

# Faith: What Are We Missing? 4

*A Command, A Commission, & A Promise,*

(preached 10/1/23)

Please turn to *Hebrews 11:1*

SO FAR...

- Belief and Faith are a married couple, but they're NOT the same thing.
- Belief is human and takes place within the heart.
- Belief is a choice.
- Faith is a supernatural gift and fruit, and is only given by God.
- We cannot produce it, achieve it, or work for it.
- When we believe, God grants faith.
- We don't have faith because we don't believe.
- We believe in JESUS because He is willing, able, intends to bring Heaven to earth, He gets us/can relate, He's supernaturally wise, is consistent, and dependable.
- We must approach God and ASK for things, SEEK them out, and KNOCK on God's door until He opens it to give us what we asked for.
- HOPING, ASSUMING, and WAITING are passive and result in "hope deferred" which makes the heart sick.
- ASKING, SEEKING, and KNOCKING are active, commanded by Jesus Himself, and yields actual supernatural results.
- Let's approach God and make our requests known to Him.
- Let's continue seeking out the result we've asked for.
- Let's continue knocking on His door until He opens it.

TODAY is the final installment in this sermon series and has a KEY ingredient to operating in faith.

**We must have something tangible to believe for and have faith in.**

**[Heb 11:1 ESV]** Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

**[Heb 11:1 NKJV]** Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

***Last week we mentioned HOPE*** and that we needed to go beyond it and start asking for that which we've been hoping for. We hope for a better marriage, we wish for financial security, we long for our kids to know Jesus as Lord, and so much more. That being said, look again at *Hebrews 11:1* and look at the words I underlined in these 2 translations of the Bible:

- Faith is the ASSURANCE and SUBSTANCE of what we've been hoping for.
- Faith is the CONVICTION and EVIDENCE of said hope which has not yet manifested in the physical, but still exists only in the spirit.

Faith is a gift and fruit of the Holy Spirit, given and produced only by Him to us. **To receive faith is to believe in something tangible and "concrete" as opposed to something ambiguous.**

Example: you're hungry, don't feel like cooking, and are willing to *go out to eat*. Problem is you don't know what you're in the mood for. So even though you're ready, willing, and able to go nothing will happen until you tangibly know what you want and where to get it.

*On the flip side* suppose you've been in the mood for Olive Garden for awhile, make your request known to your spouse, AND knock on that door over and over. Next thing you know your spouse says "let's go to Olive Garden!" and you can practically taste those yummy breadsticks!

**So how can we finally know what to ask God for**, seek out, and knock on His door until He opens it up and gives? There are 3 ways and the Lord provides them all plentifully:

- 1) A command
- 2) A commission
- 3) A promise

COMMAND. The Bible is full of God's commands and all His commands are tangible and decisive...*so perhaps we need to grab hold of a command from God* and start asking, seeking, and knocking?

Example: you've been praying for your kids to be more respectful toward you because sometimes they aren't. Is there a command which speaks to this so that we can start asking/seeking/knocking? Yes! Let's start with more obvious ones like:

**[Eph 6:1-3 ESV]** 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."

As a parent, go ahead and ask God for these things: that your kids would honor you and, if they still live in your house, obey you. ***Let me give you a secret though:*** grab hold of and ask/seek/knock after the commandments which apply to you if you really want to get some quicker results. I just quoted the first 3 verses of Ephesians 6 above, and our example of what I just said comes with verse 4:

**[Eph 6:4 ESV]** Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Johnny Doe is a dad who feels his kids are disrespectful and disobedient. He's reading Ephesians 6, reads the first 3 verses, and says *"aha! I finally have something tangible to believe in: a command from God Himself! God says my kids need to obey and be respectful to me! Pastor Scott says I need to make my requests known to God so here goes: 'Father, in name of Jesus, I ask that You would tell my kids to honor and obey me. Amen!'"*

Johnny goes on to read verse 4 and something happens—he hears the Holy Spirit talking to him, revealing that he does and says things to trigger his kids and make them angry. He also realizes that he's been lacking in practicing Godly discipline and Biblical instruction to his kids. ***Feeling humble about his own wrongdoing, and compassion toward his children***, Johnny prays: *"Father, thank You for revealing this to me. I would ask that You give me wisdom and the fruit of patience when dealing with my kids. Fill me full of Your love and help me to treat them like you treat me. Amen."*

In summary, **the first source of tangible things we can pray for can be found within God's commands as written in the Bible.**

The ***second source*** of tangible things we can pray for are found within **commissions and appointments** that God gives in the Bible. I often hear Christians say they don't know what God wants them to do, what their destiny is, etc. Since they don't know, they often feel a lack of purpose in God's Kingdom.

The truth is **the Bible is full of commissions and appointments** that God has already made to us, His people. Our first source is the Bible and can certainly grab hold of what's there while still asking/seeking/knocking for prophetic words. Here are a few:

- To share the Gospel
- Tell others about Jesus: Who He is and what He did.
- Live holy lives and leave sinful lifestyles behind
- To pray and read the Bible
- To be married or celibate, the latter completely dedicating themselves to Christ
- To endure persecution and not lose hope
- To serve other Christians
- To attend church

I could go on, but **the Lord has given these jobs/purposes and they apply to all of His kids.**

There are certain **specific commissions and appointments that will only apply to some**. Only some will be pastors and others aren't. Only some will prophesy and others won't. Only some are called to be teachers of the Bible, not all. Not everyone is called to stand up behind a pulpit and preach.

