

# When Following God Doesn't Work Out

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[ 0 : 00 ] So we won't sit for the whole thing. So good morning. My name is Jonathan. It's been said. It's really a treat to be with you. I know most of you. I know many of you. If you're new here or if you don't know me, welcome.

We're really glad that you're here with us this Sunday morning, that you've taken time out of your weekend and of your day to worship the living God with us and join us here for worship.

I'll do a little bit more by way of introduction in a minute, but let us turn now to the reading of God's word. So as I was reflecting on this earlier this week, we're going to look at a lot of text this week.

And so I tried to trim it down so that we would not read two full chapters.

And I think I trimmed too much. So we're going to add just a little bit more than what's in your bulletin. So we're going to add four verses from chapter five. So you don't have those printed in your bulletin.

You can either look them up on your phone or just catch up when I start reading in your bulletin where it picks up. So we're going to start today in Exodus chapter five. We're going to start in verse one.

[ 0 : 57 ] Your bulletin starts in verse five. So just listen along or read along in your Bible, whatever you have. And so this is God's careful word given to us. And so let us pay careful attention to it.

Chapter five, verse one. And afterward, Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, let my people go that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.

But Pharaoh said, who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord. And moreover, I will not let Israel go. Then they said, the God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with a sword. But the king of Egypt said to them, Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work?

Get back to your burdens. Picking up at verse five on your bulletins. And Pharaoh said, behold, the land, the people of the land are now many and you make them rest from their burdens.

[ 2 : 01 ] That same day, Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, you shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks as in the past. Let them go and gather straw for themselves.

But the number of bricks that they make in the past, you shall impose on them. You shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore, they cry, let us go and offer sacrifice to our God. Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words. Skipping ahead to verse 22. Then Moses turned to the Lord and said, oh, Lord, why have you done evil to this people?

Why have you ever sent me? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people and you have not delivered your people at all.

Chapter six, verse one. But the Lord said to Moses, now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand, he will send them out and with a strong hand, he will drive them out of his land.

[ 3 : 09 ] God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty. But by my name, the Lord, I did not make myself known to them.

I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians have sold us, hold as slaves.

And I have remembered my covenant. Say, therefore, to the people of Israel, I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians and I will deliver you from slavery to them.

And I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people and I will be your God. And you shall know that I am the Lord, your God, who has brought you out from under the burden of the Egyptians.

I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord. Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.

[ 4 : 19 ] This is God's word. Would you pray with me? Lord in heaven, as we come now to your word, we pray that you would also send your spirit and that word spirit and our hearts would mix in such a way that sends up a fragrant offering to you, that you would receive our attention for your glory and for our growth in Christ and that you would send us out as faithful image bearers, worshipers and ambassadors for your kingdom and your glory.

It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen. As it's been said, my name is Jonathan. I'm not the normal pastor. If this is if this is your first time here, I work as a college pastor. Andy mentioned this. I work for an organization called Reformed University Fellowship. It's the campus ministry wing of the church that of the denomination of the of the church that you're in. And so even if you've never heard of RUF before, just by being in this church, you are supporting campus ministry through RUF. And so thank you. This church has been a huge supporter of RUF across the state, not just me, but the Air Force Academy, Colorado State and others. And we're really, really thankful the ways that you pray for us and support us and let us come speak and tell about the work and give money. We're so grateful. We cannot do this. And in a lot of ways, campus ministry, RUF, is the it's the ministry of the Presbytery. It's not necessarily my work. It's it's your work.

[ 5 : 46 ] And so we're really, really thankful and grateful for it. So that's my nine to five job. My five to nine job is I'm married to my wife, Caroline. She's a really talented artist.

So look her up, her art. She's she's really, really good. You'll love what you find. And then I have to we have two little girls, Phoebe's five. She's really, really sweet. And then we have Molly. She's almost 17 months and we've got a sweet little family. So I'll be back in February. Matthew's on his sabbatical and I will be spending a whole several Sundays looking at the topic of evangelism. And this is the topic that's probably closest to my heart. I love both doing evangelism. I can't say I'm good at it, but I love doing it. And I love helping and teaching y'all in the church in it.

