

Pastor Caleb Duvick
Holding Onto & Handing Off the Faith

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Series: Taking Ground
Joshua 24

BIG IDEA – HOW DO WE KEEP OUR FAITH AND PASS ON OUR FAITH?

Good morning. Welcome. My name is Caleb. I'm one of the pastors here at Two Cities. If you're new here, one of the things you need to know about us and this church is we are committed to mission. We are committed to taking the gospel to the lost locally, nationally, and globally. One of the ways we do that is through short-term trips like the one you just saw.

Here's our challenge to everyone who calls Two Cities Church home. We want you to prayerfully consider where God might be calling you to go on a short-term missions trip like these over the next three years. We want you to commit to praying thoughtfully about that.

Here's something I want to celebrate together as a church. Just this year, in 2023, we have already sent 64 people on trips like these. Isn't that awesome? Our hope is that we can continue to do more and more of those together, because we know how God uses those for his eternal purposes, and we want you to be a part of that. So let's pray, and then we're going to dive into the last chapter of the book of Joshua, Joshua 24, as we wrap up that series together today. Let's pray.

Father, we love you, and we are honored that you call us to be a part of the mission you are doing, not just here in Winston-Salem but around the world. Thank you for the people who have already put their "Yes" on the table, and for those of us who need to consider what that might be for us, God, would we take that seriously and listen where you might be calling us to go. God, as we dive into your Word today, we pray that you would open up our hearts and minds to receive whatever it is you have for each of us here today. It's in Christ's name we pray, amen.

I want to ask you a question. Have you ever thought about your own funeral? Have you ever thought about what the end of your life is going to be like? I just did a funeral for a family a couple of months ago, and it has really had me thinking about these types of things. Actually, I just had a spiritual retreat a couple of weeks ago where I really pressed in on that and considered what that would be like and what, at the end of my days, I want to be able to say.

It made me consider what things are most important to me. Here are two things I walked away with. At the end of my life, I want to be able to say that I have kept my faith, that I finished well. I don't know about you, but we live in a world today where it seems like it is making it harder and harder for us to keep our faith, where we are constantly being pushed to drift away from it, and people are not finishing well.

One of my favorite bands growing up was a band called *Caedmon's Call*. I love their music. They had this incredible way of taking good biblical gospel truths and putting them into song. So, you can understand how upset I was when, a handful of years ago, the lead guy, Derek Webb, divorced his wife and completely walked away from the faith. It breaks my heart every time I hear one of their songs.

Many of you can feel the same way as you're scrolling through social media, and you see friends you knew, maybe from church growing up, or whatever, who had been following the Lord but are no longer walking with him anymore. It's heartbreaking to think about. It makes sense why John Piper, a famous pastor... He says he prays for two things every day. The first is "God, help me stay married," and the second thing is "God, please help me stay a Christian." We need help if we're going to keep our faith.

The second thing is this. I want to keep my faith, but I also want to pass on my faith. I don't know about you, but I have so many people in my life who are far from God but close to me who I desperately want to see taste and see that Jesus Christ is good. At the top of my list are my four girls. My hope and prayer for them every day is that they would love and follow Jesus Christ every single day of their lives. I want to pass on my faith to them.

As we come to the end of Joshua, to the end of the book, we're also coming to the end of his ministry. The two things that are on his mind are "How can I keep my faith to the end, and how can I pass it on?" We're about to see Joshua is coming to die. He's saying, "I want to finish well, and I want my family to follow after me. I want the people God has given me influence and leadership over to follow me to the very end." That's what this text is about today: How do we keep our faith? How do we pass on our faith?

01 REMEMBER AND SHARE OUR STORY

As we dive in, I think you're going to see three ways that, if we do these things, the Lord will bless us, and we will see those things in our lives. Look with me at verse 1. You're going to see the first thing is we need to remember and share our story. Verse 1 says:

"Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. And they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.

Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac. And to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. And I gave Esau the hill country of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. And I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with what I did in the midst of it, and afterward I brought you out.

Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea. And the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. And when they cried to the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians and made the sea come upon them and cover them; and your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness a long time.'"

He goes on to recount more of their story. Skip down to verse 13. ***"I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant."***

Joshua is giving us an example of what it looks like for us to remember and tell our story. Why is that important? Why did he gather all of the people of Israel and tell them a story they probably already knew? I think there are three important reasons we need to remember and share our story.

First, *our forgetting leads to failure*. When we forget our story, what often happens is it leads to failure. As we finish up the book of Joshua today, I wish we could go right into the book of Judges, because what you're going to see are two completely different stories. Joshua is a book about victory and triumph. It inspires us. When we get to the end of it, we see Joshua does keep his faith. We see the people he's leaving behind embrace the faith themselves.

When you jump over into Judges, it's a completely different story. It's a book about defeat. It's embarrassing, because generation after generation of God's people have

walked away from him, and God is having to give them over to their sin and to their enemies, and he's having to go in and save them.

As you look at the commentaries, they all agree there's something behind it. Just like Simba in *The Lion King*, they forgot who they were. They forgot where they came from. In other words, they forgot their story. This is how faith dies. Generation one receives the faith. Generation two forgets it. Generation three forsakes it.

That's why it's so important for us, as God's people... If we want to keep our faith and pass on the faith, we have to remind people, those who come after us, of the story about God's faithfulness to us and to them, lest we forget it and ever forsake it, because when we forget we fail.

Here's the second reason we remember and share our story: *our stories help us and others learn from our sins and mistakes*. You see, there are two things a story does. It can give us a vision for what *can* be. It's like, man, we want that to happen in our lives. But it also serves as a counter-vision. When we tell about those parts of the story that are not so beautiful, it's like, man, we don't want to go down that road.

