...there's a problem... this mass of lives is far away from food. So the disciples raise the concern to Jesus... and it becomes an exchange in which he would show them that here is more potential than they could see.

What we see is the process by which we can experience God's working...and which faith develops.

### **1. Focus on serving God's purposes.**

There is one thing we should realize...and it's something we do well to see in every work of God.

It came in the process of serving God's purpose...of a need that naturally arose in the midst of sharing God's love.

**Jesus did not say...invite the people to a magic show.** It's important to note what Jesus did NOT do... he did NOT go around producing food every time it was meal time. As the disciple John makes so clear...this was a sign ...not a show.

Faith is not a magical power to wish for what you want... or something unusual for unusual sake... it is faith in the purposes of God... in a plan...

This is often missed...but it was a significant aspect of what Jesus saw in people. He knows that human life has always wanted to take the goods and then turn away from the Giver. ALWAYS.

That is the world he has come into. **Nothing he did was an end in itself.** It never was. It was about people recognizing something greater,

As Jesus told us...

#### **Matthew 6:33 (NIV)**

*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

So if you want to enter the bigger reality... it flows not in getting God to do whatever you want... but being involved with what he wants.

Focus on serving God's purposes... that is where God is at work.

## 2. Recognize what I cannot control or accomplish in myself.

“When Jesus . . . saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them . . . so he began teaching them. By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came and said, ‘This is a remote place. Send the people away so they can go and buy something to eat.’ But Jesus answered, ‘You give them something to eat!’ They said, ‘That would take eight months of a man’s wages!’” - Mark 6:34-37a (NIV)

This is a fascinating exchange.

- They present a problem.
- Jesus says they should go ahead and resolve it.
- They say it’s impossible.
- And what is there solution? Send them away.

We tend to have a hard time facing limits and if we do... then we assume that there’s no potential as to what God might want to do.

Let’s keep something clear. **God will help us in everything**...but I think there is a **difference between** problems that God has already provided means to solve...and those that are beyond our control and potential. There are **some problems** that are within our potential to apply **wisdom**...and **discipline**. If we are overweight...we may need a diet. Some financial problems require discipline is spending.

**If you don’t have an unsolvable problem you don’t need a miracle.** That’s kind of obvious right? If it’s not unsolvable you don’t need a miracle.

This is a moment in which they need more than they have.

They said, Lord it would take eight months wages just to pay for these guys. Imagine such a moment today... Five thousand people! How are we ever going to import the food? How are we going to keep it hot? How are we going to distribute it? How are we going to do the clean up? Who’s going to get the health permits? What about liability insurance?

Jesus asked the question to remind them of the **finiteness**... their limitations... their need. Now this **sense of limit** can simply **become an end in itself**... send us into a negative place... or it can **direct us to trust God** for what he wants to work out.

We need to recognize that there is an opportunity in a problem I cannot solve... or a possibility I cannot accomplish.

The third thing we learn about what is involved with developing faith...and trust is this...

## 3. Trust God by giving Him what I have.

“How many loaves do you have?’ Jesus asked. ‘Go and see.’ When they found out, they said, ‘Five small loaves of bread and two fish.’” - Mark 6:38 (NIV)

Jesus says to the disciples I want you to consider what you have. He says, “*How many loaves do you have?’ Jesus asked. ‘Go and see.’ When they found out they said, ‘Five small loaves of bread and two fish.’*”

John adds how this happened...

Then Andrew... spoke up. “There’s a young boy here with five barley loaves and two fish. But what good is that with this huge crowd?” - John 6:8-9 (NLT)

Andrew discovered a boy with five barley loaves and two little fishes. It was the basic lunch of a very poor boy that likely his mother sent with him.

One little boy has a lunch, a sack lunch.

Now we may imagine that there was only this small lunch preset in the crowd. But it never says that no one else actually had some food...and among those 5,000 households...and 10,000 people... I think we can assume that there were a lot of people hiding a picnic basket under their robe because they don’t want to share it with anybody else. It is highly doubtful to me that only one boy brought a lunch. He becomes the hero of the story because he’s willing to offer up what he’s got. He gives God what little he had.