So we're going to look at how can y'all be growing in evangelism with your friends, your co-workers, your family. And so I would encourage you to come back for that in February. Today, we're looking at the book of Exodus.

[ 6 : 44 ] I've been preaching through the book of Exodus with the college students. And as I was reflecting on what to preach today, I thought, you know, this is not a New Year's sermon, but it does have application to the ending of one year and the beginning of another.

And so we'll make some passing reference to that. Like I said, we're covering a lot of texts, so we'll just be hovering on a couple of verses, but I wanted to set the scene. So if you know the book of Exodus, you know that the story is at least the first bit, the story of how God rescues his people. The Bible's term is redeems his people out of slavery. The Israelites were God's people, and they had been enslaved by the Egyptians for 400 years.

And this was a terribly oppressive slavery that they were subjected to, to the point that they were victims of a systematic oppression that in many ways sought to even eliminate them from the planet.

I don't know what the Egyptians were seeking to do in that, killing off their labor force. But we hear in the first chapters of Exodus that the Egyptians seek to kill every baby boy under the age of two.

[ 7 : 53 ] We have a word for that. Genocide, right? We have a word for that. A deep, systematic, ethnic cleansing, right? And so here are the Israelite people who a much stronger nation is literally seeking to destroy them, is oppressing them with slavery and mass killing on a level that chills everybody.

It's the kind of thing that keeps, you know, keeps historians and philosophers and political scientists up at night. And they cry out to God and they say, God, rescue us from this.

We can't do anything about this. It's too great for us. And God hears their cries and he promises to redeem them, to rescue them. And the way or the means that he will rescue them, the tool that he will use to rescue them is his servant named Moses.

Moses is this servant that God will send to rescue him. And so he appears to Moses and he says, you are my servant. Here are signs and powerful miracles that you will do.

And I will send you and you will bring the people out. Right. And so that brings us up to our text today. Things are starting to rev up. Things are starting to get moved forward.

[ 9 : 05 ] And so now Moses goes to Pharaoh with all of the authority and confidence in the world. God has appeared to me in the desert in a non-burning, burning bush and said, I will be with you.

I'm going to use you to rescue the people of Israel. He walks into Pharaoh's throne room and says, the Lord has appeared to me. Let my people go.

And it goes horribly. It goes horribly wrong. Right. And it makes me ask the question. When following God does not go well, when it does not go well, what do we do?

When following the living God, when we're doing what we think we're supposed, what we know we're supposed to do, what God tells us to do, when we get discouraged, when we fail in the Christian life.

What do we do? How do we handle it? And if you've been a Christian for more than a month, which I suspect many of you have, this is a question that you have without a doubt asked, without a doubt felt.

[ 10 : 14 ] How do we handle the life of faithfully following God when it goes poorly, when it feels like a failure? And this text today shows us this, right? So an example of this, I'm sure you can relate to this.

When I was, before I was a pastor here in Colorado Springs, I was called as a college pastor in New Mexico, southern New Mexico at New Mexico State University. And I had started the job. I'd been there for about three years. Started in 2017. The first two years, you know, of any job, you're not very good at it, particularly campus ministry. You're just, you have no idea what you're doing.

You're just, you know, throwing things on the wall, seeing what sticks with college students. Year three, you start to get the hang of it, right? So I enter year three and I, you know, we start to, things start humming, right?

We have in our fall, which is the big, it's Christmas and Easter put together, this huge outreach program to gather students into the campus ministry. We have a really successful fall outreach.

[ 11 : 11 ] Hundreds of students are coming to our campus ministry. A whole array of students, Christian, non-Christian. We had a fall conference that we went on that was a huge success. We did an amazing conference.

The first time we'd ever done this kind of conference in January, January of 2020. We start reading the news. There's this bug going around in China.

We think it's not going to be a problem. It's not going to be a problem, right? March 2020 happens and the school shuts down. And suddenly, literally overnight, this thing that I had worked so hard to build and was seeing success in goes from around 100 students gathering a week to less than 15. You remember, right? It's crazy. You think it was almost five years ago, right? And I remember this crushing feeling of, I am a terrible pastor.

