

# **Pump Up Your Faith**

## **Follow Me series #2**

### **By Bill Aumack**

We're in our new series, Follow Me. I hope you've been enjoying the series so far. And we're talking about what a disciple does, right? They follow their leader. And we're disciples of Jesus, and we're trying to follow him as best we can. Last week, Pastor kicked us off with a great message about following Jesus. And this week, we're gonna be talking about pumping up your faith. I don't know how many remember the old Saturday night skit, with the two guys that were muscle bound. We're here to pump you up. Making fun of Arnold Schwarzenegger, I think. So I promise not to do that joke again.

All right. Let's do a little test, and I promise I'm not gonna embarrass anybody, but let's do a little test. How many of you believe that when you go out to your car after church and try and start it, it's gonna start? Let's see your hands. Like 100% of us. Now I have owned some cars where that was a crap shoot. Okay? But today I'm pretty confident that the Mighty Ridgeline is gonna start after church. Now watch it, not today, but pretty confident. Now, for this part, don't raise your hands. Don't... no hands. How many of you absolutely believe that thing you're praying for, that somebody gets better, that some relationship is restored, that there's a new job, whatever that thing is you're praying for is going to be answered? I would dare say it wasn't 100% of us. We have more faith in the Delco battery and starter in our car than we have in Jesus sometimes. Because we've all prayed for something and not gotten it. Right? We have prayed the good prayer, please heal so-and-so, and they don't get better. We've prayed for that failing marriage and it is not restored. So what do we do about that? How do we do that?

And you know, building our faith is a little bit like building a muscle, right? You've got to use it, use it or lose it, right? Anybody here ever broke a leg and had to wear a cast a long time? Anybody here? Couple of us. I've noticed that runs in families. If somebody raises a hand in the family, somebody else raises their hand in the family. Daredevils, I guess. What happens when you take that cast off after you've been wearing it for a long time? Is your leg in good shape and ready to go?

No, right? You gotta go to physical therapy and build those muscles back up and get ready to go. You didn't use the muscles, they atrophied. Faith is like a muscle. You don't use it, it atrophies. It goes away, okay? And you don't get your faith just because you turned to 21, or just because your parents had faith, or just because your pastor has faith, right? That's not how it works.

So the question is, how do we get faith? Well, I'm glad you asked that. Take out your sermon notes, take out your Bibles. We're gonna look at a couple things today. There are so many verses in the Bible on faith, we can't begin to look at them all, but we're gonna cover a couple of them here.

So here's some practices that will help you build your faith. Number one, spend time with God so that you what? Know God. Can you have faith in somebody you don't know? No, right? If I said, you know, hey, we're gonna have a work day here at church in a couple of weeks, and I asked a couple of you to come, and you all said, yes, I'll be there. I have some amount of faith that you'll show up, right? But I wouldn't have that same faith for some random stranger walking by, because I don't know them, right? You ever notice that little kids, have great faith in mom and dad, because they know them, they trust them. They know who they are.

Let's look at a Bible text, Romans chapter 10 verse 17. Turn to Romans 10:17. way back there in the New Testament. Give me an amen when you get there. Man, you guys are fast. Romans 10:17, it says, Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message. The message is heard through the word about Christ. Where does faith come from? Hearing the message. Hearing what message? The word about Christ. I mean, that's really pretty straightforward. Right? That doesn't need a lot of explanation. You don't have to go look this up in some Bible dictionary. What do they mean? That's pretty clear. Where does your faith come from? From hearing about Christ. Okay, that's where we get our faith. That's how we get to know God so that we can trust God. Because we can't trust somebody we don't know.

