



UNSHAKEABLE

BUILDING YOUR LIFE AND LEGACY ON KING JESUS

PERSONAL JOURNAL

DAILY READINGS | GROUPLIFE & SERMON NOTES

UNSHAKEABLE

BUILDING YOUR LIFE AND LEGACY ON KING JESUS

DAVID M. BOOTH

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Now why do you call Me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a wise man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and the rain fell and when there was a flood, the winds blew and slammed against, the river burst against and yet it ***could not shake*** it and it did not fall, because it had been well built, for it had been founded on the rock.

But everyone who has heard these words of Mine and has not acted accordingly is like a foolish man who built a house on the sand—on the ground without a foundation; the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house, and the river burst against it and it immediately collapsed; it fell—and its collapse, the ruin of that house, was great.

A synthesis of Jesus's closing illustration from His "Sermon on the Mount" found in Matthew 7:24-27 (NASB), and His "Sermon on the Plain" found in Luke 6:46-49 (NASB).



A WORD FROM OUR SENIOR PASTOR

I love coming out of summer and heading into every fall with a full head of steam for a new year of ministry. One of my favorite traditions during this time is coming together as a church family to seek spiritual renewal together through the aligning of preaching in Worship, teaching in GroupLife, and spiritual disciplines at home. The *Unshakeable Personal Journal* you hold in your hand was birthed out of the Lord directing our focus this fall toward the building of His kingdom together. This is so fitting as we are in a season of expanding the infrastructure of our church campus to continue doing just that. But we are not only building and renovating our physical campus, each of our lives is being built by God for greater kingdom impact.

Building God's kingdom together requires the best out of each of us. It requires each of us continuing to grow in our personal walk with Christ out of which will flow greater love for one another, unity, sacrificial giving, and the expansion of our ministries and missions impact. We have a community and world to reach brimming with men, women, boys, and girls for whom Christ died. We must share Jesus with them!

My prayer for our church family during this fall churchwide emphasis is to come out on the other end more connected, unified, and strengthened for the kingdom work for which God has set us apart. But in order for that to result, each and every one of us will need to give our best to *Unshakeable*. Our church is only as spiritually healthy and fruitful as her individual members. So I encourage you to keep up with the daily readings in this journal, and bring it with you every weekend to GroupLife and to Worship to record the insights God's Spirit will whisper to you. Tune the full attention of your heart and mind in to what the Spirit would want to say to you during this season. Then respond with absolute trust and total surrender as God speaks. He loves you more than you know and has made you with kingdom purpose.

I love you and am so humbled to be your Pastor. There's no one else with whom I would rather take this journey of kingdom growth. Our best days of making Jesus our all and sharing Him with all are ahead of us. Let's build His kingdom together.

Your Pastor,

Jim Heiligman

ABOUT *UNSHAKEABLE*

When it comes to the harsh realities of life, it can feel like the cards are stacked against us. Regardless of our personal stories, we have the common enemies of a broken world, our own inner struggles and inconsistencies, difficult people and relationships, and an enemy that seems to know how to press our buttons when we're most vulnerable. Some of us know better than others how difficult life can be. We know what it feels like to crumble under the weight of expectations, sin, shame, abuse, restlessness, heartache, or despair. We honestly can't imagine making it without Jesus. At times it feels like we're just one last straw away from the camel's back breaking. We're just trying to hang on.

Others don't experience life that way. Life is generally trouble free. They've tasted what's its like to overcome a thing or two. Maybe not in every area, but they have some things relatively together, thanks to their upbringing and the work God has done in their lives. And in their better days, life resembles the Hobby Lobby ideal painted on every farmhouse placard to "live, laugh, and love." But whether life is troubled or trouble free, my bet is that very few think they're absolutely crushing it at building a kingdom legacy.

Jesus taught that regardless of the harsh realities of life, an unshakeable life and legacy are possible. They're not only possible, but they are the expected outcome of entrusting our lives to Him and following His lead. Do you believe this? Do you truly believe that your life could not only handle the pummeling of life's difficulties, but could also become something that leaves behind an everlasting difference?

For the next six weeks, our church will be kicking off the Fall of 2023 with a churchwide emphasis about building your life and legacy on King Jesus, aptly called *Unshakeable*. Through daily readings, followed by a complementary Sunday morning GroupLife Lesson, and sermon from our Senior Pastor, every week will give focused attention to a critical element of living the unshakeable life. Your basic equipment for this journey will be your Bible and the *Unshakeable Personal Journal* that you are now reading. The *Personal Journal* contains the daily readings, space for weekly reflection, and pages to write down the high points from your GroupLife lessons and Pastor Jim's sermons on Sundays. For these reasons, be sure to bring your *Personal Journal* to church every week.

Every daily reading in your *Personal Journal* follows a template—blueprints if you will—derived from a familiar parable Jesus preached in both His sermon on the mount and His sermon on the plain. Drawn from Jesus's illustration about the two builders, you will **listen in** like the builder who hears Jesus's words; you'll **dig deep** like the wise builder;

and you'll **lay down** application for your life as you consider acting upon His words through your abiding relationship with Jesus. Each of these is marked with a corresponding logo.



LISTEN IN



DIG DEEP



LAY DOWN

Optionally, an extra challenge is given to encourage you to find more treasure from God's Word upon which to build, in a section called **build up**. This optional section is great for those in a season in life with less restrictive time demands.



BUILD UP

As we take this journey together, keep this in mind: we are mining not only for factual truth in the Bible, but truth that connects us to a Person. It's not enough to know more information *about* God. God wants to know us, and for us to know Him, in a deeply meaningful relationship. Jesus is not a subject to know *about*, *He is a living Savior and King to know, to follow, and to share*. So work through this resource conversationally with God, listening and responding to His voice.

Like most things in life, treasure is available to those willing to do what it takes to dig it up. Keeping in step with *Unshakeable* will require an investment of your time and effort. Expect to do this imperfectly, but aim high. If you miss a day or two, you have a built-in catchup day with Day 6. If you get further behind, pickup where you're supposed to be and come back to what you skipped at a later time when you're able. Commit to attend every Sunday for both the GroupLife hour and one of our Worship Services. Whatever your *Unshakeable* journey will look like, ask the Lord for His eyes and His heart to make the most of this opportunity to unearth the truths and treasures of *Unshakeable* together, as a church family.

TABLE OF CONTENTS & CHURCH SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15: *UNSHAKEABLE* CHURCHWIDE EMPHASIS BEGINS

SERMON: Jim will preach the *Unshakeable* introductory sermon.

GROUPLIFE: Last day to pickup your *Unshakeable Personal Journal* in your GroupLife classroom (or atrium) to begin daily readings on schedule.

DAILY READINGS: *Personal Journal* daily readings begin Monday, October 16.

WEEK 1: UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM PAGE 10

WK. 1 DAILY READINGS began Monday, October 16

WK. 1 SERMON & GROUPLIFE on Sunday, October 22

WEEK 2: UNSHAKEABLE BEDROCK PAGE 37

WK. 2 DAILY READINGS begin Monday, October 23

WK. 2 SERMON & GROUPLIFE on Sunday, October 29

WEEK 3: UNSHAKEABLE FOUNDATION PAGE 66

WK. 3 DAILY READINGS begin Monday, October 30

WK. 3 SERMON & GROUPLIFE on Sunday, November 5

WEEK 4: UNSHAKEABLE FAITH PAGE 92

WK. 4 DAILY READINGS begin Monday, November 6

WK. 4 SERMON & GROUPLIFE on Sunday, November 12

WEEK 5: UNSHAKEABLE LIFE PAGE 121

WK. 5 DAILY READINGS begin Monday, November 13

WK. 5 SERMON & GROUPLIFE on Sunday, November 19

WEEK 6: UNSHAKEABLE MISSION PAGE 149

WK. 6 DAILY READINGS begin Monday, November 20

WK. 6 FINAL SERMON & GROUPLIFE on Sunday, November 26



UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM

WEEK 1

**God offers us entry into His kingdom
and its purposes.**

UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM, DAY 1:

The KING'S PURPOSE

God wants our lives built for His Kingdom purposes.



LISTEN IN

Now why do you call Me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a wise man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and the rain fell and when there was a flood, the winds blew and slammed against, the river burst against and yet it could not shake it, and it did not fall, because it had been well built, for it had been founded on the rock.

But everyone who has heard these words of Mine and has not acted accordingly is like a foolish man who built a house on the sand—on the ground without a foundation; the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house, and the river burst against it and it immediately collapsed; it fell—and its collapse, the ruin of that house, was great.

A synthesis of Jesus's parable,
from Luke 6:46-49 and Matthew 7:24-27.

In January 2023, earlier this year, a bus load from our church toured key archaeological sites in Egypt, including the great pyramids at Giza. Pastor Jim, his wife Courtney, and I decided that we would take advantage of the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to enter into the heart of Egypt's largest pyramid, the Great Pyramid of Giza. As we approached the pyramid, the sheer size of it was breathtaking. The length of each of its sides was nearly 2 and 1/2 football fields, its base covering about 13 and 1/2 acres. In your mind's eye, its footprint is comparable in size to the Kyle Field stadium, but it towers more than 4 times the stadium's height. This thing was massive!



At its base were the largest of its 2.3 million stones, weighing in at 15 tons each. The total weight of the pyramid is estimated as nearly 6 million metric tons, or over 13 billion pounds. It appears the pyramid is built directly on the sand. It turns out, however, that the desert that creeps up to each of the pyramid's sides only gives the illusion that it rests on the sand. The foundation upon which the pyramid actually lays is solid limestone bedrock, precisely prepared by its ancient engineers to be level to within 8/10ths of an inch from one end of the pyramid to another. The fact that this monument has stood the test of time reveals a hidden foundation able to bear its massive size and load.

Unlike the pyramid, however, Jesus wants your life to be a monument of His kingdom that *never* ends. The kingdoms and dynasties of Pharaohs came and went. All that is left are the relics of ancient history. But the kingdom of Christ was, is now, and forevermore will be. In the closing illustration of both Jesus's sermon on the plain from Luke 6 and His sermon on the mount in Matthew 7, He tells a parable about two types of persons, and the different types of lives they build. It provides important instruction concerning the care and precision with which God wants us to build our lives and legacies.

**EACH OF US IS TO LOOK AT JESUS'S STORY AND SEE
OURSELVES IN IT, EITHER AS ONE BUILDER OR THE OTHER.**

In today's "LISTEN IN" portion of this daily reading, I took the liberty of merging the details of Jesus's parable, told on two separate preaching occasions. By doing so, we can listen in on the illustration afresh with the full range of detail Jesus used when He preached this parable. Each version uses subtle differences we need not ignore. In both sermon illustrations, Jesus contrasts the approach of two different builders. One builds a house on a reliable foundation, the other without one. When stressed, one of the houses stood firm. It was unshakeable. The other house collapsed under its own weight when tested by the elements. Let's read it again.

Now why do you call Me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a wise man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the

rock; and the rain fell and when there was a flood, the winds blew and slammed against, the river burst against and yet it could not shake it, and it did not fall, because it had been well built, for it had been founded on the rock.

But everyone who has heard these words of Mine and has not acted accordingly is like a foolish man who built a house on the sand—on the ground without a foundation; the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house, and the river burst against it and it immediately collapsed; it fell—and its collapse, the ruin of that house, was great.

From Luke 6:46-49 and Matthew 7:24-27.



DIG DEEP

Do you truly believe an unshakeable life is possible moving forward?

Circle YES or NO

Consider the goals that have driven your decisions in life, and the use of your resources like time and money. **Describe with one sentence the life purpose your decisions and goals have served up to this point.**

As believers intending to follow Jesus as His disciples, it's important to grasp the vision that King Jesus has for your life in His kingdom. Consider the words that frame the application of the parable – *"I will show you whom he is like."* These words indicate that the parable is meant to get personal. It's about you and me. It's about each one of our lives and our legacies that survive us. Each of us is to look at Jesus's story and see ourselves in it, either as one builder or the other. We are to consider how we are building our lives, because each of our lives matter to Him. And they matter to the kingdom He is building. Like the great pyramids, will our legacies stand the test of time? More importantly, will they stand the test of eternity? Before all is said and done, our lives will reveal the unseen foundation beneath us. And we will leave behind a legacy that corresponds to the way we built them.

The parable draws a natural conclusion: God wants you to be the wise builder. He has a purpose for your life and wants you to wisely build your life according to it. He has provided everything necessary below ground to undergird and support that kind

of unshakeable life above the surface. But He not only envisions the life He desires for us, He also sees what could become of our lives if we decided to build it our own way. He knows that two drastically different outcomes await, depending on whether Jesus is central as King of our lives, or whether He is essentially ignored. God has a purpose for each of our lives. And this plan is ours for the taking.



LAY DOWN

If the price tag of an unshakeable life is living under the rule and reign of King Jesus in every area of your life, would you be willing to pay it? Circle YES or NO Explain why you would or wouldn't:

Father, it's astonishing to realize that my life matters to You, and our relationship matters to You. I am starting to see what You are intending my life to become, and what You are wanting my life to avoid. I ask for Your help, for only You can help me to build the entirety of my life on King Jesus. Increase my understanding of Your kingdom, my desire for it, and my willingness to trust and obey You with every single part of me, from the inside out.



BUILD UP

When you read the parable and hear Jesus describe a house that doesn't shake, collapse, or fall, what comes to mind? **Write down a few characteristics of a life that you consider unshakeable:**

Write a few difficulties that have slammed most forcefully against the stability of your life.

UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM, DAY 2:

THE KINGDOM AGENDA

God's kingdom agenda is to extend the rule and reign of Jesus.



LISTEN IN

*But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him...
"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'"*

From Matthew 25:31-34.

What is the true storyline of eternity past to eternity future? What actually happened, what is happening, and what will happen? What did God get started, and to what end? How does God describe the narrative arc of past creation to future new creation? How do we make sense of it all, and what do we even do with that information? In short, what is God's kingdom agenda and our place within it?

One of the distinguishing characteristics of being created in God's image is the ability to ask such questions. We are meaning-makers. We are wired to make sense of things. With this capacity, however, we can just as easily hitch our ability to make meaning to falsehood as we can to the truth. In a seemingly endless sea of personal opinions, there is one actual truth. We are not victims of conjecture, guess work, or fantasy. Something actually did happen, is happening, and will happen—whether we believe it or not.

God has revealed to us the answer to those big-picture questions. We have the truth of God recorded in the Bible and personified in the God-man, Jesus Christ. Jesus said that His purpose was to tell this truth. *"You say correctly that I am a king. For this reason I was born and have come into the world: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice."* (John 18:37). Even more, He explained that truth is more than an abstract idea. Truth is a person. *"I am...the truth..."* (John 14:6). So how did *The Truth*, God in the flesh, choose to explain the big picture storyline of history?

Jesus primarily chose the motif of the "kingdom" to reveal Himself, the storyline of creation history, and our roles in it. What was Jesus saying to His listeners by using kingdom language? In my early years of self-feeding on the Scriptures, I mistakenly understood "the kingdom," "the kingdom of God," and the "kingdom of heaven" to just be different words Jesus used to refer to "heaven," the eternal place where God

the Father dwells and Christians go after death. My Christian upbringing had already painted a mental picture of heaven as a walled city in the clouds with giant gem-encrusted gates behind which were white-robed believers floating over streets of gold, basking in the light of God and engaged in never-ending worship. Admittedly, that limited understanding made many of Jesus's statements related to His kingdom mysterious, if not downright confusing.

But the kingdom of God was a concept with which the Jewish listeners would have been much more familiar. Throughout the Old Testament, God revealed Himself as the one who was beginning to re-establish His eternal kingdom through Israel's Messiah. Over 200 times, the Old Testament uses kingdom imagery. *"But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne will be established forever"* (1 Chronicles 17:14). *"Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations"* (Psalm 145:13). God's kingdom reign began with creation. Since creation's fall into sin, God has been restoring His kingdom through Jesus, one person at a time, from one generation to another, in the hearts and lives of those who are yielded to Jesus's reign.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD DEMANDS A RESPONSE. IT'S NOT A GENTLE SUGGESTION TO TWEAK OUR LIVES A LITTLE HERE AND THERE, YET REMAIN FUNDAMENTALLY UNCHANGED.

The New Testament draws from kingdom imagery 154 times. Luke's first chapter powerfully connects Jesus and His kingdom to the Old Testament kingdom God established with David. *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end"* (Luke 1:32-33). In the opening pages of Jesus's ministry, a sweeping announcement was made. *"From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'"* (Matthew 4:17). Prefacing His declaration about the arrival of God's kingdom was His clarion call to repentance. The kingdom of God demands a response. It's not a gentle suggestion to tweak our lives a little here and there, yet remain fundamentally unchanged. No, His call is for us to do a complete 180° turn away from every kingdom agenda but His own. God's kingdom agenda is to restore and extend the rule and reign of Jesus.

The timeline of history, from creation to new creation, is the true story about God's kingdom. God setup a perfect world—a place where He ruled and reigned as its

Creator-King, where everything in the physical world and the souls of man were rightly oriented toward Him. God setup a world in which humankind, His image-bearers, would operate properly inside the confines of a right relationship of worship and love due their Creator. Creation was rightly related to God, and every creature within rightly related to each other, without exception. It was paradise in every sense of the word.

Even before God spoke matter into existence and ordered the creation of this world, even before mankind's sinful rebellion, He was preparing for you and me a restoration of this kingdom. *"Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matthew 25:34). His kingdom agenda is to restore His complete rule and reign over His creation as He always intended. One day, history will culminate and be wrapped up in eternity, when all people, nations, and creation itself will again be brought under the perfect rule and reign of God in King Jesus, without exception. In this unshakeable kingdom, Jesus will occupy its throne and all creation will be physically and spiritually redeemed to once again bow its knee in joyful allegiance to the Creator. Jesus will restore the kingdom that was once fully enjoyed at the dawn of creation. Sin and its effects will be no more. This is the undeniable truth—God's kingdom is unshakeable. Upon the arrival of Jesus, the kingdom has arrived. And it is expanding—heading to its appointed destiny. It will culminate in the unrivaled rule and reign of Christ without end. The only question is, are you yielded to His kingdom agenda?



DIG DEEP

Read Colossians 1:15 -18, Ephesians 3:1-12, Hebrews 1:1-3, and Acts 17:24-31. As you read, think about the timeline of eternity past to eternity future. **Write down some of the pivotal milestones of the kingdom of God in history.**

Write how you believe your life contributes to God's kingdom agenda:

How might an unshakeable life contribute to God's kingdom agenda differently than a life built on a lesser foundation?



LAY DOWN

Father, I can't wait for that final day when I step into eternity with You—an inheritance I will not deserve, but one that You have set apart for me because of Your love for me, through the person and work of Jesus Christ. Until that great day, I pray that Your rule and reign in my life will touch and transform every nook and cranny of my mind, my heart, my first love for Jesus, and my life on mission sharing Jesus with all. Give me this unshakeable life, for it is Your plan to do so. I consecrate myself to this purpose and process. Show me how to abide in Christ so this will increasingly be fulfilled for the remainder of my days.



BUILD UP

By virtue of His resurrection, Jesus has already been given all authority in heaven on earth (Matthew 28:18-20), has already ascended to the throne of God (Revelation 3:21), and has already been given the name above every other name (Ephesians 1:21). He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. **Write down how the future reign of Christ in His eternal kingdom differs from His reign right now as the ascended, exalted Christ:**

UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM, DAY 3:

The KINGDOM DILEMMA

We will be justly held accountable by God for our sin.



LISTEN IN

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, being understood by what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their reasonings, and their senseless hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible mankind, of birds, four-footed animals, and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them up to vile impurity in the lusts of their hearts, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for falsehood, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Romans 1:20-25

In Romans 1, Paul draws our attention to the tragedy that unfolded in God's perfect creation. Though God created mankind to remain in a good and perfect relationship with Him, He created man with the capacity to choose whom or what to worship and treasure above all others. It's a gross understatement to say that God's perfect creation went off the rails somewhere along the way. Twenty seconds tuned into any news media outlet will tell you that society has strayed quite a long way from God's perfect design.

SIN'S ESSENCE IS WHENEVER AN INDIVIDUAL BREAKS FAITHFULNESS IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND REBELS AGAINST HIS KINGDOM AGENDA.

But it's not just a matter of shocking societal decay that makes news headlines. The nature of sin itself is more personal than societal. The apostle James calls sin a breach of faithfulness akin to spiritual adultery against God (James 4:4). Sin's essence is whenever an individual breaks faithfulness in their relationship with God and rebels

against His kingdom agenda. Anytime the unrivaled rule and reign of Jesus is resisted by you or me, an idol is treasured above Jesus. This is this sin of idolatry. Christians can tend to get caught up in the most egregious outward behaviors of others, but miss that underneath our own behaviors lies the same adulterous stance toward the Lord Jesus.

Though sin is a personal offense against God, we may be blind to it. We have plopped down on the throne of our own lives and scooted off its rightful ruler too many times to count. We're just so used to trading the active rule and reign of Christ for life on our own terms that we may not even notice it. We relegate Him to the sidelines of the lives we are building for ourselves, rather than keeping Him front and center. We have, as Paul described in Romans 1, worshipped the creation rather than the Creator. We have turned the lives God created and redeemed to be Christ-centered into life-long projects of worshipping and serving our heart's distorted desires. Sin poses a fundamental dilemma for God's kingdom rule.

To be clear, the dilemma is not God's. He continues to be sovereign, guaranteeing that all things are moving toward their appointed end. He will bring all things under the footstool of Christ's reign. Guaranteed. The dilemma is our own. Bundled with the capacity to choose is an accountability to God for our choices. We have inherited a sinful nature from humanity's first ancestors, and have been practicing and perfecting it ever since. We are *"without excuse"* (Romans 1:20). And we will be accountable to God for our sin. Our eternal destination is at stake.



DIG DEEP

When considering final judgment, list a few ways people might attempt to remedy the dilemma of a broken relationship with God?

Up to this point, how have you personally tried to be made right with God and gain entrance into heaven?

The Bible teaches us that we don't have the capacity to undo all of the wrongs we have done. We may attempt to clean up our lives, get sober, turn over a new leaf, be a good person, and discipline our lives to follow God's rules. Those attempts will always fall short. Our sins run too deep. We can't balance out our past sins with future good deeds, or atone for them. *"The wages of sin is death"* (Romans 3:23). In other words, we will get what's coming to us. No one is sinless or exempt from the judgment sin deserves (Romans 6:23). But, there is one glorious exception: God made one (and only one) way for sinners like you and me to escape the deserved wrath of God's perfect judgment. It is up to every person whether they will take advantage of it.



BUILD UP

A sound biblical theology is built on core truths revealed in Scripture. Among those that rise to top is the fact that God is sovereign. You can see the word "reign" in "sovereign." It means that God is ruler over everything. He reigns. Always has. Always will.

Some might wonder how sin could possibly exist and have the dominance it has in individuals and culture if God is truly sovereign over all things. **Explain how the undeniable presence of sin and its consequences reconciles with the reality of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God?**

Review each of the following verses in the "Romans Road." The Romans Road is a list of Bible verses from the book of Romans that explains God's plan to rescue us from the perfect and righteous judgment everyone deserves:

Romans 3:23 (elaborate with Romans 3:10-18), Romans 6:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 10:9, Romans 10:13, Romans 5:1, Romans 8:1, Romans 8:38-39.

Write the central message of each of the Romans Road verses in your own words below. Find 2 or 3 other verses in other places in the Bible that correspond to each of the Romans verses and write their references below.

Romans 3:23 Central Message:

Supporting Scripture References:

Romans 6:23 Central Message:

Supporting Scripture References:

Romans 5:8 Central Message:

Supporting Scripture References:

Romans 10:9 Central Message:

Supporting Scripture References:

Romans 10:13 Central Message:

Supporting Scripture References:

Romans 5:1 Central Message:

Supporting Scripture References:

Romans 8:1 Central Message:

Supporting Scripture References:

Romans 8:38-39 Central Message:

Supporting Scripture References:

UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM, DAY 4:

The KING'S WARNING

We must not assume we are in His kingdom.



LISTEN IN

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; leave Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

Matthew 7:21-23

In Luke 6:46, Luke records Jesus introducing the final illustration of his "sermon on the plain" with a question. *"Now why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"* Jesus then goes on to answer that question with the parable about the builder who either follows the words of Jesus, or doesn't. In His "sermon on the mount," the parable of the two builders is preceded immediately by Matthew 7:21-23, shown above. Here, Jesus essentially covers the content of the Luke 6:46 "Lord, Lord" question with more detail. But instead of asking a question, Jesus issues a verdict to those who would call Jesus "Lord, Lord" without a life corroborating that claim.

