

Audacious Faith Five Day Devotional

Learning to Give God the Final Word

Church, I do not want this week to become another message we agreed with and then forgot. The goal is to practice the kind of faith we say we believe. For the next five days, set aside seven quiet minutes. Bring a Bible and something to write with. Read slowly. Answer honestly. Then do something.

Each day will take you into a different part of Scripture. Do not rush to the questions. Let the Word question you first. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring one area of your life into the light, and be willing to say yes to the next thing God makes clear.

An audacious life is built one surrendered yes at a time.

-Pastor Daniel

Who Gets the Final Word

READ SLOWLY

Luke 9:23 through 25 and Psalm 139:23 through 24

Jesus does not begin by asking whether you admire him. He asks whether you will follow him. In Luke 9, following Jesus means denying yourself, taking up your cross daily, and walking behind him. That is much deeper than agreeing with Christian beliefs. It means I surrender my claim to run my life however I want.

Self denial is not self hatred. Jesus is not asking you to despise the person he created. He is asking you to stop treating yourself as the highest authority in your life. The question is not whether you have preferences, plans, and desires. Of course you do. The question is who gets the final word when your plans and his direction pull against each other.

Comfort becomes powerful because it rarely announces itself as rebellion. It sounds responsible. It says you should wait until the timing is easier, the risk is lower, the schedule opens, the children are older, the finances are stronger, or you feel more certain. Sometimes waiting is wise. Sometimes it is fear wearing the clothes of wisdom. That is why you need Psalm 139. David asks God to search him, test him, and show him what is happening inside him. He does not assume that he can diagnose his own heart without help.

So invite God into the part of your life you most want to control. Maybe it is your money. Maybe it is a relationship, your reputation, your future, or the pace of your family. Do not begin by promising God something dramatic. Begin by telling him the truth. Name what you are protecting. Name what you fear would happen if you surrendered it.

Jesus says that the life we struggle to save is the life we can lose. A protected life can slowly become a very small life. But the life placed in the hands of Jesus is never wasted. He may lead you somewhere costly. He will not lead you somewhere alone.

The life you are protecting may be the life God is asking you to surrender.

ASK YOURSELF

- What part of my life have I quietly declared off limits to God?
- What am I protecting, and what has that protection already cost me?
- Where have I called fear wisdom because I did not want to obey?
- If Jesus had the final word in one decision today, what might change?

YOUR NEXT YES

Write the words Jesus gets the final word at the top of a page. Underneath, name one area you have been protecting. Tell God why you are afraid to surrender it. Do not edit your answer into something spiritual. Be honest, then sit quietly for one minute and listen.

PRAY

Jesus, you are Lord, and I want you to have more than my agreement. I give you the right to lead me. Search me and show me where fear, comfort, or control has been making decisions that belong to you. I trust that your hands are better than mine. Give me courage to surrender what I have been protecting. Amen.

Do Whatever He Tells You

READ SLOWLY

John 2:1 through 11

At the wedding in Cana, the wine runs out. Mary brings the need to Jesus, then says something to the servants that has guided followers of Jesus for centuries: Do whatever he tells you.

What Jesus tells them to do does not sound spectacular. Fill six stone jars with water. These were large containers. Filling them meant repeated trips, heavy lifting, and ordinary work. Then Jesus tells them to draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet. The servants have to move before they know what Jesus will do.

The servants cannot make water become wine. They cannot control the outcome, manufacture a miracle, or guarantee that obeying will protect them from embarrassment. Their responsibility is simpler. Listen. Fill. Carry. Jesus is responsible for what only Jesus can do.

We often want an assignment that feels important. God often gives us an act of obedience that feels ordinary. Tell the truth. Make the call. Apologize without defending yourself. Show up. Give quietly. Serve when nobody notices. Open your home. Ask someone for help. Begin the conversation about baptism. None of those actions looks like changing the world. Neither does carrying water.