For some of us, remember back in the days when we were dating before we got married, and some of us may be in this stage of our lives where we're still dating, that's okay. But that first date, right? That first date, how do you feel at that first date? Little nervous, right? Little nervous, don't know how this is gonna go, or is this gonna work out or not work out? Do I like them or not? Do they like me or not? Are we compatible, right? There's all these questions. Do you have faith that

it's gonna go well? Not usually, right? Again, it's kind of a roll of the dice. Maybe this will go well, maybe it won't. Sometimes you've got an exit plan. Okay, friend, you better text me at 10 o'clock so I can bail if I need to. Okay? How do you feel after the 20th date? A lot more confident, right? Feeling good about this, why? Because you know something about that other person now. You're feeling more confident. It's probably gonna be an okay date, right? What's the difference between the first date and the 20th date? How much you know that person, right? How much you know that person. That's what we have to do.

Faith comes from knowing God, right? Reading the Word allows the Holy Spirit to call to your remembrance, to your mind, the things that you need to remember in a given situation. Right? God says, you know, I'll give you the things to say if you've put them in there, right? Otherwise the Holy Spirit's wandering around in a big empty room. Hello, hello, hello. Right? You've gotta put something in there and then the Holy Spirit will help you remember that at the right time when it comes. Okay? And the Bible's full of examples, good and bad, of faith. And they're all instructive for us because they all help us learn something. Okay? Spend time with God. You cannot have faith in someone you don't know. It's just that simple.

All right, number two, how do we build our faith? Ask for more faith. If you feel like your faith isn't all that it should be, ask for more faith. Two weeks ago, we talked about the forgiveness, right? Remember that sermon, if you've forgotten, it's on YouTube. But turn with me to Luke 17. This is where, remember Peter is asking Jesus, how many times should we forgive somebody? Like seven times? Look at me, Jesus, because I'm so mighty, because I said seven instead of three, right? Remember that? So let's pick up Luke 17 verse three. and see what Jesus says, we read this just a couple weeks ago, it says, if your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them, and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day, and seven times come back to you saying, I repent, you must forgive them. All right, we talked about that last time, that's crazy, right? Seven times in a day, I'd be like, what's wrong with you, right? But what do the disciples say, verse five, The apostle said to the Lord, what? Increase our faith. That seems like a weird answer. We're gonna get to that. Then Jesus replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, be uprooted and planted in the sea and it will obey you. Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he

comes in from the field, now come along and sit down to eat? Won't he rather say, prepare my supper? Get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink. After that, you may eat and drink. Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, you should say, we are unworthy servants, we have only done our duty."

Wow. We could spend a lot of time on that and we're not going to today, but we wanna look at it real quickly, right? So Peter says, should we forgive seven times? Jesus says not seven times a lifetime, but seven times a day. And the apostles say, give us more faith. And you're like, how are forgiveness and faith related? Because they are, because they are. Forgiveness and faith are very much intertwined. They say, give us faith. Because I think the apostles realized how far off the mark they were. The apostles are going, we thought we were climbing to the top of Mount Everest, and we thought we were doing pretty good, and you know, the peaks right there, we're gonna make it, yay us. And we just found out we're walking up a small hill. Right? We aren't even close to where we're supposed to be. So Lord, increase our faith. Right? Because we ain't getting it done. Increase our faith. And then Jesus tells him the story about the servant. Is he gonna get a big reward because he did what he was told to do? No. If any of you work, at a job where you're the supervisor. You know that in today's world, everybody wants like a bonus because they showed up. I was here like eight hours yesterday. Yeah, but did you do anything or were you just here? Right? Jesus says, you know, you don't get a big bonus, you don't get a big reward for just doing what you're supposed to do. That's what you're supposed to do. Suppose you tell one of your kids to take out the trash or clean up their room or whatever. Do they get a trip to Disneyland when they take the trash out? No. Some of them are going, that's a good idea. Sorry, parents. Right? We get a reward when we do something above.

And sometimes we get discouraged, because it says if you had faith as small as a mustard seed, you've seen mustard seeds, right? I mean, when you get old, mustard seeds don't exist anymore because your eyes aren't good enough to see them. They are tiny, okay? And Jesus says if you have that little tiny bit of faith, you can move the mulberry tree. or in Matthew 17, you can move the mountain. And you're like, I can't even get my prayer answered for Aunt Mildred. I must have less faith than that tiny mulberry seed. And that can be a little bit sometimes depressing, make us feel bad. Like I'm not getting it done. But I don't think that's

what it's meant for to do. This is meant to encourage us. Keep working on building that faith. Because when you have just the tiniest amount, it's a powerful thing. It's a powerful thing.