In the Matthew 7 account, Jesus gives the parable of the two builders after He already explains the gravity of its meaning in the preceding verses. Jesus raises the stakes and doesn't *just* make the application of the parable a matter of an unshakeable and steady life in the here and now, but also an unshakeable life that is ready for eternity. Jesus is helping us zoom out from the 80 years (give or take) we will live on this earth and take a look at life from the perspective of eternity. He is shutting the door on an interpretation of His parable that includes *only* this relatively short life. The parable is not just about weathering life's storms better. Our temporary lives have both temporary *and* eternal consequence. It would be a mistake not to heed the warning of this parable.

Whether or not someone actually knows Jesus and is following Him as Lord has eternal implications. It is imperative that we don't miss this. Jesus gives this warning at the conclusion of His sermon. After reading the sermon on the mount, some might mistakenly conclude that following new kingdom rules secures entry into the kingdom. Along with this, there are other reasons people need to heed this warning. Some trust in their immersion in the Scriptures (John 5:39). Others place their confidence in merely believing the correct facts about God (James 2:10). Some are banking their eternity on their membership in a group of people (Galatians 3:29).

None of us should assume we are citizens of His eternal kingdom just because we are members of a local church of individuals who call Jesus, "Lord."

**WE ARE BIRTHED INTO A NEWNESS OF LIFE THAT IS
PROGRESSIVELY RECALIBRATED TO THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS.**

Everyone begins outside of God's kingdom. There has to be a point in time when a person enters into it, or they remain a kingdom outsider. To enter God's kingdom, a transformation must take place inside. A relationship fracture with God must be repaired. *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless someone is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3). When we enter God's kingdom, we are birthed into a newness of life that is progressively recalibrated to the Lordship of Jesus. No one can clean up their lives to gain salvation, but the Savior never fails to clean up the lives of those He saves.



DIG DEEP

In the opening Scripture, Jesus seems to indicate 2 different criteria for His eternal evaluation of our lives: 1) whether or not He knows us, and 2) whether we do the will of our Father in heaven. Which is it? **Write down a biblical explanation of how these 2 criteria relate to one another** (hint: consider John 6:40, John 15:1-16, along with other Scriptures that clearly address this question).

Would God be satisfied if you gave your all to getting the outer behaviors mentioned in these sermons right, yet miss out on the relationship He wants you to have with Him?

What verses specifically address that question?

Why does our relationship with God and our outward obedience both matter to God?

In light of Jesus's plan of salvation, His warning, and the parable of the two builders, would you say your life is built upon Jesus and is therefore ready for eternity? Why or why not?



LAY DOWN

Father, I am so humbled by Your love that valued me so much that You chose to create me and pay for my redemption through Jesus. I didn't deserve Your salvation, and in no way have earned it. But I am resting in the personal relationship You purchased for me by my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. May that relationship bring about the inner transformations necessary to produce an unshakeable life—a life marked by the character of Christ and the will of the Father. You alone receive the glory for my readiness for eternity.



BUILD UP

Read the full “sermon on the plain” in Luke 6:17 - 7:1 and/or the “sermon on the mount” in Matthew 5:1 - 8:1. When you read, pay attention to the relationship God wants you to have with Him, the rule and reign of King Jesus, and the outward evidences of His Lordship.

Journal any questions you have, and any key thoughts the Spirit emphasizes to you as you read one or both of these sermons.

UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM, DAY 5:

THE KING'S INVITATION

You must respond to God's invitation to enter His kingdom.



LISTEN IN

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation: for by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also the head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

Colossians 1:13-18



Within the last five years, both of my daughters received an invitation for marriage. "Will you marry me?" That question alone didn't make them married. The invitation to marriage was a declaration of love and an eager willingness to enter into permanent covenant relationship. But in order to wear the engagement ring, the invitation had to be received. Saying "yes" to the invitation is saying "yes" to the person asking it, and simultaneously declaring "no" to all other would-be husbands. Getting engaged is the entry point of a lifetime of exclusivity and faithfulness. Likewise, entering God's kingdom through faith is the entry point of a lifetime and eternity of making Jesus *"first place in everything"* (Colossians 1:18).

Engagement is similar to God's invitation to us. He extends the gracious invitation to enter into a permanent relationship with Himself. *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:20). Sinless Jesus "became sin" so that we would become righteous. This does not mean that the essence of Jesus became sin, any more than it means that we have become righteous in essence. It means that just like the sins of Israel were imputed to a blameless sacrificial lamb, our sins were pinned on Jesus. Though He

was completely innocent, He bore our sins, then paid the penalty for them. And in like manner, if we receive this gift, we will become clothed with the righteousness of God, in Christ.

This verse also tells us that we *“might”* become the righteous of God in Christ. The fact that Jesus paid the price does not mean we will become saved. It means that His gift is available to us, and that it must be received by faith. He extends to us the invitation, an invitation that we, like each of my daughters on their engagement day, can either receive or reject. God is not wanting us to just accept a legal re-arrangement of the relationship—merely moving from unforgiven to forgiven, and from guilty to not-guilty. He is wanting us to say “yes” to a relationship with Jesus as not only our sin-forgiver, but as our exclusive, first-love King.

What’s remarkable about God’s salvation plan is that it wasn’t an afterthought or an on-the-spot creative solution to an unexpected dilemma. Knowing full well how tragically it would all play out, God still created us with the capacity to choose or reject Him. He created us this way because He always makes the right choice. It was best that He created, loved, and paid the price for His rebellious creation rather than never creating us at all. Knowing all things perfectly, He saw that creating mankind, then redeeming them, was worth the immense price it would cost Him on the cross. It is hard to fathom God’s redemptive plan from eternity past, even before creation itself, to rescue all those who would receive Jesus through the sacrifice He would pay through His sinless life, substitutionary death, and bodily resurrection. We must have been of such infinite worth to God—even the angels, Peter says, long to understand the immensity of this undeserved grace (1 Peter 1:12). Do you understand that God paid the highest price to have permanent union with Himself?

**HE IS WANTING US TO SAY “YES” TO A RELATIONSHIP
WITH JESUS AS NOT ONLY OUR SIN-FORGIVER, BUT AS
OUR EXCLUSIVE, FIRST-LOVE KING.**



DIG DEEP

Have you received the gracious gift of Jesus as your Lord and Savior, by placing your faith in Him? YES or NO

If so, pause to write a prayer of gratitude to the Lord for inviting you into a restored relationship with Him.

If not, nail down the reasons why you have not yet received Jesus by faith. Be completely honest with yourself and write down those reasons here:



LAY DOWN

Perhaps after seeing those reasons written down, they no longer seem valid or important as reasons to continue rejecting the free gift of grace God is offering to you.

If you are ready to entrust your life and eternity to Jesus, you can ask Him to save you right now. Close your eyes to clear your mind from distractions, and talk to God.

In your own words, admit to God that you've been living life your own way (sin) and that you need the forgiveness of sin that Jesus paid for.

Tell God you believe that Jesus was God in-person, sent to pay the price for your sin through His sinless life, death in your place on the cross, and was raised to be the living King (Lord) of your life.

Ask God to save you from your sin and restore your relationship with Him so that you can know, love, and follow Him for the rest of your life.

If you asked that of God, the bible teaches that God saved you—*“the one who comes to Me [Jesus] I certainly will not cast out”* (John 6:37). **To nail down your decision, write down the date, and in your own words the prayer of faith you prayed to receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord:**

Date:

Prayer:

Be sure to share the great news that God has saved you with a pastor, and other Christians that you know care about you.

If you are still unwilling to surrender your life and eternity to God and would like to speak with someone about your reservations, I encourage you to ask your GroupLife teacher, or a friend in your GroupLife class that you know has a relationship with God, to find a time to talk this through with you. Or if you are not yet plugged into GroupLife and don't know anyone to talk to, call the church, or come forward after one of our Worship Services on Sunday mornings, and speak with one of our pastors, who will be delighted to listen to your concerns and talk them through with you.

Father, You didn't have to deliver me from the mess I made for myself when I decided in countless ways to live life on my own terms. I know that I am accountable to You for all of my choices—and because of that have no hope apart from Christ. Thank You for demonstrating perfect love for me by making a way—the only way that could save me. Jesus, thank You for resisting every temptation so You could sinlessly offer Your life as an atoning sacrifice for my sins. And thank You for following through to the cross until You paid the price in full for me. Thank You for restoring my relationship with You, for inviting me into closeness with You, and for giving my life kingdom purpose. Thank You for loving me. Help me to hold nothing back from You as I learn better how to love and follow You.



BUILD UP

Go to **biblegateway.com** or other Bible tools, and read John 1:12-13, John 3:3,16, Romans 6:23, and Ephesians 2:8,9 in the NASB, the ESV, the NIV, and the Amplified Bible. **Summarize below the truth being conveyed by these scriptures:**

UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM, DAY 6:

REVIEW & REFLECT

Take a moment to review days 1 - 5 of this week. **Identify the truths that struck you as most significant to the kingdom God is building, in part through your unshakeable life. Write them below:**

Write down any questions you have about the content from this chapter you are unsettled about:

What are some things you will begin doing, or stop doing, in response to what you learned this week?

What is something you'd be willing to share with your GroupLife class this Sunday about what God showed you this week?

UNSHAKEABLE KINGDOM, DAY 7:

WORSHIP AND GROUPLIFE

GROUPLIFE TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from GroupLife that God emphasized to you today:

SERMON TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from today's sermon that God emphasized to you:

YOUR RESPONSE TO GOD SPEAKING AT CHURCH TODAY:



UNSHAKEABLE BEDROCK

WEEK 2

*The bedrock of grace in Jesus
stabilizes everything.*

UNSHAKEABLE BEDROCK, DAY 1:

HITTING BEDROCK

Jesus secures for us grace that is never earned, never deserved.



LISTEN IN

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our wrongdoings, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the boundless riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:4-9

Could you indulge me and read that again? God is rich in mercy—that's who He is. He has great love for us—God is love. God saved us—He's never given up on us. He raised us up—He wants us to be where He is. He slathers grace and kindness on us—that's what He's extravagantly preparing for us (His idea, not ours). We wouldn't dare ask or expect a Holy God to orient His heart toward sinners like that. But He couldn't help it. Because that's just who God is. And His grace didn't just end at the cross. Paul explains that the cross wasn't the extent of His love, but an unforgettable proof that His grace remains inexhaustible. *"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32).

Haven't we conditioned ourselves to expect that the unshakeable life Jesus portrayed in His parable comes at the price of disciplined reading of Scripture, more Bible Studies to work (hard) through, more commitment, more service, more, more, more? For people like me, it feels like grace just doesn't compute—like we're a computer written in the binary language of Os and Is and along comes programming code that uses 7s and 23s. System error. Does not compute.

Admittedly, I've been part of church leadership cultures that, with good intentions, have equated deeper commitment and more effort with deeper results. But thanks be to God that an unexpected shift has played out in my walk and ministry—the deeper I get, the more simple the unshakeable life becomes. The prize is Jesus, and the key that unlocks that prize is receiving His saving and sanctifying grace as a gift. Bible studies, then, are only as good as their usefulness in helping people to receive God's grace in fellowship with and dependence on Jesus every day, in all situations. We'll talk this week about grace in its various forms, but for now we must give focus to understanding what grace is, our hopelessness without it, and how to receive it.

Let's agree on a working definition of grace. *Grace is God ever-welcoming us into fellowship with Himself as an undeserved gift.* With that definition are some assumptions that we need to understand. First, grace is not a thing to be dispensed out in portions. It is an invitation into a love relationship with holy God. Also, grace is never what we deserve. We can't buy it with our money, our commitment, our devotion, our morality, or our obedience to God's commands. The Bible teaches emphatically that anyone thinking they can earn God's initial saving grace, or His continuing grace, has an extremely low view of God's righteousness and their own unrighteousness. Both are greater than we can comprehend. Allow me to illustrate.

Harvard Business School graduate and philanthropist Pablo Fernández is not only a young, wealthy entrepreneur, he is also an accomplished athlete. He has held five Guinness World Records for non-competitive swimming. He has been the first to cross several notable bodies of water such as Ha Long Bay in Vietnam, the mouth of the Congo, and the Gulf of Fonseca from Nicaragua to El Salvador—all for charitable causes. His most difficult athletic accomplishment took place on July



19, 2021 in Miami, Florida. In this single swim, he obliterated 3 world records—fastest time to 100 km, furthest swim in 24 hours, and longest distance swim (by far). The swim started at Miami Beach. Pablo swam into the open water of the Atlantic Ocean for 250 kilometers (155.3 miles) before stopping after more than 26 hours. He swam a staggering 3.6% of the 4,115.34 miles from Miami to the nearest coast of his home country of Spain.

Imagine if you, a handful of your friends, and a few hand-picked staff from the church (heaven forbid) decided to attempt to swim across the entire Atlantic Ocean with Pablo. On your mark, get set, go! You run to dive over the breakers into the Atlantic to begin your swim. After about 10 minutes, you notice that Pablo is far ahead, becoming just a speck on the horizon. Trailing behind him are a handful of the younger, stronger, and more athletically-inclined. But you also notice that you're not in last place—several are still lagging behind where you've managed to make it (probably church staff). You're confident you'll make it farther than them. On the one hand, you feel good about not being last. On the other hand, you don't feel so good about how far others are ahead of you, especially Pablo. Eventually, all the swimmers tucker out. Pablo sets another record. And you win...a healthy dose of perspective. When the distances are tallied, predictably, Pablo's distance was 100x greater than the next nearest swimmer. But with your freshly-earned perspective, you realize that

none of you, not even Pablo, made it even half way, or 1/4 of the way, or even 5% of the way across the Atlantic—you're all "sub-5%-ers" when it comes to swimming the span of the ocean. This illustrates our need for grace. Without His grace, no one could even come close to bridging the massive righteousness gap between us and God.

GRACE IS GOD EVER-WELCOMING US INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH HIMSELF AS AN UNDESERVED GIFT.

We must receive the grace He extends to us in Christ and make it our bedrock. The basis for which we first are made right with God (salvation) and continue in fellowship with God (sanctification) must be the stabilizing reality of God's grace in Jesus. For this reason, I will use "Jesus" and "grace" interchangeably when I describe the bedrock God desires for our lives. Grace makes Jesus accessible. Jesus makes grace possible. We couldn't build a thing on Jesus if He were not accessible through grace. A relationship with God is something that we can grasp, something that we can build on. It was purchased for us by the person and work of Christ. But we must grasp it. It is a gift that must be received. And upon receiving that initial saving grace, we will be evermore welcomed into relationship closeness with God. If we reject saving grace in Christ, we are choosing to base our relationship with God on what we can earn. The grace stops there. Per your wishes, judgment awaits.

Grace cannot envelop your life if you don't initially receive it and become right with God. But once you do, grace forevermore becomes the basis on which you can keep relating to God with confidence. Grace in Christ is the only bedrock for beginning and remaining in a relationship with holy God. If we think otherwise, we've lost biblical perspective and have more in common with the Pharisees than we'd ever like to admit. The only way to have any stability in our relationship with God is by digging down until we hit the bedrock of grace—grace that is God ever-welcoming us into fellowship with Himself as an undeserved gift.



DIG DEEP

How comfortable are you with the reality of God's grace? Write down how you feel about ***how God feels about you*** in each of these scenarios...

...when you realized you were lost and in need of a Savior:

...right after you've given into temptation:

...when you've been demoted or fired at work:

...after you've hit a milestone of self-discipline or sobriety:

...when you've hurt your family through selfishness or neglect:

...when you compare your progress to the spiritual progress of others:



LAY DOWN

In J.D. Greear's book, *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary*, he suggests a daily "gospel prayer" to help believers stay anchored to the bedrock of God's ever-welcoming grace in Christ.

*There is nothing I have done that could make You love me less,
and nothing I could do that would make You love me more.*

The bedrock of God's grace means that in all those scenarios listed above, you were no less deserving of God's grace, or no more deserving of it, regardless of how you feel God feels about you. If we're ever going to live unshakeable lives, we need an unwavering rock upon which to build. His name is Jesus, and He welcomes us to come to Him for grace. Because that's who He is. Learn to get comfortable receiving the gift of God's grace, regardless of the scenario. If you don't, your foundation will be built on the shifting sands of emotions and untruths. Anything other than the bedrock of grace in Jesus is sure to fail.

Father, I don't speak the language of grace. It's not my native tongue. It's hard for my mind to wrap around, and my heart finds it even more difficult to receive. So help me to build every scenario of my life on the bedrock truth that You have, will, and will always extend grace in Christ. Help me to run to You for grace and mercy—I'll always keep needing it.



BUILD UP

Conduct a simple word-study on "grace" by going to biblegateway.com. Type "grac"(no "e") in the search field so it will pull variations of the word "grace," like "gracious." In a few seconds, all of the results will be categorized on the right hand side of the page by book of the Bible and the # of times that word is in that book. Start clicking through books of the Bible to see the thread of grace that runs cover to cover.

Use bullet points to describe the key characteristics of grace you discover from your search.

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UNSHAKEABLE BEDROCK, DAY 2:

SOLID ROCK

Grace in Jesus must undergird our salvation and sanctification.



LISTEN IN

You examine the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is those very Scriptures that testify about Me; and yet you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

John 5:39-40

Bedrock is the rock layer that sits below the soil upon which the substructure and superstructure of buildings are built. It is comprised of one of three types of rock, all of which can support thousands of pounds per square foot. Experts explain that bedrock is inert, meaning it doesn't move by expanding, contracting, or shifting, making it ideal for bearing even the enormous weight of the world's heaviest structures. Problems related to structural integrity above ground are avoided when anchored to the bedrock below the soil.

Cape Hatteras is a popular tourist beach just off North Carolina's Outer Banks in the center of our Eastern Atlantic Coast. Its iconic black and white striped landmark, our nation's tallest lighthouse, stood watch over a dangerous stretch of coastline called *The Graveyard of the Atlantic* for nearly 130 years, where thousands of vessels lay shipwrecked. When I was attending college in Norfolk, Virginia, local concern began to build that the historic landmark would soon collapse due to encroaching beach erosion. In a feat of engineering ingenuity, the pine timbers and granite that formed the 1870 brick lighthouse's original foundation were skillfully replaced with a lattice of steel beams that served as a temporary mobile foundation. Then, with a network of synchronized hydraulic jacks, the lighthouse was lifted 6' onto a carefully-devised system of rollers for relocation. On July 9, 1999, the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse was laid onto a new and fortified foundation on solid ground, safely distanced from the eroding shoreline.



Like the historic lighthouse, believers can find themselves on ground no longer capable of handling the violent beatings and steady erosion of life in a broken world.

Even though things may appear okay for now, a foundation built on unsteady ground will eventually be exposed as lacking—either upon a life that comes to ruin, or upon final inspection. Curiously, Jesus directs a warning to those who are wanting to please God by studiously engaging the Scriptures. He’s addressing devout Jews who have built their lives on dutifully keeping the Torah. In our day, these are the good guys, the modern-day church goer, those who attend Bible studies and who read the Bible for themselves. *“You examine the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life...and yet you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life”* (from John 5:39-40).

Mercifully, Jesus points out this surprising blind spot. Echoes of this John 5 warning are heard in Luke’s account of Jesus’s parable of the two builders: *“Everyone who comes to Me **and** hears My words and acts on them...”* (Luke 6:47, emphasis mine). Even a life built upon the Scriptures is no life at all unless it is accompanied by the solid ground of a relationship with Jesus. Otherwise, it’s a life built on sand. Ironically, individuals and groups who pride themselves on the Bible may not actually know the Savior who inspired the Scriptures to begin with. The Bible is indispensable to building an unshakeable life, if and only if Jesus is the rock upon which its understanding and application are built.

**EVEN A LIFE BUILT UPON THE SCRIPTURES IS NO LIFE
AT ALL UNLESS IT IS UNDERGIRD BY THE SOLID
GROUND OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS.**

The only bedrock of an unshakeable life that glorifies God is Jesus. He is the Creator for whom we were made (Colossians 1:15-18). He is the resurrected Lord, ascended and reigning as King of Kings as God brings all enemies under His footstool (Hebrews 10:12-14). He is the author of our faith, and its perfecter (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus is the only one who can bear the weight of *all* of our sins and *all* of our messy lives. Yet He never wears out, He never sleeps, never erodes, never changes. Jesus alone is our unshifting, solid bedrock.

Like the old lighthouse originally built on solid ground, time revealed that the ground was vulnerable to the elements over time. We cannot take for granted that our saving faith in Jesus automatically translates into an unshakeable life. *“Therefore, as you*

have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Colossians 2:6). We must not only have saving faith in Jesus, we must continue walking with Him in faith. Jesus’s parable shows us that it requires digging, and digging deep, to make sure that our life is laid upon the rock. It wasn’t easy to move the historic lighthouse to solid ground, but it was possible. You and I can likewise relocate our lives upon solid ground whenever the warning signs reveal we have built on the sand.

In 1984, before the Romanian Revolution, the communist dictator of Romania, Nicolae Ceaușescu, began a government building project in Bucharest that turned out to become the heaviest building in the world, tipping the scales at 4.5 million tons. In order to support such a massive structure, the regime bulldozed 1/5th of Bucharest, leveling Arsenal Hill and displacing 22 churches, 6 synagogues, and 30,000 residences. These were some of the sacrifices (I won’t mention the human suffering) made to properly build the massive structure on the level bedrock capable of bearing its load.



When it comes to building the unshakeable lives God desires for us, sacrifices need to be made to build on the solid bedrock of the person and work of Jesus. Our hearts will need to be examined and recalibrated. Our beliefs will need to be renewed. Idols will need to be displaced. Our time and finances will need to be reallocated. Missionary martyr Jim Elliot weighs in on such kingdom sacrifices,

“he is no fool to give what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

Elliot was right. The wise builder makes the temporary sacrifices necessary to build an unshakeable life for now and eternity.



DIG DEEP

A father would find it hurtful and offensive if his child only wanted his provisions but didn’t want to hear what he had to say. **How many times in a typical week do you pickup the Bible and read it?**

When you do read the Bible, do you write down what your Father, the God of the Universe, speaks to you through the Scriptures? YES or NO. Why or why not?

When you do read the Bible, do you talk to God about what He has revealed to you through the Scriptures? YES or NO. Why or why not?



LAY DOWN

The Journey is a discipleship process our church uses to train its participants with a simple method to engage God relationally (not just informationally) through His Word. It's called the S.T.A.R. method. **Whenever you read a verse that God's Spirit uses to emphasize something to you, use the S.T.A.R. method 1) to record and remember what He is saying to you, 2) to clarify your response, and 3) to talk with Him about how He is teaching and leading you through His Word. Below, the four elements of the S.T.A.R. method are described.**

S - Scripture Read – write down the reference, then write out the verse or phrase that God used to speak to you.

T - Truth Conveyed – write down the main idea God was getting across through that verse or phrase in context.

A - Application Required – write down what you believe God wants you to do in response to this Scripture. That may include confession, reconciliation with a brother, getting rid of distractions, taking your "next step" at church, or any other form of specific obedience to how God is leading you.

R - Response Given – conversationally pray back to God the Scripture you've read and the applications impressed upon you. Discuss with Him what you are depending on Him for, and your specific applications to it.

Write down the main idea(s) God is emphasizing to you through today's daily reading:

Now talk to Him (pray) about how He wants to apply that to your life.

Father, I know that the moment Jesus saved me, my eternal foundation was set squarely on Him. Yet building each day of the remainder of my life on Jesus is another story. Help me to see any blind spots I need to see. Help me not to just be religiously busy or knowledgeable and utterly miss You in the process. Thank You for calling me to come to You for an intimate and abiding relationship, to which my unshakeable life will be anchored.



BUILD UP

Reread each of the Scriptures referenced in today's daily reading. Underline or highlight the phrases you believe God is emphasizing to you. In response to God speaking through His Word, use the S.T.A.R. method of journaling below to engage God relationally through His Word and prayer.

UNSHAKEABLE BEDROCK, DAY 3:

COUNTERFEIT GRACE

Grace counterfeits can lead to self-effort or shame.



LISTEN IN

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let's hold firmly to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of our need.

Hebrews 4:15-16

Unbelievable. Within a two week period of time, a few light winter storms blew through Bryan. As a result, three mature oak trees in our back yard mysteriously broke off at the root and crashed to the ground. There's only 30 feet from the right side of my house to the neighbor's left side of his house—each of the trees fell lengthwise in the 15' foot side-yard on my side of the fence without hitting his home or mine. Even the fence between us remained intact. That's a grace story in itself, but I want to talk about what we were left with—three giant trees laying in my backyard.