And I remember thinking, God, I'm called to this. There are non-Christian students who three weeks ago were hearing the gospel and were considering the Christian faith, and now they're gone.

[ 12 : 19 ] I can't find them anywhere. They want nothing to do with campus ministry. And even if they did, I'm not allowed to see them. What do we do when our Christian life, when following God, utterly fails?

More importantly, what do we do when it seems not only that we have failed as Christians, but that God has failed us? That's the question that Moses faces here.

And as we end 2024, I'm sure there are things that you can look back on in your year and think, I didn't do great on that one in my Christian life.

And there are maybe even some of you can look back on your Christian life and say, God let me down. God let my family down. God let this church down in ways.

What do we do with that? How do we handle that? Well, our text shows us today. The first thing I want us to notice here is the discouragement that comes from following the life, in the Christian life, from following God.

[ 13 : 27 ] The discouragement, right? Remember the story, chapter 3, God appears to Moses and he says, I'm going to show you and the Israelites and the Egyptians my power.

My mighty arm. With my mighty arm, I will redeem and rescue the Israelites. And in fact, here are two miracles to back that up. And he turns Moses' staff into a snake and he makes Moses' arm leprous and then cleans it again, right?

And Moses, with all of the confidence in the world, goes to the Israelites and say, the God of our fathers has appeared to me in the desert. He's going to redeem you. And you can hear the Israelites going, okay, let's see it.

Let's see you work, right? And it tells us, and he does some miracles to the Egyptians. And it says in the text of chapter 4, the Israelites worship God. And they say, finally, someone has heard our cries.

Things are sizzling. Things are happening. So Moses, our text, picks up, goes into Pharaoh's throne room and says, let my people go. And what does Pharaoh say? Who is this guy?

[ 14 : 30 ] I don't know him. And moreover, I don't care. I don't care who he is, right? I don't care. And he says it's not going to happen.

And in verse 8 of chapter 5, it's even worse. He says, apparently the Israelites have a lot of free time to think about what they would like to do with their lives. And we'll deal with that.

And so from now on, you will now make bricks without straw. And you have to find your own straw. And so the process of making bricks, never made a brick bore in my life. Apparently what you do is you mix clay and straw.

They cook together and you have a brick. Up until this point, the Egyptians had been providing the straw. Now the Israelites have to go and get their own. But it goes even further than that, right?

Right? He says, Pharaoh even says, there's this rebellious throw it back in God's face. And he's saying, I don't care who your God is. I'm the one in control.

[ 15 : 29 ] I'm the one who has the power in this situation. We'll see who your God, who this Yahweh is. I don't know him and I don't care. He's rubbing his oppression, his power in the Israelites' face.

And he's in open rebellion against God. Such that we did not read this, but in verse 20, Moses says this.

He says, Lord, Yahweh, look on me and judge because you have made us stink in Pharaoh's eyes. And now they are going to kill us either by beating us to death or by working us to death.

It's a massive failure. And put yourself in Moses' shoes, which I know is easy because you've been here before. Imagine yourself going back to the Israelites when they hear, here's what's now expected.

You must double your workload. You know, it's all this more. You would feel embarrassed. You would feel ashamed. You would be frustrated. Everyone's mad at you. Everyone is mad at you for trying to follow God.

[ 16 : 35 ] And he says in verse 21, God, why have you done this evil to your people? Why did you even send me? You haven't delivered your people at all. And in fact, it's even worse now.

It's even worse. And you can hear buzzing in the back of his mind, Lord, if this is what it means to follow you, if this is how you love your children, maybe I don't want to be one.

And if this isn't what it feels like to be a Christian sometimes, I don't know what it is. We get these moments of clarity. Our heads pop through the clouds and we think, yes, I'm going to follow God.

And I'm sure, as Andy said, you have a New Year's resolution about things that you want to do to grow in your faith this 2025. Amen for it. Praise the Lord in it. Unless you are far more disciplined than most of us, you'll get to mid-March and say, I failed again.

I can't do it. What am I doing, right? We get these aspirations and these goals. We say, I'm going to read my Bible consistently regularly.

[ 17 : 40 ] I'm going to quit this sinful habit. I'm going to pursue Christian friendships. And it goes terribly. I call this, and we call this the camp high in RUF.

You know, we'll regularly go on weekend or week-long camps with the students. And they're awesome, right? They're little tastes of heaven because we'll get to spend time with other Christians. You know, the students stay up 20 hours a day.

They sleep maybe three hours. And they're hearing the word preached, and we're worshipping, and we're doing Bible studies, and we're fellowship. And they're amazed. They're like, they come back to college, and they're just like, I'm going to do this, and I'm going to follow the Lord in this way.

And they make it maybe four days, and then they're back in their old habits and patterns, right? Life hits you again, and relationships are hard, and work is frustrating, and kids, and neighbors, and

bills.

And we meet with the discouragement and the failure of living the human life and of following God. And, in fact, sometimes this pushes some of us to even question whether or not we want to be Christians, right, to see whether it's worth it.

[ 18 : 48 ] I guarantee that this has happened to your friends. I grew up in Colorado Springs. Many, I would say, about half of my friends that I grew up with in the Christian church have left the Christian faith.

And many of them, it's because they say, you over-promised and under-delivered. This is not what I thought it was. This is so much harder, so much worse than you set it up for.

If this is how God treats his children, I'm out. So how do we wrestle with this, reckon with this? Well, first, we have to set the record straight, and it's this.

We have to start by saying that our world has taught us, has trained us to view our lives as a calculus of maximizing our pleasure and minimizing our pain.

We are taught as consumers to use things, people, food, experiences around us to get pleasure, right? And think about Christmas.

[ 19 : 47 ] This is what, I mean, Christmas is this, at its worst, at its most cynical, Christmas is a giant exercise in this. Where, you know, my five-year-old little daughter, I have to train her to think about Advent, Christ being born.

I don't have to train her to think about Christmas is what? About me. What toys did I get? Did I have fun with my friends? Did I have fun on Christmas break? Did I get to eat all the sugar I wanted, right?

That's just intuitive to our human nature. It's intuitive to how we think as human beings, right? Our culture. And in a capitalistic, post-industrial world, it runs on the idea that consuming things makes me happy.

Consuming things makes me happy. Think about restaurants. Their goal is to make money, and the way they do that is not by making food that's healthy, but by making food that tastes good. And so we go to restaurants that make us happy because they give us food that tastes good, right?

And if it doesn't happen, then we don't go there, right? And we are all trained to view our lives as a decision-making calculus matrix of pursuing pleasure through consumption.

[ 20 : 59 ] And here's the trick. The moment that something gets hard, the moment something no longer gives us pleasure, we bounce, right?

We leave. We don't go back to that restaurant. And we begin to treat other things in our lives in the same way. As soon as a relationship gets hard, we just slowly build up walls or we abruptly cut off that relationship.

And what's very insidious is we'll treat, we begin to treat our Christian faith in the same way. One more area where we consume. What am I getting out of this?

What am I getting out of going to church on Sunday morning? What am I getting out of the sermons? What am I getting out of worship experience? If it's not what I think I want, then I'll go someplace else.

I'll look for something different. Here's the truth. This consumeristic way of treating our life, our faith, it's a lie. All of the research indicates that long-term happiness doesn't come through consumption.

[ 22 : 04 ] But more importantly, in our Christian life, in your Christian faith, the Bible never promises you that following God is easy. It's consumption will make you happy.

It never promises that. In fact, most of the Christian life is a pilgrimage. It's a grind. Hebrews 1 has example after example of faithful Christians who what?

Had faith. What is faith? It dogged trust when it doesn't make sense. It's trusting in the promise of God when every circumstance is to the contrary, right?

It's sojourning in a foreign land. It's exile. It's a Christian life. It's a Christian life. It's a Christian life. It's not a series of mountaintop experiences.

And we have all been trained intuitively to think about Jesus as a – following Jesus as a process of height to height to height, either in worship or in quiet times or in relationships or in the next great book that we read.