If you need a purpose in God's Kingdom, **then grab hold of one or more of the many tangible appointments from God that He recorded in the Scriptures, and start asking/seeking/knocking.**

- When we as the last time you shared the good news with someone? If it's been awhile, ask God to inspire you to do it. (Don't overthink this!)
- Is your Bible reading sporadic? Ask God to give you a greater hunger for His Word.
- Are you living a lifestyle that God calls sin? Then ask Him to help you overcome said lifestyle and live holy.

In summary: ***grab hold of what God has appointed all Christians to do and start asking the Lord to help you do those things.***

The last one is my favorite of these three: **a prophetic promise from God**. "Prophetic promise" is a redundant phrase because all promises are in the future. Hebrews 11 is famously called "the Hall of Faith." Let's read some of it:

**[Heb 11:7 ESV] 7 By faith** Noah, **being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen**, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Here are the facts: Noah was told AHEAD OF TIME not just that a flood was coming, but that he and his family would be saved from it. Both are promises. Both prophesy of a future that hasn't happened yet.

**NOAH BELIEVED** that God would fulfill both of these promises, so he got to work.

**Noah had something tangible from the Lord**—the flood and salvation from it—to believe in. He had prophetic promises.

**What you and I may have been missing in our lives are prophetic promises from God to believe in.**

Another example:

**[Heb 11:8-10 ESV] 8 By faith** Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

**Abe received several prophetic promises from God as follows:**

- There a Promised Land I've prepared for you and yours.
- I'm going to create an entire nation of people through you.
- You'll have a son with Sarah, and I'll make the same covenant with him.
- I have a heavenly city I've built called the NJ and you're all going to live there someday.

Abraham didn't just take off from his dad's house and pick some random direction, hoping God would lead him, and just happening to end up in the land of Canaan. When it says "he didn't know where he was going" that means he'd never been to Canaan before...not that he started wandering aimlessly. ***He has specific promises from God to believe in, then faith was given to him.***

- Maybe we lack faith because we don't have something tangible to believe in?
- ***Perhaps if we had a promise from the Lord, we would finally have something to believe in so that Faith could flow and mountains could be moved?***

**[Heb 11:11-12 ESV] 11 By faith** Sarah herself **received power to conceive**, even when she was past the age, **since she considered him faithful who had promised**. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

**Sarah's body wasn't cooperating** with God's promise to her. He said she would have a kid, but she was unable to and getting older. While both her and Abe struggled to believe for awhile, they eventually did and thus supernatural faith enabled her to conceive. Please note: Sarah didn't merely wish to have a kid and hope for a good outcome. God said she would have one and even name him Isaac. Sarah had something concrete to believe in, she did, and it happened.

**I END WITH THIS:** a few weeks ago I said we were constructing a building. Said building has been in the spirit for 20 years now, and it was around 2018-2019 when the Lord promised myself and the board that we would have our own building.

Hold on: it wasn't just a matter of **wishful thinking**! We asked God to make it happen, asked Him to make it possible, asked Him to provide the money, skills, people, know-how, and

we're STILL asking.

Let's take stock: 1) we had a specific prophetic promise from God for a building and 2) we asked, sought, and knocked (and still are!)

## **The first thing that began to happen were prophetic**

**words**, dreams, and visions to confirm the promise God made—that it was from Him and not just something we made up.

- Multiple people in the church flowed in the prophetic gifts and SAW our building on the inside and out!
- Others were inspired to make generous gifts to the Ezra Fund, greatly increasing it to the point where would could finally start!
- People with skills began to come forward and volunteer themselves!
- My dad gifted us the lot for free, which was worth a 5 figure sum and could have set the project back by years if we'd had to pay for it!

## **The building is happening because we got a tangible promise from God. We had something to believe in.**

There are promises God wrote in the Bible, and there are ones **He gives us specifically through prophetic words like our building.**

Common Bible promises are glorious things like the *Resurrection and Second Coming* of Jesus. These things haven't happened yet, so it takes FAITH to believe them. Yet they are tangible, concrete, they are something specific that we can cling to! And should!

**Now how about asking/seeking/knocking for specific promises?** If you're struggling with addiction, have you ever asked God if He will free you? If your marriage is on the rocks, have you asked Him to make a promise to heal it?

**God does NOT say yes to every request** regardless of what modern day charismatic preachers say—*James 4:3* makes it clear that when we ask God to fulfill a fleshly or sinful passion, He won't. Whenever I ask God to convict someone else of their sins and change them, He decides to do that to ME. In the past when I was convinced I was going to make millions, I pleaded with God to send a check and He never has.

When we get a promise from God, however, then its not coming from our flesh. **How about we start asking God to make promises?**

**I USED TO LOVE THE BATH FAIR** as a kid, and would go to my Dad and beg him to take me. With dad, you really needed to knock, knock, knock on the door to get him to say “yes” to things! When he’d finally get mad and say “yes” I finally had a promise...something to believe in and look forward to!

**[2Co 1:20 ESV]** For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

**[2Pe 1:4 ESV]** 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

# COMMUNION