A quote for \$1,400 to remove trees that *had already fallen* caused me to look for other options. I secured cheaper labor from my son and would-be son-in-law and bought or borrowed some needed tools for less than half that price. Because we had no clue what we were doing, it was a lot of trial and error. We quickly learned the importance of sharpened tools and YouTube'd tutorial videos whenever we were "stumped." Over the span of three or four weekends, we finally got the job done, or at least done well enough.

In that scenario, grace would have been the contractor doing all the work I needed done, and calling us square without receiving payment. The job would have been accomplished by him, at his own expense. I don't want to suggest that the value of God's grace is in the neighborhood of \$1,400, for grace cost God the incalculable price of His Son. What I am suggesting, however, is that when it comes to following Jesus as a disciple, that too often our default is to slip into self-effort. We D-I-Y our Christian progress rather than letting our lives be the outcome of an abiding relationship with Christ.

Do-it-yourself self-effort is a type of counterfeit grace that keeps our lives from becoming unshakeable for the glory of God. It finds its appeal in the awareness that

we have been saved by grace, and are now given a fresh start, a clean slate, a 2nd chance to try harder and do better for God than we did before. Like every lie of the enemy, there's just enough truth in that sentiment to resonate with our hearts. But if we look more carefully, we must notice that self-effort shuts Him out of the sanctification process. He didn't save us to give us a clean start only to be shut out. He saved us to give us a new way of living in fellowship with and dependance on Him, which is grace that transforms us from the inside out. As we're building our lives to be unshakeable, abiding in fellowship with and dependance on Christ is paramount.

HE DIDN'T SAVE US TO GIVE US A CLEAN START ONLY TO BE SHUT OUT.

We're getting pretty sophisticated in our methods of detecting counterfeit bills these days. The texture of the ink, colored fibers in the paper, the security ribbon, the serial numbers, and holographic watermarks all make spotting a counterfeit easier than ever.

But the best defense against being duped by a counterfeit bill is to know what the original looks like. We're going to look at another grace counterfeit, and conclude "that's not grace!" because we know what grace looks like! Remember, grace is God ever-welcoming us into fellowship with Himself as an undeserved gift. But too often believers keep their distance until they can clean up long enough to feel good about approaching Him for forgiveness and restored fellowship. We feel we've disappointed God, and no one likes to approach someone who is disappointed with them. Simply put, shame keeps us at arm's length.



This counterfeit is addressed in Hebrews, chapter 4, verses 15-16. On the basis of what Jesus did for us by His sacrifice, we are welcomed to approach Him confidently when we need His mercy and His grace. Not with confidence that we've earned it in some way, but with confidence that Jesus purchased for us the right to be children of God who approach their Father without hesitation or fear of rejection. Because we are in Christ, He receives us, and even feels for us (sympathizes). We are commanded to come to Him when we've blown it again (mercy) and just can't do it without Him

(grace). Why? It's because that's who God is, though we don't deserve it in the least. He loves us, and there is no longer any sin debt that remains between us. It's God's desire that we enter into fellowship with Him whenever we need or want to—it's the relationship He saved us for. That's grace!



DIG DEEP

The flip side of lack of confidence in God's welcoming grace would be inappropriate confidence in one's self-righteousness. Pride can be masked behind one's serious and sincere efforts to do what God expects of us. Though it may seem otherwise, confidence in one's self-righteous accomplishments does not indicate a high view of God's law. To the contrary, confidence in one's righteous performance indicates a view of God's law that is so low that we wrongly believe that righteousness can actually be attained without Him. If righteousness can be achieved apart from Christ, His sacrifice was altogether unnecessary (Galatians 2:21, Romans 3:20).

Write below the things about you, or the way you live, that tends to give you confidence in your relationship with God:

- .
- .
- .
- .

For each of these reasons, ask yourself if you are more deserving of God's acceptance and approval because of this list than if your list were empty. If your answer is yes, pray a sincere prayer asking God to help you better understand His grace and any blind spots to pride you may have.

One mark of Christian maturity is how (and how quickly) we respond when we sin. Think of the sin that you most easily give in to and answer the following questions.

How do you feel that He feels about you after you sin? What feelings do you typically project onto God?

What do you do in response to your sin? How do you finally bring resolution to it?

Underlying each of those counterfeits and countless others is a misunderstanding of the love of God toward His adopted sons and daughters through the ups and downs that are a part of the life-long process of sanctification. His mercy and grace

are ever-extended to His redeemed children in Christ. Some, however, feel that the general demeanor of God toward us is one of anger or disappointment. We may have confidence in our legal standing as a son or daughter by grace, but we feel like our Father is ever-disappointed with us.

A remedy for these misguided feelings can be administered by looking at the ways that God describes His heart toward (i.e. how He feels about) sinners. Throughout the Old Testament and the New, God described, and ultimately demonstrated on the cross, His love even *"while we were still sinners"* (Romans 5:8). He so loved the world of sinners that He sent His Son on a rescue mission to save them (John 3:16). The same mercy and grace now available to those in Christ has always been the predisposition of His heart toward all. The first recorded occasion of God revealing His heart toward humanity is recorded in the story of Moses getting a glimpse of His glory as He passed by in Exodus 33-34. There, God proclaimed this about Himself, *"The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but will by no means clear the guilty"* (Exodus 34:6-7a, ESV). Like a good Father, He is slow to anger and reluctant to punish the guilty, but is quick and eager to love, even at the greatest cost to Himself.

**TO BE SURE, HIS ANGER CAN BE STIRRED UP BY SINNERS,
BUT GOD NEVER HAS TO BE PROVOKED INTO LOVING THEM.**

To be sure, His anger can be stirred up by sinners, but God never has to be provoked into loving them. The pleasure of His heart was and is always to choose, save, and adopt sinners (Ephesians 1:6). He *"is not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Centuries before the cross, Ezekiel records God saying it this way, *"...As I live!" declares the Lord God, "I take no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live"* (Ezekiel 33:11).

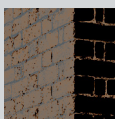
The kind demeanor of God toward sinners compels sinners to repent (Romans 2:4). The only difference between God's love toward the redeemed and His love for sinners is that He actually gets to love the redeemed—while sinners keep His love at arm's length. Christ removed every obstacle so that God could lavish the love, mercy, and grace on us that has always filled His heart for the lost. A shame-stricken son or daughter of God can approach a God that feels this way, even about unredeemed sinners, with confidence. This is grace!



LAY DOWN

As said before, our feelings about how God feels about us may affect our daily relationship with God more than His grace actually does. God wants to reverse that. What is true about God is true about God, not what we *feel* is true about God. When you find yourself hesitant to enter into fellowship with God *for whatever reason*, that should signal to you that you are resting on the shifting sand of your feelings, rather than the bedrock of God's grace. Those reasons need to be rooted out, understood, addressed, and overcome with the help of God's Spirit, His Word, and His people. Our church can help you with this. Our Discipleship Office is only a phone call or email away. You can review a specific way our church can help at fbcbryan.org/regen.

Father, I confess that far too often, I avoid intimacy with You when I need You the most. I know You deserve my unadulterated love and devotion, but I fall so far short of that with my pride, failure, and unfaithfulness. This disappoints me so much because I love You and You're worthy of so much more. But help me not to dishonor Your grace and the price Jesus paid to keep offering it to me by refusing it. I am ever-welcomed into fellowship with You to receive the grace and mercy I'll keep on needing, not because I've deserved it, but because it's Your pleasure to want it for me. Isn't it just like You to love and redeem me that much? Teach me how to trust Your love when my feelings tell me otherwise.



BUILD UP

Write a hypothetical (or real) letter to a Christian friend or family member who is distressed. They express strong beliefs and feelings that God is disappointed in them, and as a consequence they are unfit for closeness with God. They question God's unconditional love and acceptance when they still sin after they have been saved. They question why they are still prone to sin in particular ways. Their relationship with God feels like anything but unshakeable. **Explain the unshakeable relationship they have with God in Jesus whenever they sin, using Scripture to support your letter.**

How difficult was it for you to write this letter—were you at a loss for words? Do you feel confident that your letter is biblically accurate, or was your encouragement just wishful thinking? Do you feel adequately armed with the Scriptures that are needed whenever Satan, the accuser of the redeemed, heaps shame on you or someone you love? **Take a few minutes to read through Romans 6–8 and write down key truths you can use to encourage those who are struggling with remaining sin, and the aftermath of sin:**

UNSHAKEABLE BEDROCK, DAY 4:

SUSTAINING GRACE

Grace is expressed as strength in trial and weakness.



LISTEN IN

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in distresses, in persecutions, in difficulties, in behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Grace is God ever-welcoming us into fellowship with Himself as an undeserved gift. There's a nuance to God's welcoming grace we don't always pick up on. We start "getting it" when we understand that God offers the forgiveness of sins we do not deserve, nor could earn in the slightest. Then, we begin to understand that God bundled with that saving grace His continued acceptance of us, in Christ. We are ever-welcomed to receive grace and mercy in our time of need (which is always). Yet we tend to overlook the fact that when we enter into fellowship with God, He enters into our impossibilities. God steps into our weaknesses with His sustaining grace to help us. He abides with us in our trials, gives power in our inadequacies, and oversees the sanctification process for the duration of our lifetime. Grace saves us, grace keeps accepting us, and grace sustains us.

**GOD WANTED HIS GRACE TO ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING
IN PAUL'S LIFE THAT COULD ONLY BE DEMONSTRATED
THROUGH HIS WEAKNESS.**

The context of the passage above is when Paul made passing reference to a particular weakness that was a constant companion throughout his life (2 Corinthians 2:7). Perhaps you have one of those, too. Maybe it's a physical ailment, a haunting past, or an addiction stronghold. Paul prayed that God would just poof it away, but God

didn't. God wanted His grace to accomplish something in Paul's life that could only be demonstrated through his weakness. Scholars aren't really sure what Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was, but I'm glad he didn't tell us. Paul instead chose to address weakness generally. We all have one if not many weaknesses. In its broadest sense, God expects absolutely nothing good to spring from our lives apart from Him (John 15:5). We can therefore insert *any* weakness into the text and discover what is true about how God's grace will handle it.

God's gracious disposition toward us, demonstrated and guaranteed at the cross, means that however He handles our weaknesses will be done out of love for His children. Underneath His commitment to sanctify us lies a heart of love—He has no ill-will toward us that would want anything for us but our best. God's sustaining grace, at times, means the removal of a trial. Paul knew that. He remembered being miraculously released from his Philippian jail cell. But it seems God most often works in and through our trials. There are depths of God's sustaining grace that can only be forged through experiencing trials. James puts it like this, *"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing"* (James 1:2-4). Paul echoes this in Romans 5:3-5 by explaining that suffering produces endurance, character, and hope. And it's within this very context of our trials God's love is *"poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us"* (Romans 5:3). You see, God's grace binds Him to want what is best for us. And what is best for us is not the easiest of circumstances, but more of Jesus Himself.

Grace does its best work, not only in our difficulties and trials, but also through our limitations. God's power is demonstrated when strength is needed. Strength is needed to stand firm in temptation (Ephesians 6:11-14). It is also needed to do what is necessary to extend the reach of His kingdom through the sharing of the gospel (Philippians 1:27). God's sustaining grace is the *"surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe...in accordance with the working of the strength of His might"* (Ephesians 1:19). We do not wield our own strength to fight our defensive and offensive battles; we wield God's unlimited strength. Time and again throughout the Old Testament, God's people were the underdogs. They were outmatched. And so are we. Our enemies are too powerful, and our mission is impossible. But when we enter into His presence asking for the grace we need, He brings His grace into the setting of our weaknesses to overcome every enemy and to be fruitful in our mission, and He gets the glory for it.



DIG DEEP

Make a list specifying your unique weaknesses below (to save paper—we could do this all day!—limit yourself to the 5 most prominent ones):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. (an extra for good measure) _____



LAY DOWN

Father, when I consider my greatest weaknesses, I bring with them my failures, my heartaches, and my inadequacies. I can't handle them or overcome them without abiding in fellowship with and dependence on You. Reorient my life so that I will face my weaknesses, not apart from You, but by coming to You without fear or hesitation so that I can receive the grace, mercy, and rest You know I will keep needing for the rest of my life. Make my life unshakably built on Your sustaining grace.



BUILD UP

Write a letter expressing any unresolved disappointment you have with God for allowing certain trials in your life. Afterward, talk this through with Him, holding nothing back. Spend several minutes receiving, or asking Him for faith to receive, the love He wants to pour out on you through His Holy Spirit in the midst of these heartaches.

UNSHAKEABLE BEDROCK, DAY 5:

GLORIOUS GRACE

God's grace deserves our praise.



LISTEN IN

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He favored us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.

Ephesians 1:2-8a

Growing up, I always thought I'd never become like my dad. Somehow, though, I've grown to develop a soft spot for none other than History Channel documentaries, especially those that involve treasure. I just can't pass up an episode of *The Curse of Oak Island*, but if I do miss a Tuesday night episode, I am sure to stream it as soon as I get 40 minutes of down time. There's just something about the search for treasure that intrigues me. For 10 years, I've been waiting, no, *yearning* for that breakthrough episode when they *finally* unearth the Templar treasure worth all of this time, money, and effort (let the reader understand). They even tease that the ark of the covenant might be in that hoard! Okay, I'm totally hooked!

One of the show's central characters predictably reminds the viewer that every man-made object that is unearthed *is* historical treasure. To that, I say "fiddlesticks!" He's only saying that because they haven't found any *real* treasure. Let's be honest, we all know what a hoard of treasure looks like—and a broken button and crusty, misshapen ox shoe ain't it! We want to see something that is intrinsically valuable, weighty, shiny, and dare I say something we can take to the bank.



After addressing its recipients, Paul immediately begins his letter to the Ephesians describing such a treasure. What is it? It's grace! God's grace is what makes the manifold praiseworthy attributes of the infinite God of the universe accessible to our enjoyment. Were it not for God's grace, His mighty power, majestic splendor, righteous wrath, and radiant holiness would be overwhelmingly terrifying—even dangerous, to say the least. But grace bridges the gap between us and God's other excellencies. Grace ever-welcomes us into fellowship with *that* God!

Paul uses an unexpected combination of words to describe the treasure of God's grace. After recounting that it was God's pleasure from eternity past to choose, save, adopt, and ultimately sanctify us through Jesus Christ, Paul describes the *worth* of such grace. He uses a form of the word *doxa*, translated "glory" or "glorious," which indicates the substantial weightiness of something's or someone's greatness. Of the some 320 times glory is mentioned in Scripture, and 256 times praise is used, very rarely are they used in combination together. Whether used individually, or in combination together, "praise" and "glory" are words reserved primarily for celebrating or worshipping the personhood of God.

**GOD'S GRACE IS WHAT MAKES THE MANIFOLD
PRAISEWORTHY ATTRIBUTES OF THE INFINITE GOD OF THE
UNIVERSE ACCESSIBLE TO OUR ENJOYMENT.**

But in light of God's redemptive plan, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Paul directs our response *"to the praise of the glory of His grace"* (Ephesians 1:6). Go ahead, give praise to God's grace! Here, God Himself is giving permission to aim our praise, not just toward Himself, but toward the greatness and treasure of His grace! Grace is a treasure like no other. And it's completely fitting and appropriate to praise the glory of His grace, because God's grace is displayed most radiantly in the person and work of God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:3).

Said another way, God's grace is praiseworthy and glorious and should not be underestimated. When we are "in Christ," all of who God is extends toward us favorably, just as it does toward His own Son. *"Just as the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you..."* (John 15:9). We don't have to worship God from afar. We are welcomed into His family to treasure Him and be transformed by Him. For the Father loves His adopted children every bit as much as He loves the Son. *"...You loved them, just as You loved Me"* (John 17:23b). Since we are "in Christ," there is a bedrock of

grace that undergirds everything about our relationship with God that not even our indwelling and besetting sins can dislodge. We give our sin too much credit; it's been forever disarmed through Christ on the cross. Thus, God ever-welcomes us into fellowship with Himself as an undeserved gift. And it's in that fellowship with Him that He does His greatest sanctifying work. And we can take that to the bank.



DIG DEEP

You've heard it said before to count your blessings. **In the space provided below, write down the aspects of God's grace you are most grateful for:**



LAY DOWN

Father, I know I haven't scratched the surface of the treasure trove of grace that You have toward me. There is no measuring the dimensions of Your love. But I am so grateful for what I have comprehended of grace. Specifically, I am thankful for:

Thank You for ever-welcoming me into fellowship with Yourself as a gift that I'll never deserve. In light of this, increase my humility to need You, my love to want You, my speed in running to You, and my consistency in abiding in You. Amen.



BUILD UP

Use an internet search or church hymnal to survey the hymns or songs that have been written about God's grace. Whenever a song, or lines from a song, grip your heart, pray and/or sing them back to the Father of grace.

UNSHAKEABLE BEDROCK, DAY 6:

REVIEW & REFLECT

Take a moment to review days 1 - 5 of this week. **Identify the truths that struck you as most significant to the kingdom God is building, in part through your unshakeable life. Write them below:**

Write down any questions you have about the content from this chapter you are unsettled about:

What are some things you will begin doing, or stop doing, in response to what you learned this week?

What is something you'd be willing to share with your GroupLife class this Sunday about what God showed you this week?

UNSHAKEABLE BEDROCK, DAY 7:

WORSHIP AND GROUPLIFE

GROUPLIFE TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from GroupLife that God emphasized to you today:

SERMON TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from today's sermon that God emphasized to you:

YOUR RESPONSE TO GOD SPEAKING AT CHURCH TODAY:



UNSHAKEABLE FOUNDATION

WEEK 3

*God is worthy of our absolute
trust and total surrender.*

UNSHAKEABLE FOUNDATION, DAY 1:

GOD SPEAKS

What is true about God is revealed in the Bible.



LISTEN IN

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

Hebrews 1:1-3a

So far, we have looked together at two aspects of the unshakeable life. First, we explored features of the kingdom that God has been (and is still) building and our place in that kingdom. Then, we looked at the bedrock of God's mercy and grace in the person and work of Jesus, upon which our salvation and our sanctification are built. This unchanging bedrock of grace is what makes our relationship with God stable, good, and certain. Now let us consider the foundation that must be laid upon that bedrock of grace.

In the parable of the two builders, the wise builder dug deep down to bedrock level, and on that bedrock laid a foundation (Luke 6:48; Matthew 7:24). In today's everyday language, the word "foundation" is imprecise. It can mean different things, depending on whether an architectural engineer is using the term, or whether it's being used by a first time homebuyer with a degree in poultry science (no offense intended). To avoid any confusion, we are going to allow the parable to describe what is meant by the term "foundation," and how we'll use it throughout the remainder of your *Unshakeable Personal Journal*.

The parable describes the wise builder digging "*down deep*," which indicates *vertical* direction. Hitting bedrock, this foundation would attach to and hold *up* the structure that is above. This would be analogous to the piers, columns, and piles (or pillars) used under buildings today. In the Luke 6 sermon, Jesus uses the Greek word *themelion*, translated "foundation" in its noun form to describe this vertical substructure. In the Matthew 7 version of the parable, He uses a verb form of the same word, translated "*for it [the house] had been founded*" [on the rock]. So, moving forward, when we refer to the foundation, we are talking about the substructure layer placed directly on top of the bedrock (but you can keep calling what's directly underneath your flooring a foundation if you want to). In the next chapter, we will look at the beam or slab layer

that is horizontally laid upon those vertical foundation pillars upon which the house is then built.

Rocky Fleming, author of our Journey Group resources, elaborates on the spiritual significance of the foundation layer that connects our lives to the bedrock of grace. He begins with the no-nonsense premise that people won't absolutely surrender their lives to a God they don't absolutely trust. The potency of Adam & Eve's temptation was because it planted a seed of mistrust. The enemy's lies had enough ring of truth to them that Adam and Eve misplaced their trust in the deceiver's lie that God was holding back something better from them. If someone feels that God is holding back on them, they won't have the kind of trust *in* Him to entrust their lives *to* Him. Instead, to their own detriment, they are going to entrust their lives to the shifting sands of intuition, emotions, cultural messages, coping habits, or any number of other things that will prove to be shifting sand.

**IF SOMEONE FEELS THAT GOD IS HOLDING BACK ON
THEM, THEY WON'T HAVE THE KIND OF TRUST IN HIM
TO ENTRUST THEIR LIVES TO HIM.**

The bedrock of grace goes a long way to illicit a believer's trust. Knowing that God's natural disposition (Exodus 34:6), pleasure (Ephesians 1:5), and plan (Ephesians 1:4-5, 8-10) is to lavish the *"riches of His grace"* upon us is a game-changer (Ephesians 1:7-8). Jesus's work on the cross completely removes every barrier that would keep God from loving us that way. Relationship with Him is actually possible, all the time. But the kind of trust that results in a life of total surrender to God requires that He is not *just* loving, but that He possesses qualities that bring about total trust. These characteristics of God will form the critical foundation pillars upon which we would gladly build an unshakeable life on Jesus and His words.

Jesus alludes to one of these foundation pillars in our primary text: *"these words of mine"* (Matthew 7:24; Luke 6:47). The first pillar is God Speaks. This will be the focus of the remainder of today's daily reading. Looking ahead is the pillar God Knows, which is implied from the description of the builder as *"wise"* (Matthew 7:24). The remaining pillars are implied, though not specifically stated in this particular parable. We could label the remaining foundation pillars in different ways, but Rocky's simple and memorable descriptions get to the heart of it: *God Cares*, *God's Able*, and *God's Willing*. Together, they form five foundation pillars that undergird the trust required to build an unshakeable life on Jesus.

So, when Jesus says to hear His words, He is describing the truths of the God Speaks pillar. Without God speaking, there would be no Bible, there would be no ministry of the Spirit to illuminate and apply God's Word, there would be no sword of the Spirit, no scriptural lamp to guide our feet, and most fundamentally, *there would be nothing at all!!!* For creation itself was made through God's spoken Word!" *Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light"* (Genesis 1:3). Setting aside that last fact, without God speaking, only guesswork and unanchored hope would remain. The world is filled with religious systems built on the wishful thinking of mankind trying to understand and take hold of God. But while mankind was busy trying to reach up to God, God spoke. He revealed (and reveals) Himself through creation, His Word, and His Son. The greek term translated "word" is *logos*, which essentially means a thought or message expressed. The Bible is God's written *logos*. Jesus is the eternal *Logos* who was with God, was God, and is God (John 1:1). Both reveal the truth God is expressing to us.

The *God Speaks* pillar bears the heaviest load. It is an indispensable part of the foundation because it validates that all of the other pillars' claims about God's actual characteristics are sourced from His self-revelation and are therefore true. God's Word can be trusted because He breathed it out. He is unable to be less than forthcoming, less than true, uninformed, misguided, or wrongly motivated. And because He is the source of His Word, it is likewise true, without error, and exactly right. *"All Scripture is breathed out by God..."* (2 Timothy 3:16a). It is the information source we need to hear, understand, and act on. His Word is unchanging because He is unchanging. It provides stability and a reference point of truth against which to evaluate other truth claims. As we build our unshakeable lives, God's Word gives us the confidence that what we are building our lives on, and how we go about building them, is actually the right way because His Word is the source.

God's Word is true, but it's not only true. *"For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart"* (Hebrews 4:12). God's Word is alive and active. It interacts with us, and pokes around and biopsies the deepest parts of our hearts, minds, souls, and emotions. It's the only book that reads us. And along with an accurate diagnosis, God's Word provides the cure.

When God speaks, His words are accomplished. Creation bursts forth, light materializes, stars and galaxies are exhaled, life begins, healing happens, and the dead are raised. Jesus commanded the natural and the supernatural, humans and spiritual beings—with just the sound of His voice. His words have power, because they are *His* words. And God's written Word will likewise be no less powerful or effective. If they are *Jesus's* words, we can have our full confidence that they are true and will accomplish what God purposed when He spoke them. Without God's Word, there is nothing to build upon, and nothing worth building; your guess is as good as mine. But

praise the Lord that we are not without His Word. We can build our lives on what it says is true about Him, about us, and about the unshakeable life He desires for us.



DIG DEEP

In the left column, identify a number of issues in your life you have difficulty “absolutely trusting” God about. For each issue, try to keep your description to a few words:

.	.
.	.
.	.
.	.

Beside each issue, in the column to the right, write down what you are *instead* trusting about that issue (beliefs, emotions, people, etc.).



LAY DOWN

Draw a diagram that represents the bedrock and the 5 vertical foundation pillars that rest upon it. Label the bedrock “grace in Jesus” and the central foundation pillar “God Speaks.”

Father, Thank You for speaking. Thank You for revealing Yourself through Your Word. Help me self-feed on the Scriptures more, so that I’m hearing Your voice on more than just Sundays. I need Your perspective so I can better understand how to understand my issues rightly and entrust them to You, instead of lesser things, thus bringing glory to Your grace.