Number three, you need to exercise your faith. We've talked about exercise, right? Faith's like a muscle, you gotta exercise it. Some of us know how to exercise our muscles. We go to the gym weekly to exercise our muscles, right? You ever heard somebody who's like a runner and something happens and they don't get to run for a little bit, maybe they hurt their ankle or something, then afterwards they're like, man, I feel it, I haven't been able to run, right? Or if you miss some time, then when you finally go back to the gym, it's really kicking your butt, you know? You're like gasping for air because you feel like you're out of shape because you missed some time, right? We have to exercise our faith. Similarly, if a week goes by and you don't use your faith, is it growing? No, it's probably atrophying, right? Faith is a gift of God. It's something not of ourselves. We receive it from God. It's the special work of the Holy Spirit to do something in us, and we have to use it. Use it or lose it.

In Luke 8.25, you can turn there if you want, we're not gonna read this in particular, but I think most of us know this story. Luke 8. Jesus is preaching to the people and it's been a long day and he's tired. At the end of the day, he tells the disciples, let's get in the boat and go across the lake. So they start making their way across the lake and sometime in the middle of the night, a storm comes up and the disciples are worried that the boat is gonna sink. Professional fishermen are worried the boat's gonna sink and they're not gonna make it out, okay? This is not just a little rocky-rolly, this is bad. Professional fishermen are worried that the boat is gonna sink. And so what do they do? They wake up Jesus and Jesus calms the storm. and he looks at him, and in Luke 8.25, what does he say? Where is your faith? And I'm thinking, faith? I need a life preserver, that's what I need. Jesus says, where is your faith? Why aren't you using the faith I've given you? And I'm sure the disciples got to be going like, what's he talking about now? Right? Faith, we didn't need faith. We needed somebody to calm the storm. It's half the time we don't know what we need. What we needed was faith. And faith, I'm gonna take a little side detour here, we're gonna come back to this story.

Faith is made up of a couple different parts. One, faith relies on the ability of God. Now, probably all of us believe in God's ability, right? God can do it, right? God's God, and he can do whatever he wants. When God speaks, the atoms and molecules of the universe jump. God can do it. That's not the hard part of faith.

The hard part of faith is that faith submits to the sovereignty of God. Uh-oh, this is the hard part of faith. This is the hard part of faith. Because in the Bible, you look in there and you see God doing great things, and there's miracles and healings and people raised from the dead. Maybe in your life around us, you see people who pray, they get cured from cancer, and all you want is a new job, and God's not answering your prayer. And you're like, why not? Why not? And some people ask questions like, why does God allow these horrible things to happen? Little kids get sick of horrible diseases and they die. Why does God allow that to happen? I tell you, I don't know. But I do know this. Evil is real. Evil is real. It is not a made-up concept. It's a real thing. And evil has its way in the world, too. But God could have stopped it if he wanted to.

Let's go back to that disciple story in Luke. They're on the shore and Jesus says, let's get in the boat and go across the lake. Does Jesus know there's going to be a storm on the lake that night? Of course He does. He's God. So He told the disciples to get in the boat and go straight into the storm. You and I are not promised a storm-free life. We're not. But in a God that can, a God that is able, there is time for still waters and stormy waters. And we are all gonna go through stormy waters at one point or another. It's going to happen because evil is real. Evil is real. We are not promised that everything will be okay. but faith, trust intentionally in the goodness of God. Faith, trust intentionally in the goodness of God. You may say, God, I don't understand. I don't, doesn't make any sense to me, but I still believe. I still trust in you. And sometimes we give easy answers, you know, we say everything happens because it's according to God's will. I don't believe that it's God's will that little children die of horrible diseases. I don't, but evil is real. And God can use events like that in a mighty powerful way. So God can use things in his plan, but that doesn't mean that God planned for those things to happen. Does that make sense? Seems like we're splitting hairs, but I think you need to a little bit. Okay? Faith, trust, and the intentionality of the goodness of God.

