

## Faith, Family, and Freedom

### “The Values that Refine and Define Us”

Genesis 1:28 ESV

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There is the faith that holds us, the family that shapes us, the freedom that calls us to something greater, and the fire that sends us. We need to light a fire under us and take the gospel everywhere, and we've got to expand the kingdom here on a foundation of faith. If we don't have this foundation, nothing will be right with the rest of the building. If we have a bad foundation, we're going to have a bad structure, we'll have a structure that doesn't have integrity, and a structure that can't take weight. The foundation of faith is what's going to get us through and keep us rooted when the winds and storms of life blow. When we're rooted and grounded in a faith that defines, carries, and holds us when the winds blow, we may be bent, but we will not be broken.

Hebrews 11:1 ESV

*“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

When is faith? *Now*. It's not something that's off in the future. *Hope* is in the future, but faith is *now* - not someday. A lot of people attend church in America, but that doesn't mean a lot of them have dug their roots down into the faith that holds us. There's something called the “blessed hope” in Scripture where we know something good is coming. That's *hope*. It's *future* tense. But “now” faith is *present* tense. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, but it's not just *blind* faith. It's faith based on our relationship with God who is unchanging, unmovable, and who will never leave us or forsake us.

Faith is unchanging. It's the *evidence* - the proof of things not seen. Just because we don't see it doesn't mean it's not there. We don't see the wind, but we know the *effects* of the wind. We see what it *does*. On top of mountain ridges where there are constant steady winds, the trees bend and won't grow straight anymore because the sustained wind causes them to bend and bow. It's the power of the wind that does that. Up in a tall building, the sway of the building can literally be felt when there are strong winds. So, we see the effects of the wind. We know it works. We know it's there, but we can't see the wind. It's the same way with faith. Faith is substance - the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:6 ESV

*"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."*

What is that reward? The reward is Jesus. Those who diligently seek *him* are rewarded with his *presence*. James 4:8 says, *"Draw near to God and he will draw near to you."* As we initiate movement towards him, he brings movement back. He reciprocates with it. *Why?* Because he's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. People say, *"I want to feel him. I want to know he's present."* But welcome to phase two of growth and maturity. When we're a brand new Christian, it's like we feel him all the time. It's like we just got born again. Something's happened. Things are changing. We're praying and God is answering our prayers.

It's like we *can't miss* and we get real confident. That works - *until it doesn't*. And then we start into *another* phase. The second phase of that is the panic search for Truth stage. What happens is, as God answers our prayers, we *feel* his presence. We come into church and the music sounds different. We hear a sermon and we say, *"Amen. I'm in alignment with that. I get it."* But then one day we don't feel it. One day we wake up on Sunday just tired. But we come because it's the "right thing" to do and we're faithful, even if we're tired or had a long weekend. But we come and we do it. And what happens is we may not feel him, but we *know* he's here. *Why?* Substance. Faith is substance.

And he says this, *"the righteous shall walk by faith."* He says we're to walk by *faith* and not by *sight*. So in that second stage when suddenly our prayers aren't getting answered, we don't feel it like we felt it earlier. When people come and they're excited about the *church*, they really need to be excited about Jesus, so that their faith is in *him*, not in us. If our faith is in the church body, we know it's probably not very stable.

The faith that holds us is also the faith that sends us. The faith that grounds us, that we build our life and family on, that we build our freedom on, the faith that holds us, supports us, holds us up in the hard times is also the same faith that sends us out. We're to go out. We're to preach the gospel. We're to share the good news. We're to bring others into the kingdom. We should at least be like the disciple who went and got his brother and said, *"Come see. I know a man. Come and see. Come and see."* That faith *sends* us. The faith that holds us is also the faith that *empowers* us to live for him. The faith that holds us is the faith that moves us to change the world.

None of us wants a boring Christian life. It's just cruel and unusual punishment to be boring as a Christian. This is the greatest adventure *ever*. Josh Howton in a podcast said, *"You know what? I tell my kids this often, that being a Christian is the most fun thing ever. If it's not, then we need to figure out what's happening."* Maybe we're not grounded in the faith that holds us. If it's not enjoyable and fun, listen to this: the faith that holds us keeps us standing in every storm. The faith that holds us leads us deeper into the heart of God as we grow in our faith life. How do we grow in our faith? First of all, we have to spend *time* with him. But how do we spend time with God? Obviously, through prayer, but how else do we spend time with God? We spend time in his Book. We spend time in his Word.

When we get to know his Word, we'll get to know *him*. This is how we get to know God. He leads us into the faith that holds us, and leads us deeper into the heart of God. But we do that by getting to know his words. This is how we get to know *him*. This is where we get to know his *character*. This is where we get to know how he responded to us - to mankind - to people - how he responded to the wicked, to the righteous, to culture, to people that were fake, to the wealthy that were wicked, and also how he responded to the wealthy that were *generous*.

It's all in here in this Book - his nature, his character, and who he is. We get to know him by that. Dr. Benjamin Rush was a very godly man. He was one of our founding fathers and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and he also became one of the fathers of education. He said, *"The gospel of Jesus Christ prescribes the wisest rules for just conduct in every situation of life. My only hope of salvation is in the infinite transcendent love of God manifested to the world by the death of his Son upon the cross."*

### **The family that shapes, the family that forms us, and the family that anchors us.**

Genesis 1:26-28 ESV

*"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"*

That is the call of family in this world - the treasure of family that we have in Christ - and we stand on shoulders of giants that have gone before us. John Adams, in his personal diary dated June 2nd, 1778, wrote in regard to family, *"The foundations of national morality must be laid in private families. It's like laying foundations - bricks and mortar must be laid in families. In vain are schools and universities instituted if loose principles and bad habits are impressed upon children in their earliest years."* Vodie Beichchum said, *"Don't be surprised if we send our children off to Babylon, they come back speaking in a new language."* He's saying the same thing, that if we send our children away for institutions to raise our children, but those institutions are not godly in values, and they don't hold the same values that families hold, then it's done in vain.