BUILD UP

Type one of your trust issues into the search field at **gotquestions.org**. You will be taken to an analysis of the key scriptures related to it. If there is a range of understanding about that issue, they typically do a good job of fairly representing the views from a biblical perspective.

Go to the extensive list of free online resources that is available at **<https://www.texasbaptists.org/ministries/discipleship/adult-discipleship/the-study>** Spend some time perusing the resources and expanding your collection of preferred online resources for further study.

Consider again your list of trust issues. Do you know what the Bible says about each issue? You may know a few verses about those issues, but a few verses are likely describing the issue from a limited perspective. You may be missing out on more essential truths described in other passages. It is the full counsel of God's Word that paints a complete picture. The traditional resource for looking at a topic would be in a topical index in the back of a study bible, or a stand alone concordance. You can purchase a concordance that corresponds to your translation of the Bible. In it, you'll find an alphabetical listing of topics with a list of verses where that word is used in your Bible. Then look them all up for a fuller picture. You can also go to **biblehub.com** to search across all English translations and multiple concordances with a single search, instantly. With the list of issues listed above, do a printed or online concordance search on the issue in which you lack absolute trust in God.

UNSHAKEABLE FOUNDATION, DAY 2:

GOD KNOWS

God knows everything there is to know about each one of us.



LISTEN IN

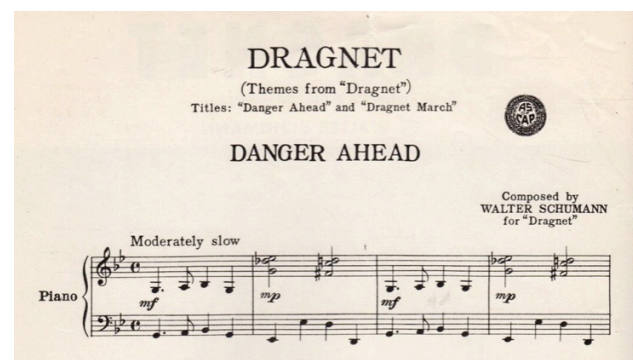
*Lord, You have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I get up;
You understand my thought from far away.
You scrutinize my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before there is a word on my tongue,
Behold, Lord, You know it all.
You have encircled me behind and in front,
And placed Your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is too high, I cannot comprehend it.*

Psalm 139:1-6

Dum d'dum dum. "Just the facts, Ma'am." If you've been around a few years, those four unforgettable bass notes and four-word catch-phrase likely brings to mind the 1950's radio-turned-TV show *Dragnet*, featuring actor Jack Webb as detective Sgt./Lt. Joe Friday.

Dum d'dum dum. Joe Friday was a no non-sense detective who dispatched a rough-around-the-edges expression and tone when questioning suspects. He not only applied that just-the-facts approach to his interrogations, but fit the facts together to solve his puzzling cases by each episode's end. That's where the pillar *God Speaks* leaves us. With just the facts. So what are the facts about the *God Knows* foundation pillar? We're going to look at two verses representative of key aspects of this pillar.

"Omniscient." Let's start there. The word is derived from the Latin *scientia*, "knowledge," amplified by *omni*, meaning "all." Simply put: God knows everything. That's a God-sized claim. Let's see if God *really* revealed Himself as the omniscient, all-knowing God in the Scriptures He inspired. A good place to start is with biblical statements about His general knowledge of



everything. But because we are talking about building *your* unshakeable life on this foundation pillar, we can't stop there. We'll also zero in on what He knows about you. Just the facts.

God has infinite knowledge of everything. In part, this flows from the fact that He is omnipresent (everywhere, all the time). It would be hard to *not* know everything if you're right there to observe it. But even more, His omniscience originates from God as Creator. God created everything into time and space, with all of its complexity, in a way that actually works according to His design. The laws of physics, the genius of DNA, a bird's flight, the anatomy of an eye, astronomy, subatomic particles, mathematics, and our magnificent brains—everything that exists was engineered in the mind of God before He spoke it into being. Absolutely incredible! Ordered complexity cannot be produced by random chance, much less out of nothing. How could God not know everything about what He conceived of, then actually made?



God's general knowledge:

"He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them. Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite" (Psalm 147:5).

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is unsearchable" (Isaiah 40:28).

He knows everything about you:

"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we must answer" (Hebrews 4:13).

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I also have been fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

He knows our actions:

"Great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of mankind, giving to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds" (Jeremiah 32:19).

"Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of human hearts; and then praise will come to each person from God" (1 Corinthians 4:5).

He knows what we say:

"Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, Lord, You know it all" (Psalm 139:4).

"But I tell you that for every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).

He knows our hearts:

"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him wholeheartedly and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever" (1 Chronicles 28:9).

"Would God not find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart" (Psalm 44:21).

He knows our thoughts:

"You know when I sit down and when I get up; You understand my thought from far away." (Psalm 139:1-2).

"And knowing their thoughts, Jesus said to them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and no city or house divided against itself will stand'" (Matthew 12:25).

He knows our needs:

So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him... For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matthew 6:8, 32).

"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

I love Psalm 139, because in one fell swoop David delineates the foundation pillar *God Knows*. In this one chapter, we see that God made us and sees us and therefore knows everything about where we are and what we're thinking, doing, feeling, and saying—and why. This Psalm, and the foundational pillar it describes, is so comprehensive, so exact, so precise, that we can be certain that if there's anything to know about us, God does know it. What we don't have a clue about ourselves, God knows and

understands exhaustively. But God doesn't *just* know. Just the fact that He knows and sees everything about me from the inside out could be unsettling, if not dreadful. He could, for example, use that knowledge against us. We also need to know more about Him that would move our hearts to absolutely trust Him. Which, tomorrow, brings us to our next foundation pillar—*God Cares*.



DIG DEEP

How do you feel about the fact that God knows everything about you, from the inside, out? What emotion(s) does that fact illicit? Do you cringe in shame, well up in comfort, or breathe a sigh of relief? Describe your feelings about the pillar God Knows:

Write out the verse above that left the biggest impression on you today:



LAY DOWN

Father, the facts about Your omniscience are shaping a foundation I can trust. There's some discomfort knowing that it's futile to keep secrets from You. For that reason, I pause to confess and ask forgiveness for the sins we haven't previously talked about:

Now, help me to remember, that in Christ, my sin has been comprehensively punished and paid for in full. Wrath toward me is no longer a thing, only because of Jesus. So help me to lean into Your mercy and grace to receive the help that I need as Your son or daughter. And don't just know me from the inside out, love me from the inside out, and change me from the inside out, too.



BUILD UP

There are many other facts to be uncovered in the Scriptures that form the foundation pillar *God Knows*. Write down any verses with which you are already familiar that also underscore this fact about God that was not mentioned.

You are encouraged to explore the following Old Testament references: 1 Samuel 2:3. 1 Kings 8:39. 2 Kings 19:27. 2 Chronicles 16:9. Job 28:24; 31:4. Psalm 11:4; 37:23; 44:21; chapter 139. Proverbs 3:5-6; 15:3; 30:8-9. Isaiah 46:9-10. Jeremiah 16:17; 17:10; 29:11. Malachi 3:16.

Here are also some New Testament references you won't want to overlook: Luke 11:11-13; 16:15. John 21:17. Acts 1:24; 15:8. Romans 8:27; 14:11. 1 Corinthians 3:13; 10:13. 1 John 3:20.

Pick one of the verses above. Use the STAR method of journaling to discuss this verse, and its implications for your life, in prayerful conversation with the Lord:

S (Scripture read):

T (Thought conveyed)

A (Application made)

R (Response given):

UNSHAKEABLE FOUNDATION, DAY 3:

GOD CARES

Everything God knows about us, He cares about.



LISTEN IN

Are two sparrows not sold for an assarion? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not fear; you are more valuable than a great number of sparrows.*

Matthew 10:29-31

*A roman copper coin, sometimes translated "penny," valued at 1/16th a denarius—a field laborer's daily wage.

God Speaks. God Knows. God Cares. God cares about all of the things that He knows about you—things pertaining your body, soul, heart, and mind. He doesn't use all of these details about us to make a case against us. He is for us. If you do not know Him personally, He is wanting you to repent, turn away from your sins, and receive Him by faith. God would not delight in having to judge you. He wants you to be saved. If you do know Him personally through the person and work of Jesus, you can know that God is dead set on lavishing His love on His adopted sons and daughters (which will require painful discipline at times, to be sure; see Hebrews 12:4-12).

The entire Bible itself speaks to the fact that God cares enough about mankind to bother with us at all. It would have been perfectly legitimate for God to create us, and like an artist unhappy with a painting, start all over from scratch, or create something else altogether. But God's heart, mind, and plans were to create us, love us, and pursue us through the ebbs and flows of history culminating in eternity *with us*. He didn't have to. How much do we matter to God? We are of such value to Him that God the Son came down to live sinlessly, just so He could pay the penalty for our sins on the cross as a blameless substitute. The big picture tells us emphatically that we matter to God, He loves us, and He has provided a way to return us to an unhindered relationship with Himself in which we can abide daily and enjoy forever.

What are some of the facts about the foundation pillar *God Cares*? How did God use the Scriptures to paint the picture that He takes all that He knows about us and uses it for our good? Consider today's "LISTEN IN" verse for starters. Even tiny birds and their comings and goings do not go unnoticed by God. Yet He not only notices them, He ensures they are fed (Matthew 6:26). He cares for them. He also describes Himself throughout the Scriptures as a Shepherd that takes care of His sheep. Among other passages, Psalm 23 and John 10 paint that picture for us. He cares for His

sheep without being asked to. He knows what the sheep need and tends to them based on His extensive knowledge of sheep. What about us? God knows everything about us, even the number of hairs (that may or may not be) on our heads, and with that knowledge considers us worth dying for. Yes! If God cares for the sparrows, He certainly cares for us! We're much more valuable than birds to Him.

**GOD DOESN'T JUST CARE FOR US BY KNOWING OUR
NEEDS AND PROVIDING FOR US; HE DEMONSTRATES
CARE BY HOW HE ENGAGES US ON THE HEART LEVEL.**

God doesn't just care for us by knowing our needs and providing *for* us; He demonstrates care by how He engages us on the heart level. Some parents may tragically feel as though their obligation to their children ends when they "bring home the bacon." Physical provisions may meet our physical needs, but it does little for us relationally. To fully entrust our lives to God, we need to know He is attentive to our hearts, feels for us, and enters in with understanding to minister to us according to our needs. Review the Scriptures below and zero in on the emotional language God uses to express His care for our hearts.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...you will find rest for your souls" (from Matthew 11:28-29).

"Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:7).

"You who are my Comforter in sorrow, my heart is faint within me" (Jeremiah 8:18).

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Psalm 147:3).

"Praise be to...the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles" (from 2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

"I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat" (Mark 8:2).

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!...The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (from Philippians 4:4-7).

"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:11).

"having cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares about you" (1 Peter 5:7).

"You have taken account of my miseries; Put my tears in Your bottle..." (Psalm 56:8).

"and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:21-23, NIV).

"...I will never desert you, nor will I ever abandon you" (Hebrews 13:5b).



DIG DEEP

Without mentioning the cross, and with the above Scriptures in mind, what fact about the foundation pillar God Cares sets your heart or mind at ease?

What's your spiritual love language? Meaning, what about God makes you feel most cared for—His provision for you or His ministry to your heart? Perhaps it's something else. Describe your spiritual love language below:



LAY DOWN

Father, Your real-time care and concern for me builds my trust. I know that even in the most difficult issues in my life, I can entrust them to You. You are gentle with my heart. Thank You for being my Good Shepherd that I belong to. You know me so well and because You are good, Your care for me is thorough even in the smallest things, yet is enormous enough to extend all the way to Calvary.



BUILD UP

List all of the ways that God demonstrates His care in the 3 parables of Luke 15.

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Then use the STAR method with the verse that is most striking to you, conversing with God and responding to Him.

S (Scripture read):

T (Thought conveyed)

A (Application made)

R (Response given):

UNSHAKEABLE FOUNDATION, DAY 4:

GOD'S WILLING

God is willing to meet the needs He knows and cares about.



LISTEN IN

Now which one of you fathers will his son ask for a fish, and instead of a fish, he will give him a snake? Or he will even ask for an egg, and his father will give him a scorpion? So if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

Luke 11:11-13

God Speaks. God Knows. God Cares. And God's Willing. When foundation pillars are being constructed, they are vulnerable to a number of internal factors that could lead to failure. Especially this one. Great care has to be taken to ensure that the *God's Willing* pillar's integrity remains intact. If its internal composition is mixed with inconsistencies and weaknesses, it could lead to foundation problems down the road that could threaten one's willingness to live with absolute trust and surrender. Eventually, this will compromise one's experience of an unshakeable life and witness.

The *God's Willing* pillar answers this critical trust question: *Is God willing to answer my prayer and help me?* If He is willing, trust obviously swells. But if He's not willing to help, it's unlikely we'll be willing to abandon ourselves to God and His kingdom purposes. Note that this is actually a two-part question. Part 1: Is God willing to help? Part 2: Is God willing to answer my prayers? But our hearts don't often care about that distinction. When God doesn't answer our prayers *in the way that we are asking Him to*, we can conflate the two questions. On the heart level, we may conclude that God is *not* willing to help in our time of need, when He actually has important reasons—reasons that are better for us—for not honoring our requests.

He is our good Father and loves to give good gifts to His children, far better than we do! (Matthew 7:11). He is willing, eager even, to answer our requests. Consider the trail of promises dropped throughout the New Testament. When reading these verses, there leaves little room for doubt that He stands willing and ready to grant our requests.

"And whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive it all" (Matthew 21:22).

"And whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14).

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

"This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1 John 5:14-15).

To properly understand the *God's Willing* pillar, we must look at it through the lens of God's kingdom. *God's kingdom defines the scope of how God answers our prayers.* God will answer our prayers as we wish, *so long that they advance His kingdom agenda.* Think about it, how *could* a holy God give us anything that would compromise the rule and reign of Jesus in our lives? He sees this bigger picture. And whether or not Jesus is your first love and first place in your life is more important than anything else. It is also unequivocally what is best for us. Among many other things, God has to factor in the condition of your heart and life.

Allow me to illustrate. My 10 year old son, Mason, is a child of the 2020's. He's never known a time when a handful of digital screens weren't a normal part of His life. For good or bad, screens are here to stay. So when Mason asks us if he can have some screen time, it's not an issue of whether or not we will eventually give him the screen time for which he is asking. In real-time, we are most likely to say "no." Why? Because in this stage of Mason's development, we are most concerned about what is going on in his mind and heart. As loving parents, we are asking ourselves, "What is Mason's attitude like right now? What's it been like lately? What happened at school today? How much screen time has he had lately? Is his heart getting too attached to screens? Is his life getting out of balance?" Similarly, God is delighted to give you what you are asking for if it is actually *good* for you right now (Luke 11:11-13). We can either view these delays as evidence God is not willing, or as evidence that His willingness is constrained by what He knows and the fact that He cares.

This gets at the heart of an important issue. There are things that we can do or fail to do that hinder God's willingness to grant our requests. Let's look at an Old and New Testament example of what might hinder His willingness. *"If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear; But God has heard; He has given attention to the sound of my prayer. Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer nor His favor from me"*(Psalm 66:18-20).

Notice how the Psalmist explains this. He begins with listing the hindrance of harboring sin in one's heart. He leads out by explaining from the get-go that the sinful condition of one's heart diminishes God's willingness. If I've bumped Jesus off the throne of my heart, I can expect my selfish prayers to go nowhere. God won't support that departure from His kingdom agenda. But then the Psalmist moves past that point. So long as treasured sin isn't an issue, God is more than willing. He hears attentively and deserves praise for His willingness to receive our prayers and lavish His favor on us.

**WE CAN EITHER VIEW THESE DELAYS AS EVIDENCE
GOD IS NOT WILLING, OR AS EVIDENCE THAT HIS
WILLINGNESS IS CONSTRAINED BY WHAT HE KNOWS
AND THE FACT THAT HE CARES.**

Likewise, James points out that God is willing, so long as it extends the kingdom rule and reign of Christ in our hearts and lives. But he explains that's not always the case. There are reasons we ask and do not receive. *"You ask and do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, so that you may spend what you request on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God"* (James 4:3-4). James uses strong language here that highlights the seriousness of the issue. If God were to give what was asked in this situation, He would be rewarding spiritual adultery against God. Our idolatries are relational unfaithfulness to the God that loves us. God cannot answer our requests that promote further idolatries.

There are other reasons God may not answer our prayers that we don't fully understand. He factors in His knowledge of all possibilities in the future. He has specific plans that He *will* bring about. He sees how your requests affect all of the other people that are praying and that He cares for. And with free will and sin in the world, He allows brokenness to run its course to the extent that is perfectly right and just. But know this, God is willing, and He has the heart of a perfect Father that is eager to meet your need and bless you in every way that is possible.



DIG DEEP

What prayer request that God did not grant was most difficult for you to accept? Of the reasons listed above, in hindsight, how have you reconciled that *God's Willing* with how He answered this prayer?

Sometimes we harbor disillusionment with God. **Disillusionment happens when our inaccurate view of God fosters an expectation of God that He is unable to fulfill.** How do each of the other foundation pillars guard against the disappointment of disillusionment?

God Speaks

God Knows

God Cares



LAY DOWN

Father, You are good. I'm growing to trust You. I know that Your heart is willing, but there are other reasons why You must override my request...including the condition of my own heart. Reorient my inner being to desire Your kingdom first and foremost, so that nothing will mean more to me than the rule and reign of Christ in my life. And as a result, to seek Your kingdom come and Your will to be done in all of my needs and requests.



BUILD UP

Life is difficult. Prayers go seemingly unanswered by a God that's actually willing. **One of the hindrances to absolute trust and absolute surrender is past disillusionment with God.** If there are disappointments with God over things you've been unwilling or unable to move past, the first step is to acknowledge them. There's space to write them out here.

After acknowledging your disappointment, know that God cares how you feel and wants to enter into your disappointment and minister to you with grace and truth. Ask God to do just that. *"God examine me, and minister to me, to bring understanding and healing to this disappointment."* He is willing to meet you where you are and begin the kingdom work you are asking Him to do.

UNSHAKEABLE FOUNDATION, DAY 5:

GOD'S ABLE

God has unlimited ability to meet your needs.



LISTEN IN

Why should the nations say, "Where, then, is their God?"

But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

Their idols are silver and gold, The work of human hands.

They have mouths, but they cannot speak;

They have eyes, but they cannot see;

They have ears, but they cannot hear;

They have noses, but they cannot smell;

They have hands, but they cannot feel;

They have feet, but they cannot walk;

They cannot make a sound with their throat.

Those who make them will become like them,

Everyone who trusts in them.

Israel, trust in the Lord;

He is their help and their shield.

House of Aaron, trust in the Lord;

He is their help and their shield.

You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord;

He is their help and their shield.

Psalm 115:2-11

It would do us little good if *God's Willing*, *God Cares*, *God Knows*, and *God Speaks* if He were not also able to follow through. But because *God's Able*, He is capable of fully responding to us, not only with sympathy and presence, but also with His omnipotent, all-powerful help that He knows we need. *God's Able* is the fifth pillar that forms the foundation upon which our absolute trust and surrender, and our unshakeable lives, are built.

Notice the structure of Psalm 115. There is a crystal clear contrast between the *omnipotence* of God and the *impotence* of man-made idols. God is fully able to respond as our help and shield. Not so ourselves, or the false idols that we ourselves make. It's shocking how often we trust ourselves even though we know full well that life is bigger than we're able to handle. That's what sin does; it blinds us to the power

of God, causing us to mistrust Him and turn to that which has no power to help. *"For My people have committed two evils: They have abandoned Me, The fountain of living waters, To carve out for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That do not hold water"* (Jeremiah 2:13).

**IT'S SHOCKING HOW OFTEN WE TRUST OURSELVES EVEN
THOUGH WE KNOW FULL WELL THAT LIFE IS BIGGER THAN
WE'RE ABLE TO HANDLE.**

Some things feel too big for even God to remedy. But they're not. He's able to address any problem, overcome any obstacle, and overthrow any enemy to help us in ways that advance the kingdom reign of Jesus. That may best be seen in His promise that no matter the circumstances thrown upon us, or the brokenness that comes from within us, God is not *only* willing, and He is not *only* able, but He actually *does* turn everything around so that the outcome is for our good and His glory. *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28).

Suffering from what's happened through no fault of your own? Satan will not get the final word. Struggling to overcome a stronghold? God will use even those temporary victories of the enemy to orchestrate a deeper sanctification. The ultimate picture of this is God's ability and determination to turn the cross of Friday into Sunday's resurrection. Even death didn't have the final say with Jesus. And because we are in Christ, victory over death is our inheritance, too. And we don't even have to wait to tap into God's resurrection power; it's available to us now.

Don't believe that? God's ability doesn't require your belief to be true. Paul says that your eyes need to be opened. *"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know...the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places"* (from Ephesians 1:18-20). The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to us. God's power then is God's ability now. God *"is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us"* (Ephesians 3:20). The only things that can keep what God is able to do in our lives from being done are the hindrances we cling to. We will talk about these hindrances next week with a chapter called *Unshakeable Faith*.



DIG DEEP

How do you feel about the foundation pillar *God's Able*? **Write down any fears you have in putting your absolute trust and total surrender in God's ability?**

What do you think about the foundation pillar *God's Able*? **Write out any doubts you have about God's ability to be your help and shield.**

Draw a diagram that represents the bedrock and the 5 vertical foundation pillars that rest upon it. Label the bedrock and each of the 5 vertical foundation pillars.



LAY DOWN

Write down a list of things that only God could do that would further the kingdom reign of Jesus in your life, those in your places of influence, and in the world we live in. Commit to add these things to your prayer list (pro tip: it may be helpful for you to setup digital prayer reminders).

Father, thank You for being everything I need You to be for me to completely trust You and entrust my life to You. For some crazy reason, I'm too often willing to turn to other things to be my help and shield, other than You—especially when things are beyond my control. Increase Your kingdom reign in me.



BUILD UP

Use an online bible study tool to conduct a word search for “power” and “might”. Quickly survey the Scriptures that result. When you see one that strikes you as encouraging or exceptional, write down the reference with a few identifying words. Review your list and use the STAR method to discuss a few of these verses with the Lord.

S (Scripture read):

T (Thought conveyed)

A (Application made)

R (Response given):

UNSHAKEABLE FOUNDATION, DAY 6:

REVIEW & REFLECT

Take a moment to review days 1 - 5 of this week. **Identify the truths that struck you as most significant to the kingdom God is building, in part through your unshakeable life. Write them below:**

Write down any questions you have about the content from this chapter you are unsettled about:

What are some things you will begin doing, or stop doing, in response to what you learned this week?

What is something you'd be willing to share with your GroupLife class this Sunday about what God showed you this week?

UNSHAKEABLE FOUNDATION, DAY 7:

WORSHIP AND GROUPLIFE

GROUPLIFE TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from GroupLife that God emphasized to you today:

SERMON TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from today's sermon that God emphasized to you:

YOUR RESPONSE TO GOD SPEAKING AT CHURCH TODAY:



UNSHAKEABLE FAITH

WEEK 4

*Faith is entrusting your life to
our trustworthy God.*

UNSHAKEABLE FAITH, DAY 1:

ACTIVE FAITH

Faith is visibly demonstrated in our actions.



LISTEN IN

But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to acknowledge, you foolish person, that faith without works is useless? Was our father Abraham not justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone...For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

From James 2:18-26.

It's time to start building. Our foundation has been laid upon the unshifting bedrock of grace in Christ. Our foundation is strong, fortified by the utterly trustworthy heart and ability of God, molded to bear the weight of an unshakeable life. Upon the sturdy composition of each vertical foundation pillar, a horizontal slab or beam layer must be laid down. This horizontal layer will connect the supportive substructure underground to the superstructure above ground. Practically speaking, what connects the foundational truths about God to the lives God is wanting us to build?

In the Old Testament, the word "faith" wasn't used, except in variations of the word "faithful," or "keep/break faith with." It referred to the dependability of a person, especially as it pertained to loyalty in a relationship with that person. Often this was regarding the trustworthiness of God or the relationship integrity between God and man, in either direction. The only time the Hebrew word is translated "faith" (depending on translation) in the Old Testament is in Habakkuk 2:4b, "...*the righteous shall live by faith*" (NASB). This points to the definition of faith as it is described in the New Testament: faith is belief you live by.

The vast majority of the 231 times that "faith" is used in the New Testament, it is translated from the Greek noun *pistis*. It's a noun—a thing that you can have, something you can possess. The few times it is used in its verb form it is translated "believe," or "put faith in," because "faithing" just doesn't sound right. Faith is possessing a belief about something that is strong enough to act upon it, when given opportunity.

For example, I may not be exercising my “faith” (noun) by “faithing” (verb) airplanes at the moment, because I am currently typing in my easy chair. But in May of 2023, I “faithed” the airplane in which I sat—I exercised my faith in airplanes. Having faith is a prerequisite to demonstrating faith. James says it like this, *“faith without works is dead”* (James 2:26). If you’re unwilling to act on a belief when the time comes, that is not faith.

Faith is always linked to its object. Faith in airplanes, faith in God, faith in people. Faith is such confidence in the trustworthiness of its object that you act upon it. The writer of Hebrews devotes an entire chapter to telling the stories of Old Testament characters that exercised their faith in remarkable ways. It’s like the hall of fame (or “hall of faith”) for those who believed God with action. In the introduction to Hebrews 11, faith is described as the “certainty” about the object of faith, based upon facts, that compels action (Hebrews 11:1).

Faith is the act of receiving from God what He wants to give us. Faith responds to the invitation of welcoming grace, drawing us into fellowship with God—whether that is grace to save, grace to remain in fellowship with God, or grace to overcome. Grace is a gift that must be received by faith. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith...”* (Ephesians 2:8a). All that is true about God from foundation down to bedrock does no one any good if they will not receive it and live by it. Jesus understood that we needed to hear this. The wise builder’s choice to *hear and act* upon the words of God is what undergirded the house he was building with the trustworthiness of God. Faith is acting according to the truths about God you have come to understand and believe. If you are unwilling to act on your beliefs, you don’t truly trust the object of your beliefs enough to act on them.

**ALL THAT IS TRUE ABOUT GOD FROM FOUNDATION
DOWN TO BEDROCK DOES NO ONE ANY GOOD IF
THEY WILL NOT RECEIVE IT AND LIVE BY IT.**

A few scenarios come to mind. The first is walking on top of an iced-over pond. You stand at the shoreline debating with yourself: “do you think it will hold?” Then you start reviewing the facts that are available to you. You consider the temperature from the last few weeks, the reports you have heard, what you are seeing with your eyes, and what you’ve seen happen in the past. You test the ice. You chunk a nearby cinder block onto the ice and watch what happens. Then you start asking, “but what if it

doesn't hold me up?" So you decide not to step out. Why? You don't really have the faith that the ice will hold you, and your actions reveal whether your belief rises to the level of faith.

The other scenario is something that actually happened in our family. Several years ago, when we were still renting in College Station, we decided to purchase a substantial swing set for our busy Mason. Mason was 5 years old at the time and needed (and still needs) multiple outlets to burn off his boundless wiggles. This set was made from heavy duty steel. It included three swings, a climbing and activity tower, and a slide. And of course, it had to be assembled before use. My teenage son, Lucas, and I decided we would assemble the swing set the week before Christmas and unveil it to Mason on Christmas morning. All that week we had the glass doorway leading to the back yard covered with Christmas wrapping paper, so Mason couldn't see outside while Lucas and I



put it together. The rest of the family kept Mason occupied indoors. The family couldn't wait to give Mason his final present on Christmas morning.

After opening the presents under the tree, we told Mason, "there's one more present" and walked him to the back door. We prompted him to tear off the wrapping paper and look outside, hearts bursting with excitement to see the childlike wonder of his reaction. He tore through the wrapping paper, took a look outside, and said, "Meh, I've already seen that." Then he turned around and went back into the living room. The rest of us stood there shocked, jaws dropped, chuckling with affection, and mildly disappointed. That kid! Fast forward to this Spring, 2023. Mason and I were in the backyard of our home in Bryan. I was swinging him on that very same steel swing set and we were reminiscing about that unforgettable Christmas morning. I was playfully poking fun at his unenthused reaction and he said defensively "Hey, I didn't know it was such a great present until I started using it. OK?" A lightbulb moment. "Until I started using it"—faith is a lot like that. Just looking at the bedrock of grace and the trustworthy characteristics of God and saying "Meh, I already knew that," does us no good whatsoever. It's when we begin building on the foundation with our actions that we actually benefit from all that God is for us.



DIG DEEP

What is the difference between faith and belief?

I've been noticing a trend on social media concerning the use of the word faith. People describe themselves as being a "person of faith." Will just being "a person of faith" be of any benefit to you when you stand before God and are judged based on your life choices? **Why is it important to make sure the object of your faith is actually true and trustworthy?**

James 2:19 curiously inserts something about demons into the conversation. *"You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder."* **How does that fit into James's argument that for faith to be faith, it is demonstrated through action?**



LAY DOWN

Father, my faith is in the person and work of Jesus alone, and I am demonstrating that faith by entrusting my eternal destiny to You and my life to You. This is easier said than done, especially the life part. There are still hard places in my life in which I'm still clinging to worry and other ways of coping. Soften my heart to make it completely pliable in Your hands. Amen.



BUILD UP

Read Hebrews Chapter 11. **Make a comprehensive bullet list of the characteristics of faith, as exercised by these "hall of faithers."** If the Spirit emphasizes a verse for you to act upon, use the STAR method to record what God is saying to you and your appropriate response to Him.

S (Scripture read):

T (Thought conveyed)

A (Application made)

R (Response given):

Now, insert your name below and write your own hall of faith description—write out what you would want your faith legacy to be when you are remembered by others.

"By faith, (your name) _____" ...

UNSHAKEABLE FAITH, DAY 2:

ROOTED FAITH

Faith is shaped by, and anchored to, the truth of God's Word.



LISTEN IN

*Seek the Lord while He may be found;
Call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked abandon his way,
And the unrighteous person his thoughts;
And let him return to the Lord,
And He will have compassion on him,
And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.*

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord.
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts.
For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it produce and sprout,
And providing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
So will My word be which goes out of My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the purpose for which I sent it..."*

From Isaiah 55:6-11.

Yesterday, we looked at the fact that the object of faith is what makes faith worth having at all. They cannot be disentangled: without active faith, the object's trustworthiness cannot be of benefit. But without the object being trustworthy, having faith in it results in predictable disappointment. Building the unshakeable life will require a multi-faceted faith, able to be applied to every situation in life. Said another way, God wants us to entrust every area of our lives to Him. This implies that we can know what God wants from us in every situation, and what He wants for us in those situations.

God's Word, as we looked at in Day 1 of Chapter 3, is a central pillar that forms the foundation for our lives. The *God Speaks* pillar, however is more about the fundamental trust in, and commitment to, God's Word as the source of truth about

who God is. It's the commitment to truth that directs the other foundation pillars to find their strength and shape in God's Word. But the faith that applies God's truth to life's issues requires a greater role from God's Word than just believing it is important and essential.

Isaiah 55 gives the rationale for this. For an individual person to benefit from God's Word, they have to abandon "*his way*" and "*his thoughts*" and "*return to the Lord*." As emphasized before in the parable of the builder, the basis for the unshakeable life is to first "come to Jesus". In order to do that, one must turn away from what they were formerly relying on. That's what Isaiah is getting at here. Turn away from your thoughts about things, and your way of doing things, and instead turn to the Lord. Because God is rich in compassion and mercy, the repentant person can expect the Lord to receive him and help him put God's kingdom first. It's the unrepentance of the unsaved that provokes the Lord to anger, exhausting God's patience and the long-suffering opportunities He gives to receive His grace. For the believer, our unrepentant actions indicate areas that need sanctification. Into these places God applies His discipline until we turn to Him for the mercy and grace that is needed. This lifestyle of repentance and turning to God is an integral part of the Christian's unshakeable life.

The Lord goes on to explain the merits of His thoughts—they are infinitely higher, different, and life-giving than our own. And He links His thoughts to the words that come from His mouth. Fast forward to today. We have these very living words from God collected and preserved in the Word of God, the Bible. God's Word has impact. His Word not only reveals His will but will have the impact He determines it to have on us, without fail.

After someone turns from his own thoughts and corresponding ways, a vacuum is left. God doesn't want us empty-minded and directionless. He wants our minds full of His truth on which to exercise our active faith to handle the demands of a kingdom-first life. The Bible refers to this process as renewing your mind. *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect"* (Romans 12:2).

So, practically speaking, we have to enter into the process of exposing ourselves to God's Word, internalizing it, and allowing it to effect His rule and reign in our hearts and lives the way God wants it to. But if you haven't noticed, the Bible's a pretty big book. And like eating an elephant, consuming God's Word takes place one bite at a time. There are many ways to go about this. But there are a few things to keep in mind as you go about consuming, conforming to, and carrying out God's Word.

First, it's critical that you read the Scripture firmly set on the bedrock of God's grace in Christ. If you are not careful, you can read the Old Testament (or even the New), and make applications to your life that are not fitting for those who are in Christ. Let me give an example from the Old Testament. There are three types of law: civic,

ceremonial, and moral. Let's say that you begin a reading plan to read through the Bible and come across a number of ceremonial laws that say you are clean or unclean based on whether or not you eat certain things, shave a certain way, have sores on your body, or wash a certain way. You're reading something meant for the original hearers that no longer applies to you (though there is still a lesson to be learned).

**THE BIBLE IS A NON-NEGOTIABLE RESOURCE
REQUIRED TO RIGHTLY LIVE UNDER THE
RULE AND REIGN OF CHRIST.**

For this reason, I strongly recommend that you consume the New Testament *at least 3 times before*, and *3 times more often than*, you read the Old Testament. That number is arbitrary, but it does stand to reason when considering the two divisions of the Bible by volume. If you read the New Testament 3 times, you will have read about the same number of pages and spent the same amount of time as in one reading of the Old Testament. There are two exceptions to that: Psalms and Proverbs. Why? Psalms shapes you to relate wholeheartedly to the Lord in prayer. Proverbs pertains to timeless wisdom that is not tied to any particular covenant.

It's critical that you have a working understanding of how to live according to the New Testament before tackling the Old. Here's an example from technology. Consider your mobile device. The operating system, whether it's Apple's iOS or Android, permeates every aspect of interacting with your device. The operating system is the software that governs a device's basic functions. In contrast, a specific app on your device doesn't affect everything else, it just accomplishes the narrow, focused task it was designed to accomplish, like forecasting the weather or mapping you to the nearest gas station. The New Testament is like your operating system, affecting everything about you and how you now interact with your Creator and His creation. The Old Testament is more like an app; it accomplishes what God intended it to, but it no longer permeates everything about you and how you now live in Christ.

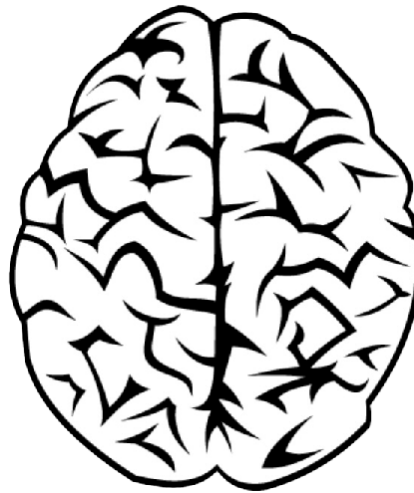
Second, remember that God's Word is not the goal. An intimate, abiding, and surrendered relationship with Jesus is the goal. The Bible is a non-negotiable resource required to rightly live under the rule and reign of Christ. Keep that truth tempered with the fact that it is possible to have the Bible without personally knowing the God of it. So be more than just a Bible-seeker. Be a God-seeker with Bible in hand.

Finally, let me remind you that I'm *not* talking about hearing more sermons or sitting in more studies about the Bible. Those are good things, and those things can be beneficial. But those things are no replacement for what the Lord can accomplish in your life when you lock yourself in a room or the cab of your car with God's Word and God's Spirit, ready to prayerfully spend time with Him.



DIG DEEP

Here is a visual representation of your brain. **Use a pen to color in and visually indicate how much of your mind you believe has already been renewed by God's Word:**



LAY DOWN

Based on what you have read today, write down some goals for reading God's Word that are appropriate to where you are in the process of renewing your mind with God's Word:

Download the YouVersion Bible app on a mobile device, or use a computer's internet browser to go to **bible.com**. Select a Bible reading plan that will help you steadily self-feed on God's Word. To start with, select a "Plan" to read daily, but don't settle for anything less than being in God's Word more days than you aren't (4+ out of 7 days a week) until your hunger for the Bible increases and a habit is formed. Progress, not perfection, is your goal. Satan would love nothing more than to heap shame on you for not keeping your daily plan perfectly, causing you to stop your progress altogether.

In addition to a steady diet of consuming God's Word, there are also ways to accelerate the Bible's impact on your mind. Give serious consideration to each of these:

1) Rather than just reading the Bible, interact with God by using the STAR method with the verses that seem more relevant from your reading. It's very simple and doable, and when you use it, you'll be writing out the Scripture, thought conveyed, application made, and journaling a personal response back to God. This will help you to keep your Bible reading *transformational and relational*, and not just *informational*.

2) Take your STAR "Response" section to another level by praying the Scripture back to the Lord. Pray with your eyes on your Bible verse, or from memory. As you pray, personalize the verse. Put your name in the text, or the name of someone that you are praying for. Praying using the Bible in this way guarantees that you will be praying according to God's will, which delights God to respond accordingly.

3) Beyond that, at the end of every month, review the verses that are in your STAR journal. Select one or more verses to memorize the following month. Write them out on sticky notes and put them on mirrors around the house, in your car, or on your computer monitor at work so you can read them, review them, pray them back to God, and put them to memory.

Father, (praying from Romans 12:2) thank You for wanting me to not be conformed to the pattern of this world. It's exhausting and empty to live for sin and self. I want my life to be transformed to be ever-more like Jesus. Replace my thoughts with Your own. Grip my heart so that Jesus alone will be my first love. Speak Your truth over me, so I can know your good, acceptable, and perfect will as it pertains to the following concerns I am carrying:

Thank You for loving me. Help me to abide in fellowship with and dependence on You today. Amen.



BUILD UP

Review the last month of daily readings and select a few Scriptures that have been most striking to you. Pray those Scriptures back to the Lord, surrendering to God and His plans revealed in those Scriptures. Write those verses on sticky notes and put them around your home, vehicle, and workplace. Begin to read, review, and memorize them.

UNSHAKEABLE FAITH, DAY 3:

HUMBLE FAITH

Humility keeps our faith actively dependent on God.



LISTEN IN

For this reason I bend my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner self, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:14-21

"I can do anything I set my mind to." Have you ever said or thought that? There is a certainly a kernel of truth in it. We can accomplish more if we have a goal, discipline, and determination. I've been overweight as long as I can remember, but I've been able to get fit enough to jog several 5Ks and a 10K in my 40s. How? By setting my mind to it, and using a progressive running plan in an app called "Couch to 5K" through which I was eased into that level of fitness. Within a few weeks, I was able to complete those distances at will, even while still carrying quite a bit of excess weight.

But there's also a lot of error in the statement, "I can do anything I set my mind to." Jesus said that without abiding in Him, we can "*do nothing*" (John 15:5). What did Jesus mean by that? He doesn't mean we can't tie a shoe, bake a cake, brush our teeth, or compete in a pickle-ball match without an abiding relationship with Jesus. But the fact is, it's more likely than not we've lived most of our days without abiding in Him. What Jesus is saying is that we can do nothing of *kingdom significance* without actively fellowship with and depending on Him. We can't extend His kingdom rule and reign in our lives or the lives of others independently of Him. The problem is, most of us set out to live the unshakeable life like we would train for a 5K. With a Bible-based godly goal in mind, we would start to work toward that goal step-by-step. We would support our goal with resources to help our minds stay focused and to get us out there doing that godly thing out of love for God. Little do we realize that while we are working for God, we are cutting Him out of the equation. We don't need to fellowship with God while working for Him; we just obey, or at least try to. And our pride has

duped us into believing that the achievement of these godly goals without Him actually pleases and brings glory to Him in some way.

Humble faith answers the question, “How will I go about building an unshakeable life that fulfills God’s kingdom agenda?” Perhaps you can’t imagine going about the Christian life without goals, discipline, or determination. That is missing the point. Those things can serve the Christian well, but only to the extent that they support remaining in fellowship with and dependence on God. Are you depending on your squeaky clean moral track record, your list of things you *don’t* do, or your spiritual discipline to build an unshakeable life? If so, your faith needs to be recalibrated toward humility. Your independent faith to do things *for* God needs to be crucified daily. And in its place a dependent, humble faith can grow in the soil of abiding fellowship with God.

Pause to look up and look at the last eight verses in Ephesians 1. Paul prays an incredible prayer over the church. Because Paul understood the object of our faith—what we put our faith in—is not our discipline, our righteousness, or any power generated within us. He prays that *God* will grant us power, inner strength, steady love, comprehension of God’s knowledge-surpassing love, and the fullness of God. From where? From the generous storehouse of *His* grace. Then he inserts something into that prayer that redirects the reader’s faith—*“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory”* (Ephesians 3:20-21). It’s God that is able to do what we need Him to do, and so much more! He is unlimited!

**GOD WILL NOT SUPPORT OUR PRIDEFUL EFFORTS TO
KEEP HIM SHUT OUT OF OUR SANCTIFICATION.**

But don’t be confused. That “power within us” is not *our* willpower, fortitude, or determination. In chapter 1, Paul described God’s power toward us. Specifically, we are to rely on *“the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe...the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead...”* (Ephesians 1:19-20). Boundless, great, strong, mighty, resurrection power from God is that which is available within us. God is glorified and receives the credit when He alone is the object of our faith. When we depend on Him and the resources that flow from Him, we have humble faith that releases His powerful grace. But when our faith is generated from self and shuts Him out, God opposes our pride and His grace is unavailable (James 4:6). God will not support our prideful efforts to keep Him shut out of our sanctification. Rather, it is His intent for you to allow Christ

to live through you by your humble faith. Consider Paul's description of this kind of humble faith to the believers in the Galatian church:

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly" (Galatians 2:20-21).



DIG DEEP

Pride blinds us to pride. I've learned how easy it is to live the Christian life on autopilot. If your faith is in yourself, it's likely that this is a blind spot for you, like it too often was for me. You may be approaching your life, without realizing it, as if ethical behavior and the work you do *for* God is all that matters, regardless of *how* that work is done. Like a child who grumbles under her breath while begrudgingly doing her chores, you may have justified the poor condition of your heart on the basis of your technical, outward obedience. You may live as though abiding in fellowship with Jesus is optional, so long as you do the things He wants you to do, also while abstaining from the things He wants you to avoid. This is missing the Christian life completely! God didn't save you to obey Him. He saved you to restore fellowship with you. Obedience is a part of that, but the relationship is the goal. God doesn't need or want you to do anything *for* Him apart *from* Him. In fact, we started today by recalling Jesus's declaration that we *can't* do anything *of kingdom significance* apart from abiding in Him. Obeying *in that way* is no obedience at all, because it is the furthest thing from His heart and will. Pride produces such blind spots. And a proud faith is not a humble faith.

When you go about your day living out an ethical Christian life (as you should), are you actively abiding in Christ? YES or NO. If yes, describe how you go about abiding in Christ.

Using the A, B, C, D, or F grading scale, **score your obedience to God's command to "pray without ceasing"** (1 Thessalonians 5:17). _____



LAY DOWN

Imagine you are discipling a new believer. Perhaps this is a co-worker, one of your adult kids, or someone at church needing a mentor. Write to them specific instructions on how to rely on God's power and not their own:

What are some practical steps you can take to keep your faith calibrated to humility?

Father, I want my faith to be humble. I want You alone to be the object of my faith. I cannot live a life pleasing to You without abiding in You. I'm committing myself to seek an abiding relationship with You daily. I crucify living life apart from fellowship with You—that's got to die, even more than any particular sin does. Thank You that Your acceptance of me has nothing to do with how I score the areas of my life. And that Your grace is not only accepting, but is transforming as well. Out of the riches of Your grace, give me Your power for living in fellowship with and dependence on You under the rule and reign of Jesus. For my joy and His glory, Amen.



BUILD UP

Read Romans 9:30 - 10:4. Use the STAR method to listen to the Spirit's application of this text to your life, and respond accordingly with humble faith.

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, but the righteousness that is by faith; however, Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though they could by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and the one who believes in Him will not be put to shame." Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

S (Scripture read):

T (Thought conveyed)

A (Application made)

R (Response given):

UNSHAKEABLE FAITH, DAY 4:

HINDERED FAITH

Faith is hindered by our unbelief.



LISTEN IN

And you were dead in your offenses and sins, in which you previously walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all previously lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our wrongdoings, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the boundless riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Ephesians 2:1-10

Faith is what releases the qualities of everything that is below ground—the bedrock and foundation pillars—to what is above ground—the unshakeable lives God wants to build with us. We’ve already talked about the bedrock of grace in Jesus, and the truths that God speaks, knows, cares, is willing, and is able. Think about what that means structurally. You may have the strongest, deepest vertical foundation pillars laid squarely on bedrock, but if the horizontal slab layer on top of those pillars is compromised or weak, the foundation will do little good to the home you are building. The very floor of your home will crack, shift, or give out, and will compromise the structural integrity of the home itself. Similarly, unbelief in God’s trustworthiness and His grace toward you hinders you from receiving what is accessible and graciously given to all of us. Our faith can be hindered in many ways, chief among them is unbelief.

Imagine that you’ve been told that you’ve won the lottery. You actually played this time, because, well, the jackpot was historically huge. So one morning, you decide (right or wrong) to throw away \$4 of your discretionary spending money to the Lottery Commission instead of to Starbucks. Bear with me. You hear on the evening news that there’s been a winner that purchased the ticket at the same gas station, in the same city, and at the same time as you bought your ticket. Whether you believe that report or not may determine whether or not you receive the lottery payout.

Perhaps you believe the report enough to rummage through the floorboards of your car looking for the lottery ticket. You bring it into your house to check the winning numbers. Sure enough, 27, 12, 5, 44, 41, 0, 18 and 6 match the numbers on your ticket! You think to yourself, "This is too good to be true. I see it written right here, but that would mean I actually won the lottery. Impossible." So you crumple up the ticket, and with the Starbucks trash you collected from the floor and cupholders, you toss your ticket into the bin and move on to live your normal life with a slightly cleaner car.

That's a lot like how we treat God's grace that has been secured in Christ and expressed through His Word, His omniscience, His care, His willingness, and His omnipotent ability to radically change our lives. It feels too good to be true. But regardless of our feelings, we really have hit the grace jackpot! This grace payout, however, wasn't a product of chance. It was because God determined long ago to do whatever it would take to redeem us so He could give us the priceless gift of Himself for all eternity. But if we don't believe this gift is for us, we hinder our experience of the riches of His grace. The sin of unbelief enables hindered faith to steal our experience of what is ours in Christ.



In the previous daily readings this week, we've already mentioned the hindrances of an inactive, unrooted, and proud faith. But there are other aspects of a hindered faith that must be mentioned. Tomorrow we will look at the hindrance of disobedience, but before moving onto that, I want to quickly address the hindrances of laziness and indecision.

**THE SIN OF UNBELIEF ENABLES HINDERED FAITH TO STEAL
OUR EXPERIENCE OF WHAT IS OURS IN CHRIST.**

Laziness and its 1st cousin, indecision, both lack a compelling view of the worth of Jesus. They often work in tandem. Whereas a proud faith is motivated to follow God's plan in misguided ways, a lazy faith is not motivated to follow God at all. Perhaps a misunderstanding of grace contributes to this. A lazy person may have this thought

process deflate their heart for God or willingness to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). They may rightly think that living the Christian life is not about doing stuff to earn God’s approval; that’s already been taken care of by Christ. But then their thinking jumps off the tracks of truth, wrongly concluding that they have no responsibility or contribution to make. And like train cars hitched to the locomotive, the heart and actions of the lazy person follow suit. Dallas Willard says it this way, “Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action.”

The Scriptures are saturated with commands and challenges for the commissioned, grace-drenched Christian that we must not ignore. Just because God does not want us going about those things in our own strength, does not mean that God does not want us going about those things in His strength. We are compelled by the jackpot of the riches of God’s grace in Christ to help others receive their own grace payout. That means that we have to be intentional about abiding in fellowship with Christ through the intermingling of prayer, His Word, faith, and obedience, out of which will flow lasting kingdom fruit.



DIG DEEP

Go to your local gas station and play the lottery (just kidding!). But the next time you fill up your tank and see those lottery signs in your gas station window, give thanks to God that you’ve won *and received by faith* the jackpot of grace in Christ that you never could have earned or deserved on your own.

Review Ephesians 2:1-10 and follow the prompts.

“And you were dead in your offenses and sins, in which you previously walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all previously lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the rest” (Ephesians 2:1-3).

Write down the specific things that characterized your life while you were still dead in your sins:

Now, review Ephesians 2:1-10 and follow the prompts.

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our wrongdoings, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the boundless riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:4-10).