You know, faith is kinda like, you know, it's a continuum. We start out, we have a little bit of faith, because we're new Christians, we just have a little bit. And our faith grows and it grows and it grows and it grows. Maybe someday eventually we have lots of faith. And ideally, the longer we're a Christian, the more faith we get. Doesn't always happen, right? Some of us grow faster, some of us grow slower. Some of us stop and turn around and start over again. Some of us like splashing around in the shallow end. and we just stay there forever, okay? But some of us need a storm in our life to help our faith grow so we can get out of the shallow end. because you aren't gonna grow if you don't have things happen to you that exercise that faith muscle. Right? What if the disciples had never had that happen to them? Would their faith be better or worse? I think that event increased their faith. Right? They saw what God could do and we can learn through that.

Think about it this way. When somebody prays for courage, does God give them courage or does he give them situations in which they can be courageous? If someone prays for a better relationship with a family member, does God give them warm, fuzzy feelings? Or does he give them situations where they can be loving? If somebody prays for faith, does God give you a bag of faith? Or does he give you situations in which you need to be faithful? Okay. Christ asked, where's your faith? If your answer is, well, you know, I got it around here somewhere. Maybe it's time to exercise that a little bit better. Maybe the answer should be Lord, what do you want me to do?

Number four, acknowledge when your faith is growing. This is okay. Sometimes we think, oh, you know, that's prideful. No, it can be, but don't do it that way. But it's okay to acknowledge when your faith is growing. Let's look at 2 Thessalonians 1:3 to 4. Second Thessalonians 1:3-4. Give me an amen when you're there. All right, it says, we ought always to thank you, thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is what? Growing more and more, and the love of all you have for one another is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches, we boast about your perseverance and faith, in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. Is it okay to acknowledge that your faith is growing? Yes. It's okay to look back and say, you know what? Faith used to be [small], but man, we finally got out of the shallow end. I'm not in deep water yet, but you know, you know, you're in that spot in the pool where the floor does this [drops off], you know. We've moved, we've grown. We've developed a little bit.

One of the ways that you see that our faith is increasing is you harbor less anger towards God. God, why didn't you answer my prayer the way I wanted? Because my faith trust in the sovereignty of God, not the sovereignty of Bill. And this is a constant challenge. This is hard for us. And this is hard for probably just about everybody. It's easy to say, but it's hard to do, right? You'll know that you have more faith when you find yourself drawing closer to God in difficult situations, instead of questioning and moving apart. Sometimes this sounds a little bit hard for just us regular, ordinary Christians. You know, I didn't get to spend three years with Jesus. I don't have the faith of the disciples, but you can. You could. There's no law, there's nothing in the Bible that said nobody will ever have more faith than the disciples. We could.

Reflection, how strong is your faith? Be honest, be honest. Because you're not answering to me. This is between you and God. How strong is your faith? Do you have great faith? You still splashing around in the shallow end.

And our challenge, be intentional. Faith doesn't just happen. You don't just walk down the street, get smacked in the face, oh, hey, I got faith. Okay? You've got to work at it. It's a muscle that you have to develop. You've got to get to know God. You've got to exercise. You've got to go through the storms of life. Work up a plan to follow these four steps and begin increasing your faith.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much that we can have faith, Lord, and that faith can do so much for us to carry us through the difficult times because we trust in the sovereignty of you and not what we think is the right thing to happen. And we know that we're not always gonna get what we want. We know that life doesn't always work out in a way that makes everybody happy because evil is real, Lord. Help us to understand these things, but help us to not let our faith get shaken as we go through the storms of life. Help us to be the kind of people that are continually building our faith. No matter where we are today, that next month our faith will be a little bit more. a little bit stronger, a little bit better, a little bit more grounded in you. Help us to make the right decisions, Lord, and help us to ask if we don't even know what it is we're supposed to be doing. Be with us now, bring us back again. In Jesus' name, amen.