That boy didn’t just give over his lunch because he knew exactly what would happen... that he would get more. That boy risked **his own hunger** .. which likely others didn’t. That’s the reality of faith. It’s RISK. It costs.

It’s more like **investing in something certain but not in the when and how.**

**Not a lever you pull....** but a **trust in one who you do not control and whose ways are different.** Whose will you trust and surrender to.

The third principle that connects us to God’s working... miraculous working...is this: I need to trust God with what I have.

This is really important to realize. We think God can do anything... and if he doesn’t need us... it doesn’t really matter what we give. We are missing something so important.

**God created us to be in a partnered relationship.... to serve over creation. God created is as those who bear His image and serve as partners in working with creation.**

If our existence is just random and meaningless... we would not be having this discussion.

But we were created to live in a trusting partnership with God. So when Jesus said “What do you have?” ...he was calling them into the relationship he created them for. When Jesus showed that he wants us to trust him with what we can give.... He is restoring the partnership we were meant to live in.

It may not be much but I give it to God. God, I don’t have much time, but here’s my time. God, my finances aren’t much, but here’s what I’ve got. God, my talent isn’t much but here’s my



talent. I give you my **reputation**. I give you my my **past, my present, my future**. It isn't much but I'm gonna give you my five loaves and two fish.

Were told how Jesus gave thanks...raised it before His father in heaven...and then began to have them pass it out. And after everyone was full...they collected 12 baskets of leftovers. He lifts the finite given up to the infinite to reveal it's purposes and power.

The result...after everyone was full...there was so much that they collected what was left and there were baskets full.

(I love this. Imagine this kid goes home. He walks in with twelve baskets full of loaves and fishes. His mom says, *Jacob where did you get all that food?* And he goes, Mom, I gave my lunch to Jesus and he multiplied it. *Go to your room and you stay there until your father gets home. You stay in there until you're ready to tell me the truth.* Really Mom. I gave Jesus my lunch and he multiplied it. *You just stay in there. Wait till your father gets home.*- from Rick Warren)

### **Closing:**

This brings joy to Jesus...to God.

This means more to Him that you and I realize.

Truly trusting God... not merely saying it but showing it... is more valuable to God than the greatest of cathedrals, than the beauty of Niagara Fall, than all the songs ever sung.

And God wants each of us to grow in faith. Trust is something that grows with experience. Each time we trust God with what we have ... we are able to grow in faith.

In fact that is what Jesus notes about this event. Later the disciples are having a hard time grasping how Jesus could provide...and he said:

### **Matthew 16:8-9 (NLT)**

*Jesus said, "You have so little faith! ....Don't you remember the 5,000 I fed with five loaves, and the baskets of leftovers you picked up?"*

The Gospel accounts reveal how they did begin to grasp his purposes and their faith indeed grew. They lived lives of trust.

It all begins with realizing how finite we are. We need to embrace that we actually don't control much. But God does.

Closing Prayer

**Resources:** This message is part of a church wide series based on the Saddleback Church Daring Faith campaign / series. We have adapted that set of messages by Rick Warren to fit our thoughts and way of approaching these topics, while maintaining most of the broad themes and some specific points. This message draws upon Rick Warren's message How To Get Ready For A Miracle (March 28-29, 2015)

**Notes:**

1. Good commentary of these events and what Jesus faced in the disciples struggle to understand:  
<https://ezracommentary.wordpress.com/2016/03/13/mark-0801-21-do-you-not-yet-understand/>
2. One reason may be the sheer number of people present. Such a mass of lives shows the external evidence and validity. Scholars note that Gospel accounts were circulating 40 years after Jesus... if they testified of events seen by so many that were not true... it would have been denounced as just fiction and fabrication. The other mentioned in all Gospels is resurrection ... notes that Jesus showed himself to 500. This event reminds us that these written accounts are merely a living testimony that was carrying on what was already known and being carried by many.