On the 81 foot-high National Monument to the Forefathers in Plymouth, Massachusetts, the largest granite structure in America, is found the recipe for how our nation was built and how we will reclaim our nation and rebuild liberty. Of those four foundations, faith is on top, but another one of those foundations is education. The representative of education is a mother sitting with a child in her lap holding a Bible, or actually, a copy of the Ten Commandments by her side. And it says this, *"The mothers are the earliest and most important instructors of youth. The foundation of national morality must be laid in private foundations of families. The family that shapes us also strengthens us. The family that shapes us reminds us who we are."*

### **The family that shapes us keeps us grounded in love.**

The family that shapes us prepares us for God's purpose. The family that shapes us teaches us to live with faith and purpose. There is also the freedom that calls us to live for more. That's what freedom does. It causes and gives us a picture that there's more out there than we are experiencing right now.

Galatians 5:1 ESV

*"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."*

We know historically that when he wrote that, he was talking about the old covenant law. He was saying we are no longer bound to the old covenant. There's a *new* covenant. Jesus even said it when he instituted communion: *"This is the new covenant in my blood."* And the old covenant was passed away and a new one came. And now we're under that covenant, and we are now free.

John 8:32-33 ESV

*"Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"*

That's what Truth does. Truth is not a concept or a premise. Truth is a Person. Jesus said, *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."* We will *know* Jesus, and when we know Jesus, we will know *freedom*. We will be made free.

John 8:36 ESV

*"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."*

The freedom that calls us to live for more is the freedom found only in Christ - a freedom that releases us from sin, redeems our past, empowers us to live with purpose, passion, and divine destiny. Benjamin Franklin was on the edge of Christianity. He was a rascal. He was a wild man, but listen to how he talked about the things of the kingdom: *"Freedom is not a gift bestowed upon us by other men, but a right that belongs to us by the laws of God and nature."* He's hinting back towards the Declaration of Independence - the law of nature and nature's God.

It's a right that belongs to us because God gave it, not man. And, if God gave it, can man take it away? No. They can take a semblance of it away, but they'll never take our freedom. The freedom that calls us to live for more isn't a license to do as we please, but a call to live as we're meant to - fully surrendered, Spirit-led, and alive to God's purpose. That's what freedom does. It's not just so we can just go do what we want. It's so we can do what he wants. We can fulfill our call in him.

Freedom that calls us awakens something deep within us - a holy hunger to rise above mediocrity and to walk in the fullness of who God created us to be. There are nefarious forces out there that want us to give up our freedom so that they can take care of us. The World Economic Forum said, *"You'll own nothing and be happy."* If there's anything to stand and fight for, it's freedom, because it's not from man, it's a gift and a right from God.

### **The fire that sends us to build our families.**

We can't do it on our own. It doesn't work. We need the Holy Spirit. We need the Fire of God, the Holy Spirit, the person of the Spirit to walk with us - the Paraklētos - the one called alongside to walk with us, to hold our arms up when we can't hold them up, when we can't stand up so that we can lead our family, to build our families, and to empower our legacy. We should want to leave a mark that'll never be erased for the glory of God, and to reach the world. We'll never reach the world unless the Holy Spirit makes the way for us to do so, and we say "Yes" to him.

Acts 1:5 ESV

*"For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized [immersed] with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."* When we're born again, we're filled with him, and then we can be covered by him, so that when we walk out, he's *within* us *and* without. Covered, empowered. Acts 18 follows that up with, *"But you shall receive power [dunamis - dynamite, explosive in nature] when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses."* That's an imperative in the Greek language, which is a command. In Jerusalem, right where they were - in Judea, a broader area - and Samaria, which was on the other side of the tracks.

Revivalist Jonathan Edwards of the First Great Awakening said, *"The great work of God's spirit upon this land is to awaken souls to eternal realities that churches may be filled with divine influence and that civil life may be ordered under righteousness."* Also, revivalist George Whitfield said, *"The fire that sends us ignites the world around us. God the Spirit is moving upon this land to awaken sinners, to bring them to Christ and to mold a nation under the fear of God. The great work of God's Spirit upon this land is to awaken souls to eternal realities that churches may be filled with divine influence and that civil life may be ordered under righteousness."*

He's talking about in the body of Christ, in the Church, and in the culture itself, revival will touch every element. It's like rising water touches everything in its path. We ought to be able to look out and see the world on fire in a good way, not a bad way. It's easy to look around and see everybody's hair on fire right now, right? We need to take a step back and be wise and strategic in the way we approach things. That means we go and vote them out of office next time. What goes around comes around. The fire that sends us burns with passion - the passion of his purpose. The fire that sends us keeps us burning until the whole world hears. One of the great revivalist preachers said, *"I douse myself with gasoline and set myself on fire so that people can come and watch me burn."*

## **Prayer**

*Father, we thank you for Your Word. You remind us that faith holds us, family shapes us, and freedom calls us out to places yet unknown. And the fire of Your Holy Spirit burns hot and alive inside of us. Lord, we don't want to just move on, but to build upon the foundations that have been laid here as we continue to build the structure. Father, we honor You for how you speak to our heart and how You lay these foundations into our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen*