

“LEAVING A LEGACY OF FAITH” (A Rick Warren Series)

Matthew 9:27-31, Hebrews 11

June 2 & 3, 2018

“A businessman had to travel to a small town for a meeting and invited his wife to come with him. She was excited about the trip until she learned her husband was going to be flown to the small town in a twin-engine Cessna plane.

“Honey, I’ve decided not to go.’ ‘What! Why not?’

“I am not going on a little-bitty, twin-engine Cessna.’ Her husband smiled and knowingly said, ‘Honey your faith is too small.’ She responded, ‘No, the plane is too small!’

“The businessman really wanted his wife to go with him, so he canceled the Cessna and booked travel on a major airline. His wife went with him because, as she put it, ‘her faith grew because the size of the plane grew.’ The object of her faith determined how much faith she decided to have.”¹

So how is it with your faith? Where do you put your faith when you have struggles and trials? And how can you pass on your faith to those around us so that they might gain strength in their faith, too? How are you being a model of what the Lord can do in your life as you have faith and trust in Jesus Christ? That’s what we’re going to look at today, as we start a four week series on “Leaving a Lasting Legacy.” We’ll be looking at touching the lives of those around us by how we live, act and speak with regard to our faith, our hope, our love and our convictions. Today we start by looking at **leaving a lasting legacy of faith**.

The Gospel lesson today gives us a real example of what it means to put our faith in Jesus Christ. Matthew 9 has several examples of people trusting that Jesus had the power and authority to bring healing to them, and because they acted out in their faith, the healing came to them. Each account is amazing.

In our Gospel lesson today, the two men that were blind were asked pointedly by Jesus, “*Do you believe that I can heal you?*” (Matt. 9:28). It was the answer to this question that allowed Jesus to do His work in them. “*Yes, sir!*” they answered.” You see, without them having faith in Jesus, He could have done nothing for them. It was their faith in Him that healed them.

And we hear that perfectly in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11. This is called the “Rollcall of the

¹ (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 2009] pg. 99, #281)

faithful,” and as you will see, there are multiple examples of people putting their faith in the Lord God and finding hope in the midst of their lives. But one verse in particular stands out for us today. Verse 6 tells us, “*Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.*” Our faith demands action, much like the two blind men seeking out Jesus in order to find healing. If we have no actions to show our faith to those around us, do we really have faith within us? In our faith we must come before God trusting that He is able to do amazing things for us.

So, using Hebrews 11, let’s look at 7 ways that we can model and teach others about faith – 7 things that we can do to have faith and pass faith on to those around us.

#1. The first thing we must do is to **BELIEVE WHEN WE DON’T SEE THE ANSWER.** Hebrews 11:1 lifts this up to us brilliantly, “*Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*” If we already have what we hope for, then we are not expressing faith. Faith comes when we hope for something that we don’t yet see, and we are absolutely certain that Jesus has the answer, and we are convinced that He can help us.

The two blind men in Matthew 9 had probably had many trips to the local doctor to try to get their vision. We’re not told if they were born blind or if they had somehow become blind as they grew older. The doctors were unable to do anything about their eyesight, so they could have given up. They could have just conceded that they would be blind the rest of their lives and given up any hope of ever seeing again.

But they had heard about Jesus and the miraculous work that He was doing. They had listened intently about the accounts of Him healing a man of his leprosy. They had heard about Him healing the servant of a Roman officer. They had heard about Peter’s mother-in-law being healed. They had heard how Jesus calmed a storm out on Lake Galilee just with His words. They had heard about Jesus casting out demons from a wild man who lived in the cemetery, sending them into a herd of pigs that then rushed into the sea. They heard about Jesus giving a man strength in his legs, curing him of his paralysis. They had heard many accounts of what Jesus was doing, and they became so convinced that if He could do all of this, He certainly had the power and authority to heal them. So they went to find Him. They believed in what they had not yet seen, because their faith grew as they heard of the wonderful accounts of what Jesus had done for others. They became certain that

Jesus was able to do something for them, too. And that belief, that faith, was what healed them. Jesus told them, *“Let it happen, then, just as you believe!”* (Matt. 9:29). AND THEIR EYES WERE OPENED AND THEY COULD SEE.

So what is it that you have going on in your life that is troubling you? What have you heard about Jesus’ ability to do something about it? Believing before you see the result is what brings the result to fruition. It may never have been done before to anyone else, but if you believe that Jesus has the power and authority to make it happen, you will be rewarded by your faith. And that leads us to the second point.

#2. First we must believe that Jesus has the power and authority to do great things in us, but then we must also **OBEY WHEN I DON’T UNDERSTAND IT**. It’s is one thing to believe, but we must then put feet on our faith and put it into practice in our life. The list of the faithful in Hebrews 11 shows action in each one listed. Looking at one of these faithful, we see *“It was by faith that Noah built an ark to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about something that had never happened before”* (Heb. 11:7).

Here’s a man that listened to God telling him how He was going to destroy the world by a flood. Noah had kept his faith in God and followed all His ways amid the rest of the people who had turned away from God and were doing great wickedness. Noah found favor with God by diligently following Him.

Now up to that time it had not rained on the earth. Plants were watered by the moisture in the ground as it came up and watered the earth (Genesis 2:6). Springs came up from the ground that offered people fresh water to drink, but it had not yet rained on the earth. So when God told Noah that He was going to destroy the world by a flood, Noah didn’t know what that meant. God told him it was going to rain for 40 days, but Noah didn’t know what rain was. Noah heard God tell him, however, that He was going to destroy the world and that He was going to save his family from the destruction, so Noah believed and obeyed.

I want you to think about this for a moment. What would you think if your neighbor suddenly started to build a huge boat in his back yard? I mean this thing was going to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet tall! That’s about the size of the sanctuary only 3 ½ times longer. We’re talking HUGE! No boat had been built that large yet, so Noah had to trust in God’s guidance in how to build it. But think about the response of the neighbors. Think about the jeering and laughter and criticism that Noah and his family would have gotten.

Yet all that Noah kept in front of him was the promise that God was going to destroy the earth, but save his family. He obeyed God's call and did all that he was asked to do in faith that God could do exactly what He had promised He would do. *"As a result, the world was condemned, and Noah received from God the righteousness that comes by faith"* (Heb. 11:7).

And what about Abraham? *"It was faith that made Abraham obey when God called him to go out to a country God had promised to him. He left his own country without knowing where he was going"* (Heb. 11:8). He trusted God to direct him to a place where God would bless him and multiply him and make him into a great nation. Abraham didn't know where he was going, or how long it would take. God told him that He would let him know when he got there. I've talked about this before of how much faith it would take to just pack up and move, not knowing where you were going to end up, but trusting that God was the One calling the shots.

Both of our missionary families that we support, the Bells and the Langteaus, took God at His word and moved away from their own communities and went to other parts of the world to take the Good News of Jesus to the people. The Bells rescue abandoned and discarded babies, while the Langteaus oversee the translation of the Bible into the languages of Southeast Asia. Neither family knew at the start where they would be, but both families trusted God and obeyed His call on their lives to go for Him into the world.

So how can we be faithful in obeying God's call in our own life? It could be talking to that person at work, or doing a special project with the neighbors, or going to a place you have never been before to take the name of Jesus to the people who have never heard. How is God calling you to obey Him in your life, today? You may not yet see the result, or even understand what God is calling you to do, but you obey God anyway and you do what He asks of you. And that leads us to the next principle.

#3. The third way we show faith is so important, too. We are to **PERSIST WHEN WE DON'T FEEL LIKE IT**. That means you keep your life focused on doing what it is that God has called you to do, even if you don't feel like doing it any more. Feelings and emotions are misleading, and the stuff in our life can get us to believe that we're being stupid in hoping beyond what we can already see and obeying a God who gives us to do something that we don't understand. Feelings can work against us to make us give up and give in to our society's way of thinking and just becoming like the rest of the people around us.

Persisting in faith is so important for us, because there will be times when we don't feel like trusting God any more. There will be times when we just don't see the end result of what God has called us to do. There will be times when we don't get why we're doing what we're asked to do by God. Feelings can lead us to stop obeying.

But faith says to us, "Don't give up – don't give in – don't give way to anything else." Look at what Moses was called to do. God called him to return to Egypt to bring out the people of Israel from slavery and bring them to the promised land that God had waiting for them. *"It was by faith that Moses left Egypt and was not afraid of the King's anger. He held to his purpose like a man who could see the invisible"* (Heb. 11:27). For 40 years God called him to lead the people through the wilderness until they were ready to receive the land God had promised them. It could have been easy for Moses to just give up and let the people go off to their own way, even back to Egypt. But Moses *"kept his eyes on the future reward"* (Heb. 11:26), kept calling the people to trust in the Lord God, and kept leading them so that they could at some point receive what God had promised. Even though he would never see the land God was providing His people, Moses faithfully led them and never gave up so that they might benefit from HIS faithfulness. Faith demands persisting even when everything in us wants to give up.

Hebrews 11:1 gives this great definition of faith. *"What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see."* So when you find God asking you to do something that may seem harebrained or unusual, when He is calling you to trust Him and you say, "OK," it may take you a long time to have what God is calling you to do finally come to completion. It may take years for God to prepare everything so that at just the right moment, it all fits together and you are able to finally finish the work that God has put before you. It takes persistence for you to keep at it so that God's plan will be fully accomplished. Don't give up! Stay at work for Him.

Remember, it took Thomas Edison years and hundreds of tries to find the right element for the incandescent light bulb. It took Abraham Lincoln years and many failed attempts to become the president of the United States. It took the Wright brothers years to develop an airplane that would fly and sustain airtime. It took years for this nation to win its freedom. It has taken decades to find successful medical treatments and

cures. It takes years to translate the Bible into any particular language. If the folks would have given up, we would not have achieved so much, but because they kept working hard to follow God's call on their life, they were able to finally achieve it.

#4. The fourth step can be a bit scary to do, but it is necessary for us to put the vision out there so that others can begin to see God's call. In faith we are to **ANNOUNCE IT IN ORDER TO EXPERIENCE IT.**

Now this is faith, when we become so assured of what God is doing in and through us that we tell it to others. *"It was by faith that Joseph, when he was about to die, confidently spoke of God's bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt. He was so sure of it that he commanded them to carry his bones with them when they left!"* (Heb. 11:22)

There is great power in the words we say. There is a direct connection between your mouth, what you say and your faith, what you believe. What we say has power for us as we begin to believe what we say and become what we say. If we tell ourselves over and over, "I'm a loser – I'm fat – I can't – I'm stupid – I'm a nobody – I'm gay," we begin to believe what we say and it becomes who we are. But if we use the power of our words to focus on the good and right and hopeful things of life, we begin to believe that. What we say about ourselves is what we believe about ourselves. So if you don't like where you're at right now, begin to tell yourself the positive, the encouraging, the successful, and the righteous things of where you want to be, and you will begin to listen to yourself and find that in time, you'll become what you say. That's the power of faith!

Announcing something in order to experience it is the way God operates. He created the world that way. Hebrews 11:3 tells us, *"by faith we see the world called into existence by God's word. What we see created by what we don't see."* God spoke and everything He spoke came into existence. Light, water, land, plants, animals, stars, moons, planets, sky, sea – everything came into existence as God spoke it. Psalm 33:9 says *"For He spoke and then it came to be."*

All throughout the Bible we see that what we say with our mouth is what God is able to do with us. When you say it, you'll sense it. Sometimes it might seem like foolishness or arrogance or being totally out of touch with reality for the people around us who don't understand, but when we speak it in faith, we begin to see the result of our words.

God told Abram that He was going to change his name to Abraham. The problem was that Abraham means “father of many nations.” Abram didn’t have any children yet, but God assured him that He was in charge and that He could do anything. *”God said, ‘I have made you the father of many nations. God, who gives life to the dead, calls things that are not as though they were.’”* That’s faith, speaking it so that we might experience it.

Many people love to tell it like is in our world today. There’s a lot of garbage and negative stuff happening, and if we get stuck on that, we begin to believe that and we become a part of that. Don’t tell it like it is. Tell it like it can be. Speak it for faith, and proclaim the difference it can be when we walk in faith. Tell it like it ought to be, like it could be, like it should be, like God wants it to be. Speak it in advance so that we can experience it when it becomes fulfilled.

In Matthew (9:5-13) we have the wonderful account of the Roman officer telling Jesus He didn’t have to come to his house to heal his servant, but all Jesus had to do was to say the word, and his servant would become well. This man understood the principle of speaking it into existence. Faith is announcing it in advance in order to experience it.

#5. FAITH IS GIVING WHEN I DON’T HAVE IT. Here again, we have a test before us between giving and faith. Many of us believe that we can only give from what we have. We are focused on the here and now and we leave out the possibility of God being able to work. God uses finances to test us. As we look at the first of the list of the hall of fame faithful in Hebrews 11 we see a man named Abel. His brother was Cain. Able made it into the roll of the faithful because he gave an offering to the Lord God. Have you ever had to decide between giving your tithe and paying a bill? It’s a test. God is testing your faith and He’s asking, “Will you pay your tithe, or will you pay the bill?”

But listen to how it is recorded in Hebrews 11:4. *“It was faith that made Abel’s offering to God a better sacrifice than Cain’s. Through his faith, God approved of his giving.”* It wasn’t what he gave that pleased God, but how he gave it. It’s not how much we give that matters to God. It’s how we give it. It’s not the amount, it’s that attitude that we give it to God. The amount given is not what is important to God. It is the attitude that we give that is important to God. If we give out of obligation or out of fear, God sees that and the offering

really doesn't count. If you're afraid that you're are not going to make your bills, don't give. But if you have faith that God is a generous and prosperous and bountiful God, and you trust Him to provide you with all your needs, test Him and see if He will not give you all that you need. Giving in faith means that we have confidence that He's not going to leave us hanging. And when we have the joy of giving back to God what is His already, He will delight us to make sure that the paycheck goes over and beyond the needs that we have. He will provide for us in astounding ways that will blow our minds, if we have faith that He is a God who can do all that He says He will do.

In fear that we will not have enough if we give to particular instances, we only look at the here and now and we miss the great possibility that God has for us. Begin to look at what God could do through you as you give to accomplish His work. Trust Him that he will not leave you high and dry, all expended with nothing left. That's not God! God delights to provide for us, even as we give when we don't have it.

2 Corinthians 8:2-3 is a great example of this. It says, "*Because of their great joy...they gave even more than they could afford.*" How do you do this? It's giving when you don't have it. You make a commitment to God that you are going to give back to Him your 10%, even if doing that might seem unrealistic. It's trusting God to provide for you. It's managing the resources you have been provided to make sure He is first in your life.

I love the way that Proverbs 3:9 says it. "*Honor the Lord by giving Him the first part of all your income, [not the remnant or leftover part] and He will fill your barns and overflow your barrels with the finest wines.*" God is telling us that we can never out give Him. In fact, He invites us to play a little game. He says, "I'll bless you. You give to Me, and I'll give to you, and we'll see who wins." If we have faith to give even when we don't have it, guess what? God will always win! When we're trusting in Him, when we have faith that He will provide for us, we have nothing to fear.

So Paul tells us in I Corinthians 16:2, "*On every Lord's Day [that's Sunday] each of you should put aside something from what you have earned during the week, and use it for your offering. The amount depends on how much the Lord has helped you earn.*" Giving by faith is when you put God first above all the rest.

#6. Faith is **THANKING GOD BEFORE I RECEIVE IT.** Believing when I don't see it, obeying

when I don't understand it, persisting when I don't feel like it, announcing it before I experience it, giving when I don't have it, thanking God before I receive it.

This is an interesting part of faith. Hebrews 11:30 is a great example of this. *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days.”* After Moses led the people through the wilderness for 40 years, Joshua takes over in leading the people into the new land promised to them by God. They get to Jericho and the city is protected by this huge wall. But God had already told Joshua that He would deliver the people of Jericho into the hands of the Israelites without them doing anything but march around the city once per day for six days, and seven times on the seventh day. At that last time around, the people were to shout a great shout and God would deliver the city into their hands. They were to celebrate the deliverance of the city into their hands. They thanked God for Him giving them the city even before anything happened. They said, “Thank You, God, that You have already give us this city. Thank You! Thank You! We're thanking You in advance.” And the walls came down. God delivered after the people thanked Him for it.

Faith is thanking God in advance! Jesus tells us, *“When you pray and ask for something, believe that you have received it and you will be given what you ask for”* (Mark 11:24). That's called faith, when we thank God for providing what we have just asked Him to provide. If you thank God after you've got it, that's gratitude. Faith is thanking God for it BEFORE you get it.

If someone gives you a check for any amount, you thank them for it even before you take the check to the bank to deposit it. You are trusting them that they are good to cover what the check is written for. God is the same way, so when we ask for something and then thank Him for it, He sees that we are trusting Him that He is able to supply it to us. And as we heard in Matthew 9 about the blind men being healed, *“Jesus said, ‘Because of your faith, it will happen’* (Matt.9:29). And this leads us to the last part of faith.

#7. Faith is **TRUSTING IF I DON'T GET IT**. Many people can tell me, “Pastor, I prayed for this thing, and I even thanked God in advance for it, but I never got it. How can you tell me that because of my have I will get what I pray for? It hasn't worked for me!” And that is true. Faith does not take our problems away. We're going to have problems in our life, even when we have faith. Sometimes God hears our prayers and takes those problems away from us, but other times God allows those problems to persist in our lives so that

we keep growing in our faith in Him. If we were to get the resolution to all our problems right away, there would be no reason for faith in our lives. We'd treat God like a giant vending machine – put our prayers here, get the answers there, done! Why would we even put our faith in God if He instantly gave us all that we wanted? No, God allows us to have struggles on the earth to remind us that **THIS LIFE IS NOT ALL THERE IS WHEN WE HAVE FAITH IN OUR LORD GOD.**

You see, real faith is developed in the valleys of our lives. In those times when the bottom drops out and we're depending upon God for our very lives, that's when faith grows. Hebrews 11 lists a whole group of people who lived faithfully in the middle of the pits of life (11:35-38). These folks were persecuted and killed and tortured for their faith. Each year, hundreds of millions of people around the world are persecuted for their faith. And then we hear Hebrews 11:39-40 which says, *"They were all commended for their faith yet none of them received what had been promised because God had planned something better."*

If you could understand every one of God's moves, He wouldn't be big enough to be your God. Some of the unanswered prayers in your life, later, you'll look back and go, "Thank God for unanswered prayer." Through those unanswered prayers God developed you into the person HE wanted you to become. Yes, the road is tough. Yes, the way is hard and difficult, but along the way, as you keep trusting God, even when you don't see the answers, He is leading you and guiding you so that at a later time, we might be able to rejoice with you **WHEN** God does answer with granting your request.

Our faith grows as we observe the lives of those who have gone before us. We see how God touched them, used them and blessed them throughout their lives and we can grow deeper in our own faith. As we delve into God's Word and see the work that He did through the lives of the faithful men and women who believed, obeyed, persisted, announced it, gave it, thanked God for it, and through it all trusted in Him, we can begin to trust that God can also do His great work in our lives, too. *"Faith comes from hearing the Word of God..."* (Romans 10:17).

As we live in faith to this Holy and Awesome God, we begin to show those around us of the wonderful nature of Him Who is able to do all things. Live in faith! Walk in the Lord. Trust Him with all your heart, in the name of our great Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**