What are the two reasons Paul mentioned for God saving us by grace? (hint: see what follows the words "because" and "so that")

What is the role of works in our salvation by grace? Write your answer below and underline the Ephesians words or phrases you are basing your answer on.

What is the role of works after our salvation by grace? Write your answer below and circle the Ephesians words or phrases you are basing this answer on.



LAY DOWN

Father, saturate with me a greater understanding and appreciation for the riches of Your grace that saved me and continues being poured out on me. As Jesus increases His rule and reign over what I love and what I do, help me to desire and engage His rule and reign in the lives of others around me—in my home, my church, my city, and my world. You want them to receive grace too, and have uniquely fashioned me to engage Your kingdom work by abiding in the fellowship, leadership, and empowering of Your Spirit. Do in me, and through me, what You will. Amen.



BUILD UP

Take a moment to pray. Spend as much time listening in silence as you do talking to God. Ask God to show you the hindrances that have, or do, effect the stability of your faith in God. If you don't believe all that is true about God "below ground," you cannot receive all that is true about God for your life above ground.

Write a list of the hindrances that are weakening your active faith in God:

UNSHAKEABLE FAITH, DAY 5:

OBEDIENT FAITH

Obedience eliminates hindrances to our active faith.



LISTEN IN

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.'

Hebrews 12:1-6

Before we wrap up our conversation on unshakeable faith, there's another principle of faith that you may have already seen underlying the entire conversation. The faith principle is this: obedience cannot be separated from faith, or it ceases to be faith. I'd like us to look at this from the lens that we looked through in Chapter 1 of your *Unshakeable Personal Journal*, the lens of the kingdom reign of Christ.

Hebrews chapter 12 begins with the word *"therefore"* which draws our attention back to the *"great cloud of witnesses"* from chapter 11. Chapter 11 describes these witnesses as faithful (full-of-faith) men and women who in spite of the most difficult and painful of circumstances kept their gaze riveted on the object of their faith. In effect, the Hebrews author is saying that in light of human history, people have been finding their place in God's kingdom, through faith—therefore, do the same. These heroes of the faith, with much less revelation than you and I have received, trusted a handful of God's spoken words to the end. They had what Eugene Peterson calls "a long obedience in the same direction." That's what kingdom faith looks like. Though faith operates in day-to-day living, it has its eye on the prize. It has a lifetime perspective, and an eternal one. It sees the kingdom that God has always been building, and sees that our role in that kingdom is to yield to the rule and reign of Jesus, in fellowship with, and fully dependent on Him. Simply put, our joy and our role is to abide. By doing so, we will *"run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith"* (Hebrews 12:2).

It goes without saying that we can't have a long obedience in the same direction without obedient faith. Disobedience is a hindrance that keeps us out of fellowship with God, and thus unplugs us from the abiding life and its resulting kingdom fruit. We must be willing to *"throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles"* (Hebrews 12:1). There are several ways that disobedience can be a hindrance to our faith in the here and now, and also to the lifetime race we are running—what we have been calling the unshakeable life. Let's look at a few.

Disobedient faith isn't possible. Disobedience takes what is essential to faith and strips it out of faith, leaving behind something less than faith. Like the man on the ice, you may agree that the ice will hold, but not enough to walk upon it. Faith is action. Obedient faith aims our actions in the direction of fellowship with God as we trust and obey Him, awaiting His intervention. Obedience is not command-centered, it is person-centered. When we have obedient faith, we are pursuing an abiding and intimate relationship with God, because He is the object of our faith. His commands are not the object of our faith. He is. Sometimes we treat God like the guy at the diner we stop at to ask for directions—we want good directions from him, but we have no intention of taking him with us. God's not interested in such an arrangement. We saw it in the previous days that there is no God-honoring obedience apart from an abiding relationship with Jesus. He doesn't just give us commands, He comes with us on the journey.

**DISOBEDIENCE IS A HINDRANCE THAT KEEPS US OUT OF
FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD, AND THUS UNPLUGS US FROM THE
ABIDING LIFE AND ITS RESULTING KINGDOM FRUIT.**

The other hindrance to obedient faith is regarding our view of Jesus. In Hebrews 12, the view is clear. Jesus is seated at the right hand of God in resplendent glory. Jesus commissions His disciples to make disciples based on His authority as the resurrected Lord. When we disobey, we are not only failing to trust God, we are sinning against Him. We are being unfaithful to Him. Disobedience is having the audacity to treat God as if He were not God, and replacing God with something we value more.

Satan obscures what we think of obedience. Often we think of it lightly. After all, a little disobedience here and there doesn't seem to hurt me or anyone else. This sentiment finds root in the heart of someone gauging their obedience against how happy it may or may not make them in the moment. If I don't want to? No problem, I just won't. Because I don't feel like it right now. I'm tired. That would embarrass me, or

that would be too hard. I'd have to rearrange my schedule. I'm already obeying God in other ways. I'd have to give up too much. When you've reduced disobedience to a meaningless decision, you've missed the main thing: the relationship.

The Hebrews 12:1 cloud of witnesses cheers you on to gauge your obedience against your intimate and abiding relationship with Jesus. Ironically, it's when we live for Him that it turns out better for us. Obedient faith keeps us in fellowship with our grace-giving Savior. All that is good and right and beautiful emanates from Him. We get splashed with grace because we remain in closeness with Him. Not so the disobedient one. Disobedience disconnects us from fellowship with our Father. And our idols always disappoint us.



DIG DEEP

Sad to say, we do sin. All of us do. And those that think they don't sin have a low view of the righteousness of God and a high view of themselves. *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1:8). What are we to do when we sin? First, we are to do the same thing Jesus said for us to about the unshakeable life: *Come to Me* (Luke 6:47). When you are tired and weary, come to Me. When you want to get closer to God, come to Me. When you've just blown it again, come to Me. When you've lived on autopilot and can't remember the last time you've conversed with God, come to Me. When your sin has reached a surprising low, come to Me. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). This verse is not about justification, and forgiving our sin *unto salvation*. That work has already been completed in full. This verse, when read in context, is about fellowship. When I sin against my wife, it doesn't instantly invalidate our marriage covenant. We're still married, but there is forgiveness I need to ask for because I want to restore fellowship with her. Likewise, after disobedience, fellowship with God is restored when we confess our sin to Him. He is eager to receive us when we return to Him. We can expect the acceptance, grace, and mercy Christ was delighted to purchase for us on the cross. We'll keep needing it, and He knows that. He also loves us so much He's not OK with our continued disobedience. In love, He disciplines us to reveal our sin, allows us to experience its painful effect, and will likewise train us in righteousness to deliver us from long obedience in *the wrong direction*.

In your past dealing with disobedience, did you tend to shrug in indifference, wilt in shame, or run to Jesus (circle one)?

What would “coming to Jesus” do for the Christian who underestimates or overestimates their sin?



LAY DOWN

The Scriptures say that it's the kindness of the Lord that results in repentance (Romans 2:4). What has the discipline of the Lord looked like in your life? **Has His ever-welcoming grace, or His discipline, resulted in repentance more? Write why you think you respond to one more than the other:**

Father, thank You for addressing my disobedience head on. It's not a small thing to turn from You to sin. I know I can't live in disobedience and have unshakeable faith. Help me keep coming to You in every season and circumstance to live the Christian life. There is no version of the Christian life that does not involve abiding. Help me to respond to Your grace by coming to You.



BUILD UP

Read Hebrews Chapter 12. Make a comprehensive bullet list of the characteristics of disobedience and deliverance from it. If the Spirit emphasizes a verse for you to act upon, use the STAR method to record what God is saying to you and your appropriate response to Him.

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S (Scripture read):

T (Thought conveyed)

A (Application made)

R (Response given):

UNSHAKEABLE FAITH, DAY 6:

REVIEW & REFLECT

Take a moment to review days 1 - 5 of this week. **Identify the truths that struck you as most significant to the kingdom God is building, in part through your unshakeable life. Write them below:**

Write down any questions you have about the content from this chapter you are unsettled about:

What are some things you will begin doing, or stop doing, in response to what you learned this week?

What is something you'd be willing to share with your GroupLife class this Sunday about what God showed you this week?

UNSHAKEABLE FAITH, DAY 7:

WORSHIP AND GROUPLIFE


GROUPLIFE TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from GroupLife that God emphasized to you today:

SERMON TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from today's sermon that God emphasized to you:

YOUR RESPONSE TO GOD SPEAKING AT CHURCH TODAY:



UNSHAKEABLE LIFE

WEEK 5

Your life is built for others.

UNSHAKEABLE LIFE, DAY 1:

WISELY BUILT

Our lives are to be built with God's highest purpose in mind.



LISTEN IN

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Psalm 1

If there is an Old Testament equivalent of Jesus's parable of the two builders, Psalm 1 is certainly a viable candidate. Its echoes can clearly be heard in Jesus's sermon illustration. Both Jesus and the Psalmist contrast two different types of people, based on how they are grounded in their covenant with God. Their character is regarded in no uncertain terms as either wise or unwise, righteous or wicked. Their choices result in drastically different life outcomes and eternal outcomes alike. Both indicate that God has always had a solid, unshakeable life of consequence in mind for His people.

What do you want your life to be like? Better yet, what does God want your life to be like? What are the main features it should possess? Previously, we looked at how God answers our requests *to the extent* that they accomplish His kingdom agenda. Likewise, God supports our life agendas *to the extent* that they further His kingdom agenda for our lives. This might feel like you're getting short-changed, but He's not holding back on you. Although God will only support His kingdom rule and reign of Jesus in your life, He isn't stopping short. "Extent" is not a constricting word, but an expanding one. He's not shortchanging you. He is taking your life far beyond where you can take it, to the furthest possible reaches of what is best for you all the way to its fullest "extent." You can't take your life to a farther good, higher joy, or deeper satisfaction than He can. Your surrender to His kingdom agenda keeps you from shortchanging yourself. Doesn't it say something deeply moving about the goodness of God that when we join Him in putting His kingdom first, it so happens to be what is also best for us? It's been said that a tide rises all boats. The higher we esteem and

surrender to Jesus as the King of our lives, the higher He lifts them. We don't become trimmed down versions of what we could've been, we become the best versions of what we could possibly become—the Masters's masterpieces. What do you want your life to be like? The only wise answer is "exactly what God wants it to become."

**YOU CAN'T TAKE YOUR LIFE TO A FARTHER GOOD,
HIGHER JOY, OR DEEPER SATISFACTION THAN HE CAN.
YOUR SURRENDER TO HIS KINGDOM AGENDA KEEPS
YOU FROM SHORTCHANGING YOURSELF.**

When considering the weight our foundation in Christ is capable of bearing, we get the sense that our lives matter immensely to God. That what He has in mind is to build something substantial—lives that are capable of tremendous kingdom influence and impact. This is the first consideration for a builder. What is the intended purpose? The builder has in mind what this building needs to accomplish. That's what we all do when considering a building project, whether it's a church building, a vacation home, or a backyard shed. We begin by considering the purpose of the building before we decide what the building itself will be like.

To do this, we'll first look carefully at what our unshakeable lives will actually be like when they best accomplish His kingdom purposes. In Jesus's parable, you are the builder, and your life is the house the builder is wisely building. Once the builder narrows down what the building is going to do, it is designed in such a way that all of its materials, parts, and systems work together to accomplish that purpose. Drive by any residential construction site, and you'll notice that once the horizontal slab has been laid, the framing isn't far behind. In just a matter of days, 2 x 4s begin giving the house its external shape—you see its size, its height, and the number of floors it will have. You could say these are the building's "bones." We design the exterior shell of the building to withstand the anticipated stressors of the external environment, and then some. Then interior work is designed to ensure the building is accomplishing its intended purpose in a way that is also aesthetically pleasing to those who will use it. In a nutshell, we bring from blueprint paper into reality what the building is designed to be



like. That's the purpose of this chapter, what the unshakeable life is like.

Before getting very specific, let's recall Jesus's parable for some general understanding. Wise builders build with intent. After taking all things into consideration, they build to last. With wisdom and understanding, they forge three essential components together to form an unshakeable life—coming to the Lord, hearing His words, and acting upon them. We discussed how the bedrock of grace, the foundation pillars of God's trustworthiness, and our active faith serve as the underbelly of the house. Then we get to the house itself—what we can see above ground.

In this parable, Jesus only gave a few characteristics to the wisely-built house. The house can withstand the regular cycles of sun and rain. The house can withstand the occasional storm. And the house can withstand the rare and catastrophic flood. Remember, this is a parable about us. He's not just describing a house, He's describing the life built by the builder. Your life. Wouldn't you want that kind of life? A life that can withstand the erosion of normal everyday life, the every-now-and-again storms, and the tragedies no one would wish upon their enemies? I think I know the answer. We'll look at these characteristics in detail in the coming days. For now, know that this is what God wants your life to look like.

We'll also be looking this week at other characteristics of our house that the rest of God's Word describes. Jesus was driving home a point in this parable that didn't require Him to mention all the things He has in mind for our lives. But they were important enough to describe elsewhere in His Word. By the end of the week, we'll better have in mind what our unshakeable lives will look like.

In closing, we need to quickly revisit the need for humble faith. We are not describing the characteristics of an unshakeable life so you can go out and try to make those things happen on your own. No, our lives will bring glory to God and have kingdom influence to the extent that He is involved and central to every part of the building process. He reigns and His kingdom expands when we are abiding in Him. *"Unless the Lord builds a house, They who build it labor in vain"* (Psalm 127:1a).



DIG DEEP

Write down what you think Jesus means (metaphorically) by the following terms in the parable of the two builders (Luke 6:46ff; Matthew 7:24ff NASB):

- Rain:
- Slamming winds:
- Flood/river:
- Shake:
- Fall:
- Collapse:

How does it feel that God will only support your goals and choices if they align with your full surrender to the Lordship of Jesus?

List anything you feel you'll miss out on in life if the Lord is absolutely in charge:

Do you truly believe that God's not holding out on you? YES or NO

Does your belief translate into an active faith that obeys Him? YES or NO



LAY DOWN

If your answers to both of those questions were anything other than "yes," pray and ask God to give you insight on why you answered that way, then write down what He is helping you see about that:

Father, You're too good to care so much about me and what becomes of my life. Help me to entrust my life to You in a way that is fitting for how good and trustworthy You are. Thank You that You are redeeming my life from the dictators of sin and self, and are ever-welcoming me into a relationship with the good and glorious King. May His perfect kingdom reign come in me. Amen.



BUILD UP

Use the STAR method to read Psalm 1 and respond to the Lord as He speaks through His Word its application to your life.

S (Scripture read):

T (Thought conveyed)

A (Application made)

R (Response given):

UNSHAKEABLE LIFE, DAY 2:

BUILT STABLE

Built upon Jesus, our lives can endure suffering.



LISTEN IN

...The creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only that, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons and daughters, the redemption of our body.

Romans 8:21-23

Though each of us has a different and unique story, every member of the human race has a few things in common. We inhabit a world that “*groans and suffers*” like a mother in the travail of labor contractions, waiting to be released from its “*slavery to corruption*” (Romans 1:21-23). To make matters worse, the world’s entire population has inherited and excelled at self-centeredness, filling the earth with injustice, heartache, self-harm, and dysfunction. This is the world in which we live, and even our gated communities can’t keep out the suffering.

Listen to Jesus’s vivid description of what assaults the wise builder’s house: the rain fell, the winds blew and slammed against the house, and when there was a flood, the river burst against the house. Notice Jesus didn’t say “if” these things came upon the house, but “when” they came. Now listen to the what the foolish builder had to face: the rain fell, the winds blew and slammed against the house, and when the floods came, the river burst against it. Notice the difference? Me neither. There isn’t one.

Everyday toils, occasional turmoil, and severe suffering are the experiences of the human race, without distinction. But with one crucial and hopeful exception—the outcome. One house didn’t collapse, fall, or even shake. Praise the Lord, that though God’s sovereign determination is to allow all creation to ache for final redemption, the redeemed do not do it alone. We have Him—and what is needed *from* Him—to endure and overcome everything that is allowed into our lives.

When a broken world and her inhabitants come crashing down on us, what keeps us from collapsing under their weight, even unshakeable? Before we answer that question, we need to make sure we don’t attribute a quality to the word “unshakeable” that is unintended by Jesus. In English, unshakeable *could* mean emotionally unrattled or unphased. The text isn’t saying that. Unshakeable comes from the Greek word *saleuō*, which in Luke 6:48 carries the idea of being shaken and cast down, or

being toppled over. When Jesus told the parable in Matthew 7:25, He instead used the word “fall” to describe the stability of the wise man’s house—it did not “fall.” Elsewhere in the New Testament, *saleuō* was used in a range of contexts, from the small act of shaking the dust off one’s feet, to God shaking the earth and the heavens (Hebrews 12:27). In either case, the shaken object, regardless of size, remains not, while the unshakeable object remains. During our difficult moments and our darkest days, we may become anxious and distressed. Our hearts may break, even fail. But the stability of the foundation and the bedrock beneath us causes us to come out on the other side still standing.

**WE HAVE HIM—AND WHAT IS NEEDED FROM HIM—
TO ENDURE AND OVERCOME EVERYTHING THAT IS
ALLOWED INTO OUR LIVES.**

The smallest sliver of faith welcomes God into our frustrations, confusion, and sorrows. Sometimes mustard-seed sized faith looks like silently aching your way to the Savior who weeps with you. King David’s example provides a lighted pathway to follow when we’re feeling our way through the darkness. Read each line slowly, pausing not only to think about the truth conveyed, but also the depth of feeling he brings to his God.

*My soul waits in silence for God alone;
From Him comes my salvation.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
My stronghold; I will not be greatly shaken...
My soul, wait in silence for God alone,
For my hope is from Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
My refuge; I will not be shaken.
My salvation and my glory rest on God;
The rock of my strength, my refuge is in God.
Trust in Him at all times, you people;
Pour out your hearts before Him;
God is a refuge for us. Selah (Psalm 62:1,5-8).*

Here, we see David’s active faith in God from within the very windstorm that was whirling about him to topple his position and even his life. This hope in God is where

David *landed*. But when the gale force winds increased to hurricane status, David took a more roundabout route to stability.

In Psalm 73, David recounts how he *“almost” “came close”* to falling (v. 2). He was disillusioned by his own suffering compared to the relative ease seemingly enjoyed by the wicked. He portrayed himself as *“envious,” “stricken,” “punished,” “embittered,” “pierced,” “stupid,”* and *“ignorant”*—until he entered into the presence of God (v. 17). There, his perspective shifted. His eyes were opened. He realized that when he was unable to contribute to his own stability, God was still with him and took *“hold of his right hand”* (Psalm 73:21-23). There are times when our grip on God slips, but His grip on us never does. It was only after the bedrock of God’s grace and the foundation of God’s attributes took hold of David was he able to say, *“My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever”* (Psalm 73:26).

When we come to Jesus while the storms rage, He will minister to us. His Spirit will console us. And with that comfort He will bring to mind the surety that God Himself keeps us unshakeable. *“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:38-29). The pummeling of a broken world is unable to topple us because our standing is in the undefeated Christ. He is our refuge in the storms. And His victory is so decisively comprehensive that He harnesses their destructive potential toward our actual good and growth (Romans 8:28). To the praise of His glorious grace!



DIG DEEP

Recall a time when your “heart failed” under the weight of life’s disappointments or tragedies. Like David, articulate some of the feelings you had during that time.

How have you seen God “taking hold of your hand” while your faith in His knowledge, care, ability, or willingness wavered? **Describe the ways you saw God provide what you needed to get you through.**

David's turning point began by entering into the sanctuary of God's presence. **How would you describe your turning point that restored your faith in the trustworthiness of God?**



LAY DOWN

Father, I confess that when I don't see Your deliverance when or how I want to see it happen, my heart and my faith in Your goodness can fail me. Thank You that my security in Christ is based upon Your strength and not my own. Every time I face one of life's storms, help me to see that Your faithfulness adds to the resume of Your trustworthiness. Restore my faith in Your goodness. Amen.



BUILD UP

Use the STAR method to read Psalm 73 and respond to the Lord as He speaks its application to your life.

S (Scripture read):

T (Thought conveyed)

A (Application made)

R (Response given):

UNSHAKEABLE LIFE, DAY 3:

WELL-BUILT

An emotionally and spiritually maturing life is best fit for service.



LISTEN IN

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver bowls, but also those of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument, set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

2 Timothy 2:20-21

Let's continue talking about the unshakeable life the Lord is building in you and me. We're at the framing stage now, so it's important that our house has "good bones." Since the house in Jesus's parable represents the life of a person, the framing of the house would be like a person's skeleton. Our bodies use it to attach connective tissues that hold vital organs in place. These organs then work together as a cohesive system. In a house, the framing is used to run plumbing, electrical, and heating and cooling systems throughout the house. The framing then holds the drywall that will conceal those unsightly wires, pipes, and ductwork within the walls and above the ceilings.

Selecting warped or twisted boards with which to frame a house guarantees problems in the finishing stages of the build. A wise builder takes care to ensure that the 2x4 boards that make up the vital framing are straight. Then the builder can have the basic raw materials to build a house that is square, as Jesus said, "*well built.*"



The internal framing that makes up who we are and how we operate in this world is our bodies, minds, emotions, and spirit—all of which enable us to make purposeful lives, connect with one another, and relate to our Creator to whom we will give account. Just as the 2x4s used in a build need to be straight, each of these fundamental components of what makes you, "you", need to be untwisted and unwarped if our lives are going to become not only unshakeable for ourselves, but useful for the kingdom purposes Jesus would bring about in others through us.

Since our conception, our lives began their building project that continues to this day. Even in our mother's wombs, the framing and systems of our bodies began to take shape. Some come to discover that some of this framing may have been deformed. Even prenatally, hazardous substances or impoverished nutrition can permanently alter the emotional framework of a young life. From the womb to adulthood, we have been inundated with the powerful shaping forces of culture, relationships, trauma, and enriching experiences (or lack thereof). We have been contorted in one way or another by our broken world and the broken people who live in it—some of us in unspeakable ways. Together with our own propensities to rule our lives to our own peril, it seems that the cards are stacked against us.

**IT BECAME APPARENT MY SPIRITUAL MATURITY COULD NOT
GROW BEYOND THIS LEVEL OF EMOTIONAL IMMATURITY.**

Over the last four weeks, we've already discussed how these powerful, shaping dynamics have taken hold and manifested through outward disobedience, unfounded mistrust in God, and a mind in terrible need of renewal. Today, we need to give attention to the fitness of our emotional makeup, upon which our relationships with God and others are built. But not just our relationships. Our emotional makeup is the heart-lens by which we interpret many things. It has the power to hold us hostage, blind us to what is true, and shut down the vibrancy of our spiritual growth and our life on mission.

Before we continue to dig deeper into that heavy topic, let me tether us back to hope. Were it not for our Savior, we would remain victims of the countless ways we have been hurt by others, hurt ourselves, and hurt others. Though at times we feel like the die is already cast and changing is out of the question, the truth is that Christ has already set us free, and we have the responsibility and opportunity to learn to walk in that freedom. What was deformed is being reformed and conformed, for our joy and for His kingdom purposes, too. That's what Paul is getting at in his second letter to the young pastor Timothy. Regardless of where people are, or how they got there, they can change and become more useful for kingdom service. Remember, He takes what the enemy intends for evil and repurposes it for our good and His kingdom agenda (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28). He takes lives formerly ruled by the soul-sucking tyranny of idol dictators and sets them free to the rule and reign of the King we were made for.

The lengthy subtitle of Peter Scazzero's book *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* makes a bold claim that I have been testing out in my life and in the real world for many years in ministry. The subtitle reads: *It's Impossible to Be Spiritually Mature, While Remaining Emotionally Immature*. Is that really true? Ever since reading that book, that statement has gnawed at me. I have searched the Scriptures and made countless observations in my own life and the lives of others I have come to know in ministry. Scazzero is onto something. I wouldn't quite say it the way he did. I'd add several qualifying statements to make sure it squared with Scripture, but the heart of what he is getting at seems truer and truer with age.

This is an issue that goes all the way down to the bedrock layer upon which we begin to build our lives. My story, in a nutshell, is that I was led to Christ by my Christian dad at the age of 8 (44 years ago!), was called into ministry at the age of 16 in the balcony of First Baptist Church in Norfolk, got married to a great Christian gal from a great Christian home (both of her parents were ministers in vibrant, growing Baptist churches), and went to seminary for divinity and ministries degrees from Southwestern. You'd think that along with that journey came a great deal of spiritual maturity. In some ways it did. My knowledge of God and ministry grew considerably and my relationships were generally in good order and heading in the right direction. The house above ground looked pretty well-built. But some major storms in my life began to expose that my foundation was weak, due to being laid upon a bedrock of some emotional immaturity. Too often, I was basing my daily relationship with God upon the feelings I had projected onto God, not on what I knew God's Word said to be true. I didn't need more Scriptural knowledge to move forward; I needed to have active faith in the knowledge I already did have. It became apparent my spiritual maturity could not grow beyond this level of emotional immaturity.