[ 23 : 12 ] A few weeks ago, Matthew said something that's just been bouncing around in my head. I can't get it out of my head. He said this. He said, the church is not about selling religious services.

The church is not about selling religious services, but how often do we approach it that way? Just one other store, one other place where we go and get what we want out of it. Second, many times following Jesus is an exercise of managing disappointment and failure.

That's the reality. Following Jesus is an exercise in managing disappointment and failure. In a world afflicted by sin, by the devil, by our own selfishness, faith literally means trusting in something often despite the evidence.

Not even just against or without evidence, but despite evidence, right? Again, the hall of faith of Hebrews 11, a list of men and women who trusted God despite the circumstances.

Listen to verse 13. These – this is these faithful Christians throughout the ages – all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, having acknowledged that they were what?

[ 24 : 27 ] Strangers and exiles on the earth. Men and women who followed God faithfully, never receiving what God promised, trusting always in his promises.

Exodus 5 is that failure moment, and Moses felt it. God called him, God shows his power, and it's a total disaster. And so what would Moses do?

What would the people do? What will we do, right? So the takeaways is this. How have you asked your religious faith to be one more area of consumption?

Where in your heart do you ask, what am I getting out of this? Is it meeting my expectations? If that's the lens of your faith, you will be disappointed. Second, learning to shift our faith into managing expectations and growing in trust and faithfulness in God.

Now, how do we do that? How do we do that? Well, we return to God's faithfulness. We return to God's faithfulness. Look at chapter 1 of verse – sorry, chapter 6, verse 1.

[ 25 : 41 ] Ends at the lowest possible note. You have done this evil. You have not delivered your people at all. Verse 1, but the Lord said to Moses, Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh.

For with a strong hand, he will send them out. And with a strong hand, he will drive them out of his land. In the Hebrew, that word now is as emphatic as you can get.

If we were to – you could underline, italicize, and make that bold in your text. We would. Now you will see what I will do. Out of the worst disaster that you can imagine, out of great failure, now you will see what I will do.

And notice he doesn't even say how I will send you out. He says Pharaoh will send you out. The source of what has become your greatest misery and oppression, I will do such a work that he is going to send you packing.

He will drive you out of the land. He will say, I want nothing to do with you because of what your God has done. Verse 2, God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am the Lord.

[ 26 : 51 ] What was Pharaoh's accusation? Who is this God? Who is Yahweh? I want nothing to do with him. What does God say? I am Yahweh.

And he says, let me tell you who I am. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty. I established my covenant. Verses 2 through 9 are rich, rich material for you to study this week.

I want you to notice here all of the things that God does in these verses, right? He hears. He redeems. He judges.

He takes possession. He brings. God here is the main character. He is the protagonist. He is the hero of Exodus.

He says, who is this God? God says, I will show you who I am. I am the Lord. I am Yahweh. And he promises in these verses three things.

[ 27 : 58 ] Three things that he promises. He promises redemption, relationship, and land.

Redemption, relationship, and land. Look at verse 6. Verse 6, he says, say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the Lord.

I will bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.

Bring them out of slavery and crush their oppressors with great judgment. This means that God is the Redeemer. He saves his people from their misery. He saves his people first by delivering them out of it and by judging and destroying their enemies, right?

He will redeem his people. Second, he promises a relationship with them. Really, the term that the Bible or the Old Testament prefers is the term covenant. Look at verse 7.

And I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burden of the Egyptians. The great promise of the Old Testament.

[ 29 : 08 ] The great promise is God says to Israel, I will be your God, and you will be my people. That is the hope, the aspiration, the desire of the whole Old Testament.

And it is a relationship of intimacy, warmth, protection, tenderness, care. I will be your God. I will have a covenant with you.

God is not just some removed deity in the sky who says, I'm going to work geopolitics so that you happen to be redeemed. No, he says, I care about you deeply.

I love you tenderly. I will reap you, my special people, who I will redeem and who I will have a relationship of care, love, and tenderness. Lastly, he promises to them a land.

And I will, verse 8, I will bring you into the land that I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. And then he seals it with the way he started.