Do not miss who knew where the wine came from. John says the master of the banquet did not know, but the servants knew. There is a knowledge of Jesus that comes only through obedience. You can watch from across the room and admire what he does. Or you can carry the jar and discover that he was at work in the ordinary thing he asked of you.

This does not mean obedience forces God to give you the outcome you want. Faith is not a lever that makes God perform. The servants did what Jesus said because he was worthy of trust. That is still the reason we obey.

You are not responsible for the miracle. You are responsible for the next act of obedience.

ASK YOURSELF

- What ordinary act of obedience have I dismissed because it did not feel important enough?
- Am I waiting for God to give me a more exciting assignment before I obey the one already in front of me?
- What outcome am I trying to control instead of leaving it with Jesus?
- What would it look like to do what Jesus has said within the next twenty four hours?

YOUR NEXT YES

Choose one action you can complete before this time tomorrow. Make it specific enough that you will know whether you did it. Send the invitation. Schedule the conversation. Make the gift. Ask for help. Begin the application. Do the ordinary thing and leave the outcome with Jesus.

PRAY

Jesus, I spend too much time asking what will happen if I obey. Teach me to trust you with the result. Show me the simple thing you have placed in front of me. Give me humility to do work that feels ordinary and courage to move before I can see what you will do with it. Amen.

Obedience Without the Map

READ SLOWLY

Acts 8:4 through 8 and Acts 8:26 through 40

Philip was part of something remarkable in Samaria. Crowds were listening. People were being healed. There was great joy in the city. If Philip had been making a strategic plan, he probably would have stayed where everything was working.

Then an angel of the Lord tells him to go south to the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza. The instruction is strangely incomplete. Philip is given a direction, not an explanation. He is told where to go, but not who he will meet or what will happen when he arrives. Acts says, So he started out.

Only after Philip reaches the road does the Spirit tell him to go near the Ethiopian official's chariot. Only after he approaches does he hear the man reading Isaiah. Only after Philip asks a question does the next part of the assignment become clear. Direction comes while Philip is moving.

We want God to explain the road, the person, the conversation, the cost, and the result before we leave Samaria. But God often gives enough light for the next step. The rest becomes clear in motion.

That does not mean every impulse in your mind is a command from God. Followers of Jesus test what they sense. Does it agree with Scripture? Does it look like the character of Jesus? Can mature believers confirm that it is wise and faithful? Is it loving, honest, and holy? Faith is not recklessness. But discernment can also become a hiding place when God has already made something clear.

You may not know how the conversation will go. You may not know whether the invitation will be accepted, whether the ministry will grow, or whether the change will work. Philip did not know any of that when he started toward the road. He knew enough to take the next step.

God's silence about step five is not permission to ignore step one.

ASK YOURSELF

- What has God already made clear through Scripture that I keep treating as an unanswered question?
- Am I asking for more information because I want wisdom or because I want control?
- What successful, familiar, or comfortable place might God be asking me to hold loosely?
- Who is a mature believer I can invite into this discernment?

YOUR NEXT YES

Make two short statements in writing. First, God has already made this clear. Second, my next faithful step is. Share those statements with one trusted believer today and ask that person to pray for you and hold you accountable.

PRAY

Holy Spirit, make me attentive to your direction and grounded in your Word. Keep me from confusing impulse with faith, and keep me from using discernment as an excuse to delay. Give me enough light for the next step and enough trust to take it. Put me where I can join what you are already doing. Amen.

The Life That Can Be Interrupted

READ SLOWLY

Luke 10:25 through 37

Jesus tells a story about a man left wounded beside a road. A priest sees him and passes by. A Levite sees him and passes by. The text does not tell us why. Maybe they felt unsafe. Maybe they had somewhere important to be. Maybe they assumed someone else would handle it. Whatever the reason, they saw a need and arranged their path so the need would not rearrange their lives.

Then a Samaritan sees the same man. Jesus says he took pity on him. But compassion does not remain a feeling. The Samaritan goes to him, treats his wounds, lifts him onto his animal, changes his destination, spends his money, and promises to return. Mercy interrupts his schedule and costs him something.

Comfort is not always a couch. Sometimes it is a life packed so tightly that God cannot interrupt it without making us angry. We can fill every hour with good things and still become unavailable to love the person directly in front of us.

This does not mean you are responsible for every need you see. You are human. You have real limits, responsibilities, and people already entrusted to your care. Jesus did not heal every person in Israel during his earthly ministry. But there is a difference between having limits and building a life in which we never have to be inconvenienced by love.

Ask yourself what happens inside you when someone needs more time than you planned to give. Think about the coworker who lingers at your door, the child who needs your attention when you are tired, the neighbor whose life is messy, or the friend whose pain cannot be solved in one conversation. Irritation can reveal that the schedule has become more important than the person.

The Samaritan did not begin with a five year ministry plan. He saw one person. He moved toward him. Sometimes the next yes is simply refusing to look away.

If Jesus is Lord, he gets to interrupt your plans.

ASK YOURSELF

- Who have I trained myself not to notice?
- What recent interruption exposed impatience or self protection in me?
- Is my calendar full because God asked it to be full, or because busyness makes me feel important and safe?
- What cost in time, attention, or money might love require from me today?

YOUR NEXT YES

Choose one person you have been tempted to hurry past. Call them, sit with them, invite them to coffee, or give them your full attention. Leave one small opening in your schedule today and ask God to show you who belongs there.

PRAY

Jesus, give me your eyes for the person in front of me. Forgive me for the times I have protected my schedule more carefully than I have loved people. Teach me to honor my real limits without hiding behind them. Make my life interruptible enough for mercy. Amen.

Spend the Life You Cannot Keep

READ SLOWLY

Romans 12:1 through 2 and 2 Timothy 4:6 through 8

Romans 12 begins with mercy. Paul has spent chapter after chapter explaining what God has done for us in Jesus. Then he says, in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as a living sacrifice. Surrender is our response to grace. It is not a way to earn it.

A living sacrifice is an entire life placed at God's disposal. Your body. Your time. Your ability. Your home. Your work. Your relationships. Your future. Paul does not ask for a spiritual corner of your life. He asks for you.

The difficulty with a living sacrifice is that it can climb back off the altar. We surrender on Sunday, then reclaim control on Monday. We tell God we are available until his direction interferes with our plans. That is why this offering is daily. You place your life back in his hands again and again.

Near the end of his life, Paul tells Timothy that he is already being poured out like a drink offering. He does not speak like a man who believes his life has been wasted. His life has been spent in service to Jesus, and he knows where it is going. Paul is not clinging to what he cannot keep. He is finishing what God gave him to do.

You have one life. You do not need to make it famous, dramatic, or impressive. You need to make it available. God may use your yes in a way you can see quickly. He may use it quietly over twenty years. Some obedience will be noticed. Much of it will not. Faithfulness is still faithfulness when nobody applauds.

The question at the end of these five days is not whether you feel inspired. Inspiration fades. The question is whether anything will change. God may have brought the same person, decision, habit, conversation, or act of obedience to your mind more than once this week. Stop asking for a different assignment. Give him your yes.

God is not asking you to make your life impressive. He is asking you to place it in his hands.

ASK YOURSELF

- What has God repeatedly brought to my mind during these five days?
- What would availability to God change about my ordinary week?
- Where am I tempted to measure faithfulness by attention, results, or applause?
- What do I need to place back in God's hands today?

YOUR NEXT YES

Complete this sentence in writing: Because Jesus is Lord, my next yes is. Then write the action you will take, the day you will take it, and the person you will tell. Do not make the promise larger than the obedience God has actually put in front of you. Make it real enough to do.

PRAY

Father, everything I have is already a gift from you. In view of your mercy, I offer my life back to you. Take my plans, my time, my gifts, my fears, and my future. Keep me faithful when obedience is small and when nobody notices. I am available. Show me the next step, and give me courage to take it. Amen.