The problem I was experiencing is exactly what Scazzero was getting at, and it's at the core of what I believe many Christians struggle with, too. This isn't just a hunch. I see it all the time in men, women, and relationships. The spiritual growth, family relationships, and kingdom influence of many Christians are being stunted by this one thing: building their lives according to *how they feel God feels about them*, rather than upon what He has revealed in the Scriptures to be true. More problematic than that, some are basing *every* choice and relationship upon how they feel about things. That's emotional immaturity in a nutshell. That was me. It affected more than I imagined it would. And I'm still battling that to this day with the strength, wisdom, and support He is faithfully providing.

Emotional immaturity looks different in each person. Like the grains on a 2x4, or a winter snowflake, we all have an emotional fingerprint that is unique to each one of us. Regardless of the nuanced ways our emotional maturity plays out, this principle is true of everyone. Our spiritual vibrancy will not surpass a heart poorly anchored to God's grace. Nearly 800 times, the Scriptures speak of the heart's role and influence upon us. The heart has the power to deceive our minds and take us in directions we must not go. That's why we are commanded to take *all* of our anxieties to the Lord,

to come to Him, not just because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7), but because He also is ready to give us His peace, which will guard our hearts and minds *in Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:6-8).

There's so much more that can be said about this. Scazzero and many others have written extensively about the intermingling of emotional and spiritual health. To boil it all down to one sentence, we can develop self-control over our emotions and lead our emotions to submit to the rule and reign of King Jesus. This is not a work we do apart from God, for self-control, as it's ironically named, is a fruit of the Spirit's control (Galatians 5:23) that only comes from an intimate and abiding relationship with Jesus. It's never too late for Jesus to take us as we are and renovate us from the inside out. We're not victims of the world or our backstories. No, victory is ours by God and His grace, into which we are ever-welcomed.



DIG DEEP

Builders tell us that 2x4s can be bent back into shape over time by applying moisture, heat, pressure, and by clamping what is twisted to that which is straight. **What are some parallels between that physical reality and our spiritual reality?**

You may have seen yourself in today's reading, or you may have new insight on how you can minister to others who are living their lives based on their feelings. On the next page are two different drawings of a train. Each has 5 parts: a locomotive (engine car up front), 3 train cars, then a trailing caboose.

Label each part of the train with one of five words: FACTS, FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, ACTIONS, FAITH based on whether your relationship with God is based on....



....how you feel He feels about you.



...truth He has revealed about Himself.



LAY DOWN

Father, straighten out the places where my heart is warped, yet remains in control. Reorder the building blocks of my life so that the Spirit is in control, not the waffling whims of my emotions. I entrust my heart to You today, based upon the undeserved grace You so freely give to me. Amen.



BUILD UP

Using the biblically-grounded online resources at your disposal, conduct a study of the word "heart" throughout the scriptures. List the different characteristics of the heart below, with Scripture references in parentheses.

Describe any interactions between the feelings, mind, facts, and actions that Scripture describes below.

UNSHAKEABLE LIFE, DAY 4:

BUILT TOGETHER

Everyone is vital for the church God is building.



LISTEN IN

So then you [non-Jews] are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19-22

God invites us to build unshakeable lives upon Himself. Lives that are well-built, square, and stable. But as emphasized in Chapter 1 of this resource, our lives fit into the larger story of God's kingdom. His kingdom agenda is to further the rule and reign of Jesus in your own life and the lives of others. It's not for you to be a tropical, weather-resistant vacation home on a remote island. Your isolation is not what God has in mind. Rather, as we are building our individual lives, we are simultaneously being built together with other believers by God into a super-structure greater than our individual lives alone.

The Bible uses several terms and metaphors to describe what God is building us collectively into. In Ephesians, it is referred to as *"the church,"* (Ephesians 1:22) *"His body,"* *"the fullness of Him"* (Ephesians 1:23), *"God's household"* (Ephesians 2:19), *"the whole building,"* *"a holy temple"* (Ephesians 2:21), and *"a dwelling of God"* (Ephesians 2:22). A few other descriptions are given to the church, such as *"God's building"* (1 Corinthians 3:9), *"the bride of Christ"* (Revelation 19:7), *"the saints"* (1 Corinthians 1:2), *"living stones,"* and a *"spiritual house"* (1 Peter 2:5). Beyond that, the Bible predominately refers to these individuals live that God has built together as the *"church."* Collectively, the various building and body metaphors are the primary word pictures used, so moving forward this resource will use *"building,"* *"body,"* and *"church"* interchangeably.

Let's push the building metaphor a little further than Jesus's parable does to drive home an important truth. If the parable of the two builders was about building a church, each one of us would represent the raw materials used to form the building's collective whole. Some of us are 2x4s, pipes, or drywall. Others of us are cinder blocks, windows, or chandeliers. Each is used together to form the building, down to the very last screw. So far, so good. But instead of pushing the building metaphor this far, the Scripture, for good reason, uses the body metaphor to represent the building of our lives together.

Each member of the body is *"fitted and held together"* for the *"proper working of each individual part"* (Ephesians 4:15). The body metaphor more capably serves the point Paul is making. In a home build, there are leftover building materials never put into use. Excess dry wall, boxes of screws, and stacked 2x4s need to be collected and removed from the property once the build is complete. Not so with the body. Every single part is attached and is expected to be useful to the proper functioning of the body. There are no unimportant or spare parts lying around. Even the appendix has a role (even if we're quite not sure what that is). The Bible illustrates this point in three primary passages. Let's look at selected portions of them below.

"...Everyone among you [must] not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think...For just as we have many parts in one body and all the body's parts do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually parts of one another. However, since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to use them properly: if prophecy, in proportion to one's faith; if service, in the act of serving; or the one who teaches, in the act of teaching; or the one who exhorts, in the work of exhortation; the one who gives, with generosity; the one who is in leadership, with diligence; the one who shows mercy, with cheerfulness"

From Romans 12:3-8.

"But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good...But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. For just as the body is one and yet has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ..For the body is not one part, but many...And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has arranged the parts, each one of them in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But now there are many parts, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"... On the contrary, it is much truer that the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary...on these we bestow greater honor...so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same care for one another. And if one part of the body suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if a part is honored, all the parts rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it"

From 1 Corinthians 12:7-27.

"...Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects ...the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love

From Ephesians 4:15-16.

God is doing something with your life beyond making it unshakeable for your own benefit. Your life is an indispensable part of the building of God's kingdom at this point in history. You have a vital role to play as an individual. But you will never become the kingdom-first person He is trying to make of you without having a biblical, healthy connection to the body of Christ, the church. And the church will never be what He is making it into if you are not attached to and functioning properly within it. When each part is unshakeable, properly grounded, and well-built, the church will be healthy and able to carry out her mission, unrestricted by various body ailments. You are a very important part of us.



DIG DEEP

How do you feel about how the church feels about you?

Are these feelings the basis on which your active faith should be grounded? If not, on what should your active faith be grounded concerning the church?

Do you really believe you are an important part of our church. Why or why not?

Describe some of the feelings that arise when you consider the fact that you are an essential part of the church, either contributing to or detracting from its health and mission.

What are the key truths about the church described in the passages above:



LAY DOWN

Father, here I am again, weighing between the actual facts and what my feelings tell me the facts are. In the same way that I need my relationship with You built on the bedrock of Your grace in Christ, I need my relationship with Your Body to be built on truth. Give me eyes to see what is true, so that my faith can lead my heart into action that benefits me, blesses others, and glorifies God. Thank You for wanting that for me. Amen.



BUILD UP

Read each of these passages from today's daily reading directly out of your Bible in their complete form. Use the STAR method to identify what the Spirit is emphasizing to you through His Word and your response.

S (Scripture read):

T (Thought conveyed)

A (Application made)

R (Response given):

UNSHAKEABLE LIFE, DAY 5:

JESUS'S CHURCH

The church is healthy and unified when you abide in Christ.



LISTEN IN

So then you [non-Jews] are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.

Ephesians 2:19-21

A body's brain controls the internal systems of the body, giving proper function to internal organs, various tissues, and critical processes like breathing and digestion without requiring any conscious act of the will to do so. Likewise the brain controls our conscious thoughts, feelings, speech, and movements. As it is with the brain and body, so it is with Christ and the church. Church can be a scary place when members of the body of Christ are not taking cues from its control center, which the Scripture identifies as the Head of the body—Jesus Christ. When the members of the church act independently of its coordinating center (the Head), it can turn on itself from within, or turn against those outside of it. For this reason, it's imperative that each member of the body of Christ has a healthy, abiding relationship with its Head, Jesus Christ.

Jesus directs the members of His Church in every local church to enter into the unfolding of God's kingdom in history, together. God's purpose is to see the rule and reign of Christ unfold in individuals, in individual churches, in the global church, and among those yet to know Him. Jesus gives the church this singular mission in His role as the church's Cornerstone. The cornerstone marks the boundaries and orientation of a building, giving a reference point against which the stones of the building are aligned. Jesus as Cornerstone is the reference point of history. God's plan has been unfolding since Genesis 3 when God prophesied the crushing of Satan's head through a Descendent of Eve (Genesis 3:15). The prophet Isaiah prophesied this descendent would become the Cornerstone of God's kingdom. *"Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion, a tested stone, A precious cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. The one who believes in it will not be disturbed"* (Isaiah 28:16). The New Testament writers refer back to this prophecy to demonstrate that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's ancient redemptive plan. They also make use of the Psalmist's prophecy, which emphasizes Jesus's rejection by many of the Jews:

*"A stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone" (Psalm 118:22).*

All that to say that Jesus is the reference point, one way or another. The Cornerstone is the *“way, truth, and the life”* through whom everyone must come to the Father (John 14:6). *“There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). But to those who reject Him as Lord and Savior, God’s grace will not deliver them. *“The one who believes in the Son has eternal life; but the one who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him”* (John 3:36).

It’s critical that every member of our church has an intimate and abiding relationship with Jesus. This abiding relationship keeps everyone headed in the same direction. Though we are each uniquely gifted, with unique work set aside for everyone, we are all working together to extend the rule and reign of King Jesus—each and every one of us is (as we say at First Baptist Bryan) making Jesus our all and sharing Him with all.

Let’s briefly revisit the Romans 12 passage from yesterday. Not only does Paul emphasize the importance of each member in the body, He places a critical emphasis on each member’s relationship to God. The verses we looked at were preceded by and anchored to the command to *“...present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship”* (Romans 12:1). It’s impossible to worship a King you are living in defiance of with self-agenda and disobedience. We demonstrate our worship not through a song, but by sacrificing our self-agenda in service of God’s kingdom agenda. This posture of surrender must underlie every member of the body if Christ is to reign in His church without opposition.

Your abiding relationship with Christ ensures that He is your constant reference point as Cornerstone. He is the leader you are in constant communication with (and in constant surrender to) as Head. Outside of these dynamics, a church can quickly become derailed by distracted members serving their own agendas, and building their own kingdoms within the church. We don’t get to make our own rules. Every member has the obligation to the rest of us to stay in tune with, and surrendered to, the Lord Jesus. That means that before any thought becomes a careless word or a sinful action, it is shackled to the rule and reign of King Jesus (2 Corinthians 10:5).



DIG DEEP

Why is it important to God’s kingdom agenda that you don’t let your thoughts and feelings dictate your life in the church?

Isn't your life just between you and God? Why would your unshakeable life, well-built upon the foundation of grace in Jesus and the trustworthiness of God, matter to the rest of us?



LAY DOWN

Rate the quality of your abiding relationship with Jesus on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 is worst; 10 is best): _____

Our full surrender is predicated on our accurate understanding of, and faith in, God, His grace toward us (bedrock) and His trustworthy attributes (foundation). Do you think that any foundation relocation or repair is needed in your life? If so, express that below. Asked another way, what are you doing to intentionally form and maintain an abiding relationship with Jesus?

Father, sometimes I honestly forget that the church is Jesus's. I always refer to it as "my church." And I am constantly trying to keep myself in charge of how involved I am and how my relationships inside of it are managed. I confess the sinfulness of that. Help me to have a posture of worship that exalts Jesus to His rightful place as Lord of my life. Help me to live in an abiding relationship with Him. I surrender control of how my life contributes to the life of the church. May there be no hint of treason in my thoughts, words, or actions. For Your glory and kingdom advance I pray—rule and reign without opposition from me. Amen.



BUILD UP

Answer the following questions in preparation for next week.

Does God want First Baptist to grow? If so, in what ways?

What are some personal sacrifices that members, classes, or programs may need to make in order to keep in step with God's growth plan for our church?

UNSHAKEABLE LIFE, DAY 6:

REVIEW & REFLECT

Take a moment to review days 1 - 5 of this week. **Identify the truths that struck you as most significant to the kingdom God is building, in part through your unshakeable life. Write them below:**

Write down any questions you have about the content from this chapter you are unsettled about:

What are some things you will begin doing, or stop doing, in response to what you learned this week?

What is something you'd be willing to share with your GroupLife class this Sunday about what God showed you this week?

UNSHAKEABLE LIFE, DAY 7:

WORSHIP AND GROUPLIFE

GROUPLIFE TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from GroupLife that God emphasized to you today:

SERMON TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from today's sermon that God emphasized to you:

YOUR RESPONSE TO GOD SPEAKING AT CHURCH TODAY:



UNSHAKEABLE MISSION

WEEK 5

God made your life to multiply on mission.

UNSHAKEABLE MISSION, DAY 1:

HIS SOVEREIGN PLAN

God sovereignly placed you around those He wants you to impact.



LISTEN IN

So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything that is in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made by hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might feel around for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His descendants.' Therefore, since we are the descendants of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by human skill and thought. So having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now proclaiming to mankind that all people everywhere are to repent, because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead."

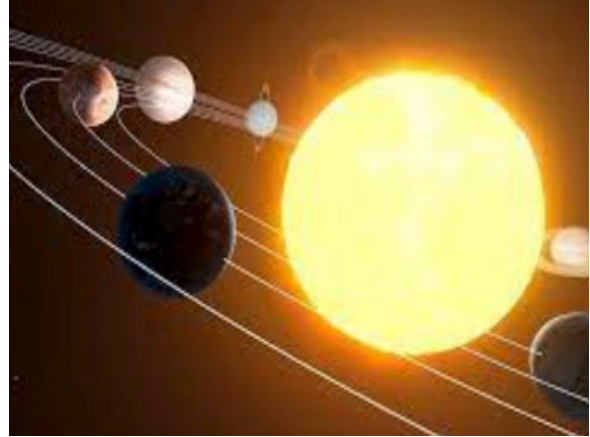
Acts 17:22-31

Paul did for the pagan men of Athens exactly what we did in chapter 1 of *Unshakeable*. He grabbed a hold of their perspective, zoomed it out for them, and helped them to see God's big picture. Not only was Paul helping them to know and understand the God who actually exists, he was helping them to understand what His plan was from creation to new creation. Let's look at some of the key features Paul shared with them that also apply to the kingdom-first unshakeable lives God is building with you and me.

Paul begins with acknowledging that they are worshippers. These pagans who couldn't have been any farther from the truth are just like you and me. We are all worshippers. We all attach value to, and orient our lives around, that person or thing that we treasure most. Everyone has a sun in the center of their personal solar system around which they orbit. For those who have been redeemed by Jesus, He has set them free from the inescapable gravity of sin and self, and has given us a new Son

around which to orbit—the Son we were always made to know, treasure, and orient our lives around.

Paul steered their attention to creation. He said that this God of whom he speaks made the physical world and breathed life into the first created man. God gave these Athenian men the desire to know what is true, an ability to comprehend truth, and the capacity to have a relationship with Truth.



Again, Paul continues to draw their attention to the fact that there is a worship problem that underlies mankind's problems. Instead of worshipping the God who made them, they worshipped gods made by human hands, in temples made by human hands, rather than the God who made *them*. This was at the heart of Satan's tactic to disrupt the creative order, turning it upside down. Satan whispered mistrust to humanity's first ancestors, and they replaced the God who they were made to worship with the service of false gods, upon the false promise that they would receive what God was holding back from them. Sound familiar? This is exactly what Jesus came to deliver us from. If we know Him as Lord and Savior, He has freed us from the powerful grip of sin. We no longer fear its penalty, nor have to do its bidding, though we still deal with its annoying, relentless presence seeking to exert its gravitational force and pull us back in. We're all a part of the same creation story.

Then Paul shifts the focus from creation to God's plan. Because a right worship relationship with God was flipped upside down, He purposefully *"determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation"* (Acts 17:26). God put every person when He wanted them to arrive on the timeline of history. Not only that, He put every person on the continent, nation, city, and even family in which He wanted them to live. You and I are not *where* we are by accident, or *when* we are. In the perfect, infinite wisdom of God, He chose to make this your appointed time and place.

Paul goes on to explain that there was a reason behind what might otherwise seem like random chance. God determined the time and place for each person to live so *"that they would seek God, if perhaps they might feel around for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us"* (Acts 17:27). Here we see God's heart. God wants everyone to find Him. *"God is now proclaiming to mankind that all people everywhere are to repent"* (Acts 17:30). But we also see God's holiness and righteousness. *"Because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead"* (Acts 17:31). In no uncertain terms, he explains to this Athenian audience what is true of everyone of us. We will meet our Maker. We will stand before King Jesus, the ascended Christ appointed as the righteous Judge of us

all. We will stand before Him and be judged, either according to the merits of our own righteousness, or based upon the merits of His own righteousness purchased for us by His own blood, and freely offered to us in love.

So the unshakeable life is not just about you. It's not just about you having the emotional fortitude to handle the hard things life throws at you, and building a stable life in spite of them. It's not just about you coming to entrust your life to the God who wants the very best for you in Himself. Though God truly wants all of this for you, His sovereign plan was to strategically insert you into the timeline of history. Before eternity future begins, time will be wrapped up at the Judgment seat of Christ. And it's for this reason that He ordained your life to contribute to the salvation of others at this time. He wants our lives to be grace-drenched so that we can help others repent of their own dead-end pursuits and find His grace, too. Your unshakeable life matters for the eternity of others. And the sobering reality we must all face is, that if our lives are unstable or unanchored to Jesus, they will make little difference in those around us.



DIG DEEP

Who lives in your neck of the woods? Who's in your family, your friendship group, your work community, or your church that needs to repent and come to Christ? Write their names below:

How does it feel knowing that God has Sovereignly orchestrated the events of your birth so that you would not only exist, but so that you would exist in a certain time and place so that He would work in these peoples' lives, in part, through you? Does that overwhelm you, excite you, compel you into action, cause you to feel shame, etc.? Write your thoughtful, honest answer below:

**IF THE FIRST DISCIPLES HAD ONLY RECEIVED THE ABIDING
RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, BUT DIDN'T ALLOW THAT
ABIDING RELATIONSHIP TO BEAR THE FRUIT OF INFLUENCE
ON OTHERS, YOU WOULDN'T BE READING THIS RIGHT NOW.**

You may be surprised to know that God welcomes your feelings of inadequacy. If you feel adequate for this ministry, you are minimizing what it takes to be used of God in this way. If you feel inadequate, you are exactly where God wants you to be, for “*you can do nothing*” apart from an abiding relationship with Jesus (John 15:5).

Since an intimate and abiding relationship with Christ is the key to being used of God, the stakes couldn't be higher. The abiding life is the best life. But we must know that God has made you for more. He made you for a mission. If the first disciples had only received the abiding relationship with Jesus, but didn't allow that abiding relationship to bear the fruit of influence on others, you wouldn't be reading this right now. Christianity would have died off when the last of the 12 disciples breathed his last breath. We are here today enjoying our inheritance in Christ because the disciples before us understood their role in history—to make Jesus their all and to share Him with all.



LAY DOWN

Father, You used others to help me understand Your goodness and kindness—those men and women who came to know You, who spoke words into my life, who embraced the call to ministry, who devoted their lives to the translation of the Bible in my own language, and countless others who contributed to my life by abiding in You, so You could bear fruit in their appointed place and time. May this also be true of me. Help me to abide in You as if my life, and the eternity of others, depended on it. Amen.



BUILD UP

Read Philippians 2:1-13, paying careful attention to what Jesus had to give up in order to fulfill His own ordained role in history. What are things you need to give up to seek His rule and reign in the lives of others, through you, above all else?

Use the STAR method to journal your dialogue with, and response to, God in the text of Philippians 2:1-13.

S (Scripture read):

T (Thought conveyed)

A (Application made)

R (Response given):

UNSHAKEABLE MISSION, DAY 2:

HIS SENDING AUTHORITY

In His full authority, Jesus sends you on mission.



LISTEN IN

But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated to them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:16-20

It seems that the disciples were not quite sure what to expect or what to do at this post-resurrection meeting with Jesus on the mountain. In verse 17, it says some of them doubted. By looking at the previous resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples, we can rule out that their doubt had to do with His identity. This particular, rarely-used Greek word for doubt is only used one other time in the New Testament, when Peter walked on the water and began to *doubt* whether the Lord was going to keep him afloat in the face of the threatening waves. It didn't involve any doubt pertaining to the identity of the Lord standing on the water before him. The word implies a hesitation, an uncertainty about what was about to happen.

The disciples doubted what to expect at this scheduled appointment with their risen Savior, and what would be expected of them. Should they worship as some did? Should they wait for Him to speak? What should they do in the presence of the King of the Universe, no longer veiled as He once was? Were they to approach Him with the informality of a secret handshake, back slap, or fist bump as they once did on their many road trips? We might expect that with the announcement of His authority, they should do something more elevated, more reverential to acknowledge this exalted version of Himself—perhaps salute, kiss His ring, or bow the knee?

We saw some of that sentiment when King Charles III was coronated King of The United Kingdom in May of 2023. The announcement had already been made upon the death of the Queen Mother that Charles was assuming the throne. Then, with months of build up and anticipation, the ceremony unfolded, inviting the United Kingdom and 14 Commonwealth realms to respond to their newly-coronated King with public gestures of esteem. There is an expectation that a King deserves an appropriate response of honor. So what did Jesus say and do upon announcing

His unqualified authority over all of heaven and earth? What kind of pomp and circumstance was He expecting?

*He reminded them of His authority.
He commissioned them.
And He expected them to go.*

The identity or authority of Christ was not in question. The question was “what was the reign of Christ in this period of history to look like upon His departure?” It’s the same question each of us must ask. “What does the reign of King Jesus look like in my life now that I fully entrust myself to Him with absolute trust and total surrender?” We can respond to Christ’s authority by following God’s heart and trusting His plan for our lives.

**GOD HAS CALLED US TO REACH THOSE AROUND
US, BUT ALSO CALLS HIS DISCIPLES TO GO
WHERE HE HAS NOT BEEN PROCLAIMED.**

We’ve seen in Acts 17 that God has always had a plan to put redeemed people in the midst of those needing redemption for their repentance. God has called us to reach those around us, but also calls His disciples to go where He has not been proclaimed. He has done this throughout all of history. This has always been God’s plan, and we should expect no deviation from His plan as it continues being reaffirmed and reissued at various times to His people. Beginning in Genesis 12:1-3, we see God telling Abram to “go” to the place God would show him, not only to bless and multiply Abram and his family, but so that “*all the families of the earth will be blessed*” (Genesis 12:3). This was echoed in Isaiah 6’s vision of God seated on His throne saying, “*Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us”* (Isaiah 6:8)? God wanted Isaiah and His people to be a “*light to the nations*” (Isaiah 42:6). And this same King of Kings and Lord of Lords would soon return to Heaven’s throne room, having commissioned His disciples to go, to make and multiply disciples who would keep doing that “*to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28:20).

We can be encouraged to know that since that time, many disciples have been made. Disciples who would come to love and treasure the Lord, abide in Him, and surrender their lives fully to these kingdom purposes. Jesus predicted this would happen. “*This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the*

nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). Many have even given their lives to the spread of the gospel ever since. In His sovereign plan, He set apart a people to be the light to the nations to prepare us for His coming. Jesus answered the missionary call of His Father and became God in the flesh. He completed His atoning work on the cross, was raised from the dead, commissioned His disciples, and was ascended to heaven's throne. His Spirit is now actively at work in His followers, indwelling and empowering them to continue making and multiplying disciples who spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. History is unfolding as planned. And He has invited us to build unshakeable lives upon Him to carry this out. It takes fully surrendered, firmly focused abiding men and women to carry out this great commission. Will you yield your unshakeable life to His kingdom purpose?



DIG DEEP

What's your motivation for obedience to the Great Commission? The only legitimate motivation is love for God and people. Time and again, the motivation for Jesus's life was to obey the will of God the Father. We also know that Jesus came to *"seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). **What do you suppose motivated Jesus more—obedience to the Father's will or the redemptive love He has for the lost?** Try to defend your answer biblically.

What about you? Is your motivation for obedience to the Great Commission primarily love for the Lord and respect for His authority? Or is your primary motivation love for people who are lost? Why?



LAY DOWN

The ultimate expression of Jesus's resolute commitment to the will of His Father was in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He yielded His will in prayer, knowing fully what awaited Him. *"My Father, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink from it, Your will be done"* (Matthew 26:42). In the Holy Land, I had the opportunity to see and touch the very same, and now very old, trees that were in the garden when Jesus prayed. I

stood at the stone that is believed to be the place He knelt down to agonize in prayer as He renewed His resolve to fulfill the mission given to Him by God the Father.

If you knew the exact sacrifices that awaited you to fulfill God's specific calling on your life to fulfill your role in the Great Commission, would knowing those sacrifices make it more difficult for you or easier?

If you knew obedience to your Lord meant giving your life for the gospel, would you?

Do you think it's easier to live for the kingdom or die for the kingdom? Explain your answer below:

Father, I can't imagine what God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit went through to pay the price for the sins of the world. My own sins are enough to bear, but bearing the cumulative sins of everyone who has ever or would ever receive forgiveness is staggering. I thank You for the glory of Your undeserved grace. Such amazing love. Thank You...with my life.



BUILD UP

Philippians 2 says that Jesus laid down His entitled glory to accomplish His missionary purpose. Complete the exercise below:

Jesus, I will “die to” whatever, so that I will abide in Christ daily, to follow you. Circle YES or NO.

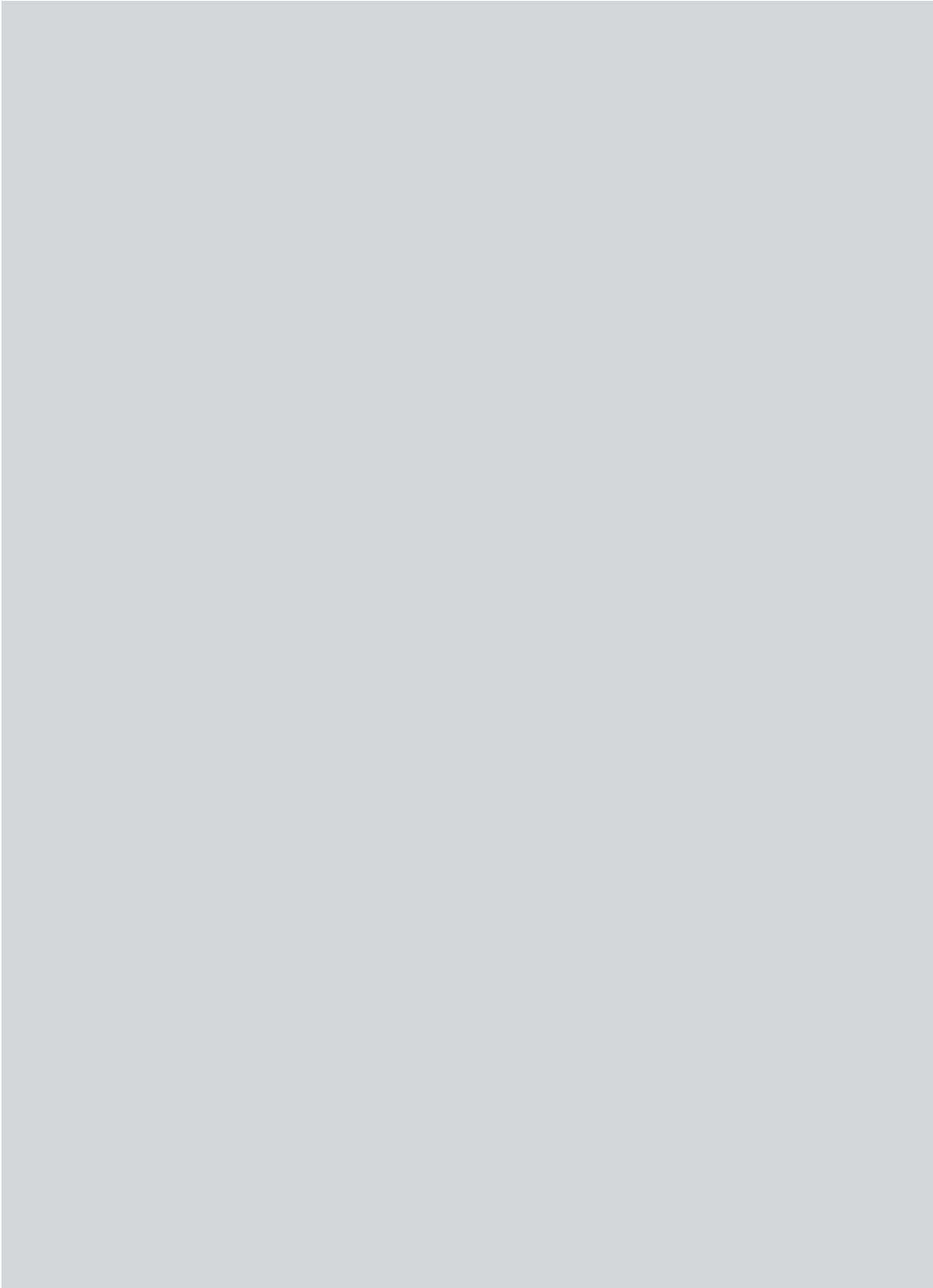
Jesus, I will go to whomever You wish, so You can use me as an instrument in Your hands to invite others into the kingdom. Circle YES or NO.

It's important you are honest with yourself about those answers. Perhaps an honest prayer might sound something like this:

Jesus, I have to be honest. To some degree, I don't want to go. Or would only go under certain conditions. I wouldn't want to give up my house, proximity to family, my job, my nest egg – it feels like too much to ask. And You surely wouldn't ask that of me, right?

Jesus, if You'll change my heart to want what You want, and make Your calling crystal clear, I will follow Your call to go. Circle YES or NO.

In the space below, write an honest “Here I am send me” letter to God, concerning His call to go wherever, and however, He might lead:



UNSHAKEABLE MISSION, DAY 3:

HE SPEAKS SPECIFICALLY

You can expect God's specific leading as you are on mission.



LISTEN IN

Now Paul also came to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brothers and sisters who were in Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted this man to leave with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the ordinances for them to follow which had been determined by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, after being forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; and passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and pleading with him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." When he had seen the vision, we immediately sought to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

So after setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the following day to Neapolis; and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were spending some days in this city. And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were thinking that there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. A woman named Lydia was listening; she was a seller of purple fabrics from the city of Thyatira, and a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. Now when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

From Acts 16:1-14.

I love this story for so many reasons. The truths tucked therein are a huge comfort to me. You see, whenever I sense a "commission" from the Lord, my go-to is to start

planning out everything I need to do to get from point A to point B. In this story, however, we see what Paul living on mission in an abiding relationship with Jesus looked like. He was determined and purposefully obedient. But he knew his place, and followed the leadership of the Lord—the same Lord who said that He would never leave us nor forsake us as we go.

My first church as a child was an Independent Baptist Church, and ever since then I have attended Southern Baptist Churches. I firmly believe the gospel is accessible to anyone, regardless of church affiliation, and I believe that many churches with different labels are making and multiplying disciples of Jesus with unshakeable lives. But that's where I came from. In our Baptist world, it's drilled into us that God's revelation of Scripture is closed. Meaning no one can come along and say, I've heard a word from the Lord that carries with it the authority that would bind all believers everywhere to it. Other traditions, sects, and cults may suggest (or emphatically insist even) that God continues to give revelation through today's popes, prophets, and apostles that *does* carry the same authority and inspiration of Scripture. That is simply not the case. And a quick scan of their contradictions with Scripture make it clear that God did not inspire the Bible to say one thing, and another source to say something contradictory, for God does not and cannot contradict Himself. He is, always has been, and always will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The canon of Scripture is found in the 66 books of the Old and New Testament. Case closed. It's the only reliable and authoritative truth by which people can read God's self-revelation, given to us and preserved for us.

But within that truth-based conviction are hidden potential dangers. Jesus said to a group of devout Jews that they can know the Scriptures backward and forward and yet miss the God who inspired them. We can be a people so book driven, so text dependent, that we stop seeking God beyond the text. God is not constrained to be experienced only through reading. In fact, in all the stories that makeup the Bible, we read, with very few exceptions, the characters experience God in other ways than by reading His Word. God became flesh and walked among us—we experienced interacting with God in the flesh. And He gives us His Holy Spirit to experience Him relationally as well. The Spirit of God gives us comfort, assures us of our sonship, provides power, groans on our behalf in prayer, and directs us (just to name a few). Only some of these ways of experiencing God are in partnership with the written Word of God. God is a God to be experienced, in His Word yes, but also outside of words written down on paper. For example, Paul prayed *"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. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe"* (Ephesians 1:17-19a). The danger of being so Word centered is that it can cause us to be closed off to the way God reveals in His Word (ironically) that He wants to interact with us outside of, but in harmony with, His Word.

Another danger is that Baptists may erroneously come to believe that God does not personally speak to us today. The argument goes something like this: "God used to speak, and we have those words written down in the Bible, so we don't need Him to speak anything else. Anything other than the Bible cannot be trusted." There's a kernel of truth in that. The Bible does have a unique role as the sole objective standard of truth against which we measure personal, subjective interactions with God. There's humility in that. Because we know that people are susceptible to error when discerning God's voice.

**GOD'S SPIRIT, GOD'S WORD, AND GOD'S PEOPLE ARE
ACTIVELY, INDEPENDENTLY, AND COOPERATIVELY INVOLVED
IN THE FELLOWSHIP WE HAVE WITH GOD PERSONALLY.**

I once attended a church in which two married individuals (not to each other) came to believe God was telling them to divorce their spouses and marry each other—on an international mission trip of all places! They were firmly convinced they were mission-driven soulmates late to find and fall in love with each other. So they followed through on their beliefs that God had spoken, and left their families to be together. They made the tragic mistake of following a subjective impression of God's voice, untested by God's Word. But just because we have the capacity for being misled does not mean that we shouldn't expect a believer to hear from God, to know His voice, be led of God, and to be ministered to by God through more than Scripture. Jesus says *"the sheep listen to his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out...the sheep follow him because they know his voice"* (John 10:3-4). God's Spirit leads and directs us personally. God uses human instruments as well. God's Spirit, God's Word, and God's people are actively, independently, and cooperatively involved in the fellowship we have with God personally.

When it comes to following Christ in carrying out His Great Commission, His direct leadership is critical. Consider Paul's journey to Derbe and Lystra in Acts 16. What are ways that God directly led Paul and his companions? First, they happened to meet a young believer named Timothy. By happenstance, right? No, because God was sovereignly at work to bring them together to further His kingdom reign. In verse 3, Paul "wanted" Timothy to leave with him and circumcised Timothy so he would not be an unnecessary offense to the Jews they would be ministering to. This conviction was birthed in Paul's heart by the Lord, and I am *certain* that Timothy made sure of that! They continued on their journey in what way seemed sensible to them, but were *"forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia"* (Acts 16:6). Clearly Paul was

resolute in following Christ's Great Commission, but Paul didn't leave Jesus behind to go do His commands. Jesus was coming with them, and comes with us, to every place He leads us. Paul continued on his journey and again, *"the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them"* (Acts 16:7). We don't know how the Spirit forbid or did not allow Paul to go to specific places, but we see that the Spirit gave active leadership to His life. Verses 9 and 10 describe a vision they received which compelled them to conclude God was leading them to Macedonia, and they immediately pivoted their plans to go there. Then, it became clear to them to spend time in the city of Philippi in the district of Macedonia, where they would encounter Lydia, who believed, and whose household believed. Lydia was likely the first convert in what is today considered Europe. The gospel was spreading, as directed by the Spirit.



DIG DEEP

If the Bible were the only way God still speaks, how would anyone know where to go, when to go, and with whom to speak when they got there?

How should a believer confidently receive opportunities that come along to join God on mission? How do the church and church leaders play a part in that? Be specific:



LAY DOWN

If God were to speak to you about a missions opportunity (through heart impressions, circumstances, church leaders), and the opportunity confirms what the Bible teaches about fulfilling the Great Commission, and the specifics of the opportunity do not contradict Scripture, what's your next move?

How do you tell the difference between you just not wanting to do something, and God forbidding you to do something?

Father, I am yielded to the general command to obey the Great Commission, recognizing I am where I am because of You. Help me to be faithful as a missionary right where I am to help others to know You as Lord and Savior. Help me to live an abiding life that is in regular communication with You through responding to Your Word through prayer and obedience. I look forward to You leading me specifically to be on mission. Amen.



BUILD UP

Look up and read 1 Samuel 2:18–26; 3:1-18, 2 Thessalonians 3, and Luke 1:1-38. From those Scriptures, extract and list principles about joining God on mission that believers need to know today in fulfilling the Great Commission:

UNSHAKEABLE MISSION, DAY 4:

HIS SPIRIT EMPOWERS

Fruitful mission work is impossible apart from His Spirit.



LISTEN IN

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had given orders by the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of things regarding the kingdom of God. Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So, when they had come together, they began asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time that You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" But He said to them, "It is not for you to know periods of time or appointed times which the Father has set by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and as far as the remotest part of the earth."

Acts 1:1-8

At some point in your life, you probably heard a grandparent, parent, or leadership guru say to always use a sharpened axe. It may surprise you that the old adage is found in the wisdom literature of the Bible. *"If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of bringing success"* (Ecclesiastes 3:10). The wisdom of this principle came into clear focus when I was trying to turn large portions of a fallen oak tree in my backyard into useable firewood. Along comes my strapping soon-to-be son-in-law with a fiancé to impress. I give him my dull axe, and after many, many attempts at getting that log split, he finally managed to do it. But he didn't split more than one or two logs for a reason. And it's for that reason I had the wisdom to not even try!

When it comes to living our lives on mission, Jesus gives us some encouraging news. He doesn't just sharpen us, He goes with us. His Spirit is ever present. He doesn't just want our axes to be sharp, He wants to introduce into the mix a hydraulic log-splitter that can do far more than any sharpened-axe wielding disciple ever could. It's for this reason that after giving His command to His disciples to go into all the earth to share the gospel, that He didn't give specifics. He was calling them to do something they could not do without His personal presence. Jesus promised to be with them

all, simultaneously, in the person of God the Holy Spirit, as God scattered them to the places ordained for each one of them. But in order for that to happen, they had to wait for the Holy Spirit to come.

**JESUS PROMISED TO BE WITH THEM ALL, SIMULTANEOUSLY,
IN THE PERSON OF GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT, AS GOD SCATTERED
THEM TO THE PLACES ORDAINED FOR EACH ONE OF THEM.**

We don't have to wait for the Holy Spirit to indwell us in the same way the disciples did. The Spirit had not yet been sent into the world to indwell every believer. For us, the Bible teaches that everyone who belongs to Jesus is indwelled with the Spirit. *"However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him"* (Romans 8:9). Acts 1:12 tells us what the disciples did after witnessing Jesus's ascension:

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went up to the upstairs room where they were staying, that is, Peter, John, James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. All these were continually devoting themselves with one mind to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. At this time Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters (a group of about 120 people was there together)..." (Acts 1:12-15).



DIG DEEP

Consider what the disciples did for their unique time in history between the ascension of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit. **How does the principle to wait on the Spirit's empowering apply to believer's today?**

Is daily dying to self and abiding in Jesus enough to activate the Spirit's empowering? Does the abiding believer need to wait for a special empowering to live on mission? When might devoted prayer be necessary?

Read Galatians 5:22-23. **How do the fruits of the Spirit aid you in fulfilling the Great Commission?** What are the predictable results on your mission field when you do *not* exhibit the character traits of the Spirit that are the fruit of an intimate and abiding relationship with Christ?



LAY DOWN

Father, I never want to presume that You're ready to work through me if You're not. Help me to abide with You in such a way that I know Your will, want Your will, and am empowered to do Your will as I engage the kingdom commission to help others come under the rule and reign of Jesus. Amen.



BUILD UP

Read Psalm 96. Use the STAR method to identify what the Spirit is emphasizing to you through His Word and your response.

S (Scripture read):

T (Thought conveyed)

A (Application made)

R (Response given):

UNSHAKEABLE MISSION, DAY 5:

BUILDING TOGETHER

Our best Great Commission work is done together.



LISTEN IN

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, and like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by people, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture:

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a choice stone, a precious cornerstone, And the one who believes in Him will not be put to shame."

This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for unbelievers, "A stone which the builders rejected, This became the chief cornerstone," and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense";

for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this they were also appointed. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2:1-10

This is the last day of your daily readings. I'd like to provide some closure for where we've been, and to give final emphasis to the mission to which God is calling each and every one of us. My prayer is that *Unshakeable* has given you biblical lenses through which to view the life God is inviting you to build, and His everlasting kingdom He is wanting you to build with that life. Truly, the unshakeable life is a life and legacy built on King Jesus. In the end, nothing else matters for us individually, or for us collectively as a church family.

Peter's first letter is addressed to believers in no particular location "*who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood*" (1 Peter 1:1b-2). If you have

entrusted your life and eternity, through faith, to the grace of God in Christ, then Peter's letter is likewise addressed directly to you.

Peter challenges believers to be a part of what God is wanting to collectively build with them. He says they are "living stones" and are being *"built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 2:5). Peter is describing what God wants us to build, together with our lives. He says that God is building all of us, living stones, into a spiritual house in which something very important takes place. We become a body of priests that helps others trust and treasure Jesus above all else. This begins, as all things pertaining to God do, with *the* living stone upon which all the others are built, none other than Jesus Christ. And so we come full circle again to the bedrock of grace in Jesus upon which unshakeable lives are built.

Peter indicates progression toward this goal. We don't start out this way. We grow this way, as long as a healthy diet of the Word of God fuels our growth. Paul said the same thing when he talked about living sacrifices in Romans 12. Paul said that renewing of the mind is critical if one is to live as a sacrifice unto God (Romans 12:2). God's Word is the critical part of the foundation, for without it, we can have little certainty about the bedrock of grace or attributes of God that compel us to trust Him.

**WE GLADLY GIVE UP OUR EARTHLY TREASURE
INVESTING IN THE PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE
KINGDOM WORK GOD IS CALLING US TO DO.**

Then Peter reminds us that this spiritual house has a purpose. A kingdom purpose. This is true spiritually, but this is no less true physically. We build buildings because of what takes place inside them with those who are gathered there. We gladly give up our earthly treasure investing in the physical infrastructure of the kingdom work God is calling us to do as a church body. We give sacrificially, reach out to all, and are being developed to make Jesus our all and share Him with all. God doesn't want us to build buildings, physical or spiritual, that are just there as religious eye candy for passersby. He is building us for a purpose. We are a priesthood, standing in the gap, gospel in hand, between the Redeemer and those in need of redemption in our city, our nation, and our world.

This passage closes with a reminder that together we build. We are, Peter says, *"A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"* (1 Peter 2:9). All of this for the kingdom purpose of proclaiming the glory of the grace that can be found only in Jesus. We have received the grace and mercy of God to share it. When our lives are sturdy and unshakeable, we can weather our own storms and turn our lives outward to fulfill the unique mission God has for us.



DIG DEEP

Your life is not just for you. It is a living stone to be built with other believers into a missionary training and sending center called "church." In a typical month, in what kind of scenarios are you consciously on mission to advance the gospel?

If there is little detectable kingdom missions activity in your life, could it be that there is an underlying growth issue that needs to be addressed? Journey Groups help believers understand grace in Jesus, develop an abiding relationship, understand their spiritual gifts, and enter into God's mission. **Write down your plan for tending to your abiding relationship with Jesus and your engagement in His mission, either in Journey Groups or in some other way in the coming year:**

There are opportunities regularly being discussed in the Loop and in your GroupLife class to be on mission. There are opportunities to give sacrificially, serve our community, serve the next generation, and to engage in short-term mission projects. **Write a goal for yourself this fall and for the next calendar year to engage in God's mission to our city, nation, and world.**



LAY DOWN

It's impossible to serve the agenda of the world and God's kingdom simultaneously. Often we aren't on mission because our lives are being overcrowded by things

that are temporary. We feel we don't have time for Journey Groups or missions opportunities. **How could you free up 2 hours a week of time currently spent on temporary things, to shift your focus to building God's eternal Kingdom?**

Father, help me to do an honest assessment of whether or not my life is making a kingdom impact. If it's not, help me to consider the temporary things that are crowding out my missions engagement in our city, nation, and world. Help me to live as a living sacrifice for Your kingdom above all else. I pray this for Your glory and the glory of Your grace. Amen.



BUILD UP

Review your *Unshakeable Personal Journal* over the last 6 weeks. Identify anything God wants to demo and discard in your life that He has shown you during *Unshakeable*.

- .
- .
- .
- .

Now, identify some things that God wants to build or rebuild in your life. Pare those things down to the top three things that have the greatest importance.

- .
- .
- .
- .

Write out a prayer recommitting yourself to God's plan to use your life for His kingdom purposes, through abiding in fellowship with, and dependence on, Him:

UNSHAKEABLE MISSION, DAY 6:

REVIEW & REFLECT

Take a moment to review days 1 - 5 of this week. **Identify the truths that struck you as most significant to the kingdom God is building, in part through your unshakeable life. Write them below:**

Write down any questions you have about the content from this chapter you are unsettled about:

What are some things you will begin doing, or stop doing, in response to what you learned this week?

What is something you'd be willing to share with your GroupLife class this Sunday about what God showed you this week?

UNSHAKEABLE MISSION, DAY 7:

WORSHIP AND GROUPLIFE

GROUPLIFE TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from GroupLife that God emphasized to you today:

SERMON TAKEAWAYS

Record any insights from today's sermon that God emphasized to you:

YOUR RESPONSE TO GOD SPEAKING AT CHURCH TODAY:

FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Grow in GroupLife

Sundays at 10am. GroupLife is the essential starting point for spiritual transformation in community with other believers. Disciples of Jesus connected in GroupLife learn to follow, love each other, and live on mission. Weekly on-campus GroupLife classes meet during the 10am hour between our two Sunday Worship Service times. They are organized by life stage—there’s a group for everyone. See fbcbryan.org/grouplife for a listing of Sunday morning GroupLife classes. It’s our desire for everyone to actively participate or serve in a long-term, weekly GroupLife class.

Wednesdays at 6pm. On Wednesdays evenings during the Spring and Fall semesters, our MidWeek ministry offers short-term studies for adults and ministries across all of our life stages. MidWeek groups are a great first step toward connecting and growing in community, while giving attention to a specific area of needed spiritual growth. Recovery groups are a specific type of MidWeek group that addresses an aspect in life that needs Christ-centered restoration—we call these recovery groups our “Living Well Ministries”. See fbcbryan.org/midweek for a listing of short-term MidWeek groups.

Re:generation. “Regen” is a discipleship-based recovery ministry that helps individuals address difficult life issues keeping them from experiencing abundant life in Christ. Regen is broader than recovery ministries that only address problems with addictions. Everyone has remnants of brokenness Christ wants to deliver them from. Regen has helped people work through anger, unforgiveness, depression, shame, and common addictions – any prevailing obstacle that interferes with freedom in Christ. Regen begins at the beginning of every Fall semester and concludes at the end of every Spring semester. It meets during MidWeek on Wednesdays. See fbcbryan.org/regen to learn more about and register for Re:gen.

Multiply on Mission

Journey Groups. Multiplying on mission involves missions preparation, volunteer service, and engaging in missions opportunities. Our primary way to ready believers for multiplying on mission is through Journey Groups. Journey Groups help believers to learn to walk in an intimate and abiding relationship with Jesus, understand their spiritual gifting, and bear the fruit of uniquely multiplying their lives on mission. See fbcbryan.org/multiplying for more information on missions preparation through Journey Groups, volunteer service, and missions opportunities.

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AUTHOR INFORMATION



David Booth has been a beloved and adopted son of God through our King and Savior Jesus Christ since the age of 8 years old. He has been married to Christy for nearly 28 years and is the proud father of two girls, two boys, and is "Poppi" to his two priceless granddaughters.

He has been our Families Pastor at First Baptist Bryan since 2016 and also the Discipleship Pastor since 2020. His life ambition is to leave a legacy of trusting and treasuring Jesus to his family and to the men and women he has served and known in over 20 years of full-time ministry. David earned a Ph.D. at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's School of Church and Family Ministries in 2013. He has served churches in Virginia, Georgia, and Texas in a variety of ministerial roles.