[ 30 : 11 ] I am the Lord. I am Yahweh. So he promises to bring them to a land. How is the land described? The land of Canaan described? A land of milk and honey. Fat things and sweet things.

Really, it's all we want for Christmas, right? Fat and sweet. Sugar, you know? Sugar and it's the delighting, joyful meals that we all want. So what is God saying here? He says, after this first round of disasters, now strap in and watch me work.

I will do everything and more that I have promised. And here's the crucial point. That same God has been the same throughout the ages.

Notice he says at the very beginning, verse 3, I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Hundreds of years before you, O Israelites, were enslaved, before you were a twinkle in your father's eye, you were a twinkle in the sky that I told your father Abraham that his descendants would be beyond the stars of the sea.

I made promises to your father, and I kept them. And now I make promises to you, and I will keep them. And Christian, that God is the same today as he was then.

[ 31 : 21 ] He has made promises to you, and he has and will keep them. The failures of Exodus 5 are only one chapter in the whole book of God's redemption of his people.

And here's the crucial point. The book of Exodus is only one chapter in a far greater story of God's redemption. And it points to a far greater redemption.

1,500 years later, more followers of Jesus would face possibly an even more discouraging moment in ministry.

The most failure colossal imaginable of God. Jesus Christ comes to earth. He claims to be God. He does the things that only God can do.

He backs it up. He claims to be the God who freed the Israelites. His disciples believe him. They follow him. They worship him. They say, you are God.

[ 32 : 23 ] You are the one who will rescue us from the oppression of the Romans, from deep, dark, spiritual oppression. We will follow you. What happened? He was killed.

A far greater defeat imaginable. In Exodus, the people themselves were oppressed with Christ. God himself was executed.

God himself was not spared from the genocidal campaign of evil against him. It's an utter disaster. Imagine what Jesus' followers felt that Saturday morning.

Ten times worse than anything Moses felt. Embarrassed, defeated, discouraged. In Exodus, the government looks at God's servant, Moses, and sneers.

But with Jesus, government looks at God himself and sneers. And kills him. When Jesus' disciples are broken men, it's the most discouraging failure of ministry ever imaginable.

[ 33 : 31 ] And what happened? Out of the ashes of this disaster comes the redemption of us all. Not just the Israelites.

But every person who would trust in Christ. Trust in the promises of God. It's as if on the cross Jesus would say exactly what God would say to Moses.

Now you will see what I will do. He walks out of the tomb. And what does he promise to those who follow him and trust in him? The same thing that he promises to the Israelites.

Redemption, covenant, and land. In Colossians 1, Paul writes, he says this, that Jesus, in Jesus, we have deliverance from the domain of darkness.

We have deliverance from the domain of darkness. The redemption of our greatest oppressor, which is sin. In Christ, you have redemption from the darkest oppressor in your whole life, which is sin.

[ 34 : 36 ] In John 14, Jesus says, when you trust in me, I will come and live in you. And you will be my brother. And I will be your father. That is a relationship, an intimacy, a covenantal connection with God.

That is what your heart has longed for since the moment your heart started beating. In John 14, again, Jesus tells him, what does he say? He says, I go to prepare a place for you. A land, a house flowing with milk and honey. A feast that makes any other feast that we have on earth practice.

Practice and preparation for the time where we will live with God forever. We read in Ephesians 2 during our catechism that we have an inheritance. An inheritance beyond our wildest hope.

A land of fat and sweet foods. A place without sadness or tears or bitterly or pain or misery or depression or despair forever. Jesus comes and promises the same things that he has been promising his people since the beginning.

[ 35 : 46 ] And he backs it up. That out of the ashes of despair and disaster, he redeems. So the question becomes then, will we listen to him?

Will we trust again and anew? The Israelites were too beat up to trust. They were too beat up. It says at the very end, what is it he says?

He says that the people were, verse 9 of chapter 6, Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.

And I can't be too hard on them because I've never been in their shoes of being at the pointy end of genocide and slavery. But they didn't listen. They couldn't trust. And I understand that for some of you, you think, Jonathan, how can I trust again?

