

A Dog's Faith: Carrying Our Burdens with Persistent Belief

Life has a way of weighing us down. Whether we're young parents worrying about our children's future, middle-aged adults concerned about the present state of our families, or seasoned veterans questioning past decisions, we all carry burdens. The question isn't whether we'll carry them—it's *how* we'll carry them.

We have two choices: worry or faith.

The Weight of Worry

Worry comes naturally. It requires no effort, no discipline, no supernatural intervention. Our minds easily spiral into worst-case scenarios, imagining all the ways things could go wrong. We replay conversations, second-guess decisions, and lose sleep over circumstances beyond our control.

But here's the sobering truth: worry accomplishes nothing. Medical research has shown that chronic worry can be as damaging to our bodies as smoking a pack of cigarettes daily. Dr. David Tolan, founder of the Anxiety Disorders Center, put it this way: "Worry may look invisible, but your body keeps score."

Jesus himself asked the question: "Why worry?" He knew that worry adds nothing beneficial to our lives. It doesn't change outcomes. It doesn't solve problems. It simply drains us.

Worry has been described as "imagination without faith"—our minds running wild with possibilities, but disconnected from the power and presence of God.

The Power of Persistent Faith

Faith, unlike worry, doesn't come naturally. It requires intentionality, discipline, and a supernatural perspective. Faith is a confidence and belief in God—in His exceptional character and infinite capabilities. It's the conviction that all things are possible with Him.

And here's why this matters: faith is the only way to create an atmosphere for the immeasurable power of God to move in and through our deepest concerns.

Think of it like a tornado. Meteorologists know that tornadoes don't form from just any storm cloud. They require specific atmospheric conditions—a dry front intersecting with moist, humid air, creating pressure that spins and builds into something powerful.

Similarly, for God to move powerfully in our lives, our burdens must intersect with a specific spiritual climate: faith. Our heart posture has to be one of trust, not worry, to see God work in extraordinary ways.

A Mother's Persistent Faith

In Matthew 15:21-28, we encounter a Gentile woman—a mother—who demonstrates what persistent faith looks like. Her daughter was tormented by a demon, and she came to Jesus, pleading: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David. My daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely."

This woman faced multiple obstacles. First, Jesus didn't respond—not even a word. His disciples urged Him to send her away, complaining that she was bothering them with her begging. Then Jesus told her He was sent only to help God's lost sheep, the people of Israel.

Most people would have walked away. The rejection was clear. The message seemed unmistakable: You don't belong here.

But she persisted. She worshiped Him and pleaded again: "Lord, help me."

Jesus responded with what sounds like an insult: "It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs."

Did He just call her a dog?

Here's where her faith shines brightest. Instead of taking offense and leaving, she pressed in even harder: "That's true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their master's table."

Jesus' response? "Dear woman, your faith is great. Your request is granted." Her daughter was instantly healed.

She Had Some Dog in Her

This woman had what we might call "some dog in her"—an unwillingness to give up, a persistence that wouldn't be denied. She kept yapping, kept pressing, kept believing that Jesus could lift her burden.

Jesus didn't make it easy for her to believe. She could have easily taken offense at His neglect or harsh words. But instead of letting offense drive her away, she pressed in with even more persistent faith.

We live in a culture of offense. People get worked up over social media posts, political opinions, moral convictions, and life's inequalities. But a spirit of offense will cheat us—of relationships, opportunities, peace, and God's blessings.

Life isn't fair. It will have harsh seasons, painful moments, and mysterious inequities. But it's precisely in those difficult conditions that faith has the opportunity to persist. Our stubborn, unshakable faith creates an atmosphere for an undeniable move of God.

As one pastor wrote: "Everybody wants to see a miracle, but nobody wants to be in the conditions where a miracle is necessary."

The Climate of Your Heart Matters

Consider this sobering account from Mark 6. When Jesus returned to His hometown of Nazareth, He came with the same miracle power He'd demonstrated throughout the Galilee region—90% of His recorded miracles happened there.

But in Nazareth, something different happened. The people were offended. They scoffed: "He's just a carpenter." The Bible says that because of their unbelief, Jesus couldn't do many miracles there except heal a few sick people. He was amazed at their unbelief.

The same seed planted in fertile Texas soil will grow and bear fruit. That same seed planted in Alaska's frozen tundra? Not so much. It's not the seed—it's the atmosphere, the climate.

The climate of your heart matters. Will you carry your burdens with the unproductive atmosphere of worry, or will you change the atmospheric condition of your heart to create the possibility of a God-move?

Renewing Your Faith

How do we shift from worry to faith? It starts with renewing our trust in God. Many of us can remember when we first believed—when faith felt warm and real and powerful. But life has happened since then, draining our trust.

We need to anchor ourselves in scriptural truth:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not lean on your own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5)

"Anything is possible if a person believes." (Mark 9:23)

"Now all glory to God who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we could ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20)

Even when God doesn't do what we hope or ask, we trust in His grace, goodness, and wisdom: "We know that God causes everything to work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Speaking to Your Burden

Faith isn't just a private decision—it's something we exude. You can see it in people's countenance, posture, and words. We need to learn to speak to our burdens because our burdens certainly speak to us.

The prophet Ezekiel was told to prophesy to dead bones—to speak truth to them. And when he did, those bones came alive and became an army. We need to prophesy to our burdens, speaking words of faith over impossible situations.

Maybe you need to reach out and take the hem of Jesus' garment today. Maybe you need to rip the roof off and lower your friend down to Jesus. Maybe you need to bring your broken son or daughter to Him.

Whatever your burden, remember this: **God can.**

Say it again: God can.

He is more than able. Nothing is too difficult for Him. Your persistent faith—your dog's faith—creates the climate for His power to move.

How will you carry your burden today?

Scripture References from the Sermon:

Explicitly Mentioned References:

1. **Matthew 15:21-28** - The story of the Canaanite woman (main text of the sermon)
2. **Mark 6** - Jesus returning to Nazareth and the people's unbelief limiting miracles
3. **Proverbs 3:5** - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding."
4. **Mark 9:23** - "Anything is possible if a person believes."
5. **Ephesians 3:20** - "Now all glory to God who is able through his mighty power at work within us to accomplish infinitely more than we could ask or think."
6. **Romans 8:28** - "We know God causes everything to work for good. Those who love God are called according to his purpose."
7. **1 Thessalonians 5:11** - "Encourage each other, build each other up."
8. **Hebrews 10:24** - "Stir up, motivate one another to love and the best of God's works."

Alluded to References:

9. **Luke 14:26** - Jesus saying we must "hate" our mother (paraphrased in the sermon)
10. **Matthew 12:48** (or **Mark 3:33**, **Luke 8:21**) - "Who is my mother?" - Jesus' question about his family
11. **Ezekiel 37:1-14** - The valley of dry bones (prophesying to dead bones)
12. **Matthew 9:20-22** (or **Mark 5:25-34**, **Luke 8:43-48**) - Woman touching the hem of Jesus' garment
13. **Mark 2:1-12** (or **Luke 5:17-26**) - Friends lowering the paralyzed man through the roof
14. **Romans 10:13** - "Those who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Additional Relevant Verses for Sermon Themes:

15. **Matthew 6:25-34** - Jesus' teaching on worry (referenced when Jesus asked "why worry?")

16. **Philippians 4:6-7** - "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

17. **Hebrews 11:1** - Definition of faith

18. **James 1:6-8** - Faith without doubting