How I'm so discouraged in my Christian life. How am I to trust one more time? You're so discouraged, and I'm so sorry for that. And to you, I would say, look to Jesus.

[ 36 : 54 ] It's all we have, but it's everything we need. Look to how faithful he was and is to you and for you and how he has proven himself trustworthy again and again and again.

The question to ask yourself, the question I would ask you is, will you listen? And if you say, I can't, I would say, why? If God is faithful, and I see in the Bible every indication that he is.

And if the Bible says the faith is not about easy consumerism, but it's about trusting a good, faithful God despite and against circumstances, I would ask, how can you not?

How can you not trust this God? He's all we have, but he's everything we need. I'm not going to oversell the Christian life. In fact, I'll undersell it. It's hard. It's hard around the world.

It's hard in Colorado Springs, but I'll oversell the God that we trust. He's the most faithful, generous, kind God you can imagine. Why would you not trust such a God?

[ 37 : 58 ] So when we ask, how? How do I do this? How can I mature and grow through discouragement? A couple of practical things, and we'll wrap up. First, pay attention. Learn to pay attention to the godly voices in your life, to your pastor, to your elders, to your parents, to men and women who have practice in this.

Verse 9, they did not pay attention to Moses. They did not listen to Moses. And that's on them. To you, I would say, learn to pay greater attention to the men and women who will exhort you to faith. These are God's shepherds to remind and exhort and encourage you. Second, drill into the core of who you are the promises of God.

Find two or three verses in the Bible that show you his promises and memorize them, so that when you wake up at 2 a.m. and you think, how can I be a Christian? Or when you get the phone call or whenever whatever happens, you run back to that.

For me, it's Colossians 1.13. He has delivered 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.

[ 39 : 09 ] Drill those promises deep into your heart. Third, throw yourself deeper into communities of faith. Despair and discouragement are always connected and linked to isolation.

There's a man named Viktor Frankl. He was a psychologist who endured the Nazi concentration camps. And as he studied and endured the concentration camps, he saw there were essentially two kinds of people in a concentration camp.

There were the people who, no matter how bad it got, could endure. No matter how bad it could become, they could endure. And there were the people that would crack and either die or give up or capitulate.

And he says, the characteristic of the people who endured were the people who had a sense of community with purpose. A sense of community and purpose, even in a concentration camp. The people who gather together around a purpose.

He says this, he says, the human species can endure almost anything, even a concentration camp, if they have community and purpose. We know this. Those of you who are in the military, you go through hard things, but you have the brotherhood and you have purpose and you can endure.

[ 40 : 14 ] Those of us who are parents, we know this. We have each other. Kids will ring us drive and we have purpose. This is your community.

This is your purpose. Throw yourself into it for 2025. Don't treat this as something where you come in and consume. That will only feed your discouragement.

Get involved. Meet with your elder. Meet with your pastor and say, how can I serve? How can I join a home group? How can I start a small group?

That is where you will find yourself actually fighting the discouragement and growing to trust the promises of God. As you approach 2025, in a couple days, in some ways it's just another year.

It's just another day. In other words, it is a new opportunity to recalibrate, reset. Think about how we can grow, as Andy said at the beginning. To you, I would say don't consume Jesus.

[ 41 : 17 ] Don't make resolutions that you'll probably fail in. Rather, faithfully wake up and follow Jesus on January 1st, January 2nd, January 3rd.

Wake up every day and say, today I will be a Christian because I trust a faithful God. That is what God asks of you. And when discouragement and failure happen, which they will, run back anew to the character of God.

Run back to his faithful promises. Trust again. He is faithful. He will not leave us. Let me pray for us. Lord in heaven, as we study your word, it strikes us anew, convicts us, encourages us.

We pray that you would do what you only can do. That you would increase our faith. Give us more faith. And it would be faith that encourages our hearts. As Hebrews says at the ends, it would strengthen our weak knees and our hands to run with endurance the race set before us.

And we would give you the glory. We do pray that you would come quickly and bring us out of this exile to the home that you have. But until then, give us the grit and the tenacity to trust you.

[ 42 : 31 ] It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.