The Bible is filled with so many of these, all of these people who have fallen and failed because of their sin or different mistakes. We can look at that and say, "Man, I don't want to go down that road." Joshua is showing us we need to be able to do the same thing in our own stories. So, as you learn to remember and share your story, what you're going to have to do is incorporate the things that are not so great about yourself in it too.

Joshua gives us an example of this. There are a lot of different ways he does this in the story, but let me just point out one. In verse 7, he says, "**And you lived in the wilderness a long time.**" What you need to know about Joshua is he's very kind and polite, because here's another way he could have said it: "You knuckleheads took what should have been a two-week walk through the desert and turned it into a 40-year involuntary camping trip." It sounds like some of your vacations, right?

He's like, "You guys messed up so badly." What he's saying is we don't just brush over those things. We need to own them, because it's only in owning those things that we can actually learn and grow from them. Living through something is not enough. We have to be able to reflect on it, to be able to process that and say, "Here's what I would do differently."

So, we need to be able to share that in our stories, because part of being a mature and healthy believer is being able to talk about your sins and mistakes. Here's what that can look like for you. Parents, be willing to talk about your sins and mistakes with

your kids. Listen. I know it's hard. I know everything in us wants to be like, "Man, I didn't struggle with any of these things. I want to look like I'm above that."

You would rather share that embarrassing picture of you with your perm or your frosted tips than actually have to talk to your kids about your sins in your past. But here's the truth. Your kids not only learn from the good things they see in you, Mom and Dad. They can also learn from the ways *you* have learned from your sins and mistakes.

What that can be is... When your kid comes to you with something they're struggling with, I'm willing to bet you probably walked through that too. What would it look like if you were able to own that and say, "Listen. I know. I've been there. Here are all of the ways I struggled with that too. Here are the mistakes I made when I was walking through that stuff, but here's the way God has used that and the way he has grown me too." It goes a long way in helping the people who come after us learn how to deal with those things in their own lives as well.

Here's the third reason we need to remember and share our stories: *because they give us and others hope*. Our stories remind us of the hope we sometimes need. There are a lot of examples of this in this passage too, but I want to just zero in on one. It's right here in verse 1. It says, "***Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem...***"

You may want to underline *Shechem*, because that's very important. One of the first places you see this place pop up is back in Genesis 12. The first time you see it is when God calls Abraham to leave and to follow him. Right after this, you see in verse 5 of Genesis 12:

"And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.' So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him."

You see, in Genesis 12, Shechem was the place of the promise. It's where God brought Abram and said, "This land is going to be your own one day. It's not now, but it will be." Shechem is the place that Abram listened and put his faith in God that he was going to do everything he said he was going to do.

Now here, at the end of Joshua, hundreds of years later, Joshua is bringing his people back to this place, because the place that was once the promise is now the place of the proof. God brought the promise about to fruition. It's realized now. I don't know

about you, but things like that give me hope, because that same promise God fulfilled hundreds of years later, not just for one man but for an entire nation... He is the same God who is fulfilling promises he has made to us today.

Part of what reminds us of those, when we get in places where we can't see that anymore or have a hard time believing it, is other people who are experiencing that in their life being able to share their story and say, "Listen. You can't see it right now, but here's what God has done for me." It brings us hope.

That's why some of us need to be able to do the same thing to bring hope to other people who need to hear that God is the one who keeps his promises. We remind them of that with our story. One of the most helpful things you can do today... Hear this: do the hard work so you can share your story of faith in clear and compelling ways for other people. Here's what it might look like.

I was born in Sandwich, Illinois, in 1987 to godly parents. At the age of 8, God came into my life, and I became a Christian. As a senior in high school, God called me to full-time ministry as a pastor, so I went to college, and I learned a lot about church and ministry as I was preparing for that. At the same time, I got into a relationship I regretted. I honestly wondered if God was even calling me to ministry anymore.

But God worked through that, and in spite of that, I moved to Louisville, Kentucky, to seminary. I got plugged into a church where I learned a lot about ministry and church planting. All the while, I was struggling with singleness and depression. Then I moved to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where I married my best friend Kelly.

Shortly after that, we experienced the loss of our son, and then after that, we had four beautiful girls who we still have with us today. God brought me to Two Cities after a period of waiting, and I get to be a pastor here at Two Cities. That's my story, but what I want you to hear is it's also God's story. Where was God in every single one of those steps? He was there through the highs and the lows.

Joshua gets this, as he's telling his story, because he actually tells their story through the lens of God. He says, "The Lord" 21 times. He says, "I brought Abraham, and I gave Abraham Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau." Over and over and over, he's showing us how God was in and through that.

I could just as easily, with my story, say, "Caleb, I saved you when you were 8 years old. I was with you when you were walking through singleness and depression. I was there with you in the furnace of suffering as you experienced the loss of your son." Our stories serve, ultimately, as a reminder not of who we are and what we have done but what God has done in and through us. So, we share the story because it brings us hope. Who do you need to share your story with?

Here's what we also see. When we see that God is in and over all of our story, it calls a response. He finishes up their story in verse 13, but then in verse 14, he says this: ***"Now therefore..."*** That means in light of everything you see God doing here. ***"Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness."***

When you see your story in light of God and all that he has done for us, how could you not serve him? He has been with us every step of the way, and he's going to see us through to the end. How could we not serve him? God's past faithfulness to us fuels our present faithfulness to God. That's what our story reminds us. So, if we want to keep our faith and pass on our faith, we need to remember and share our stories.

02 REPENT BOLDLY AND COMMIT BOLDLY

Here's the second thing we are called to if we want to keep our faith and pass on our faith: we need to repent boldly and commit boldly. Those two things go hand in hand. Look with me again at verse 14.

"Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell."

Joshua is making it clear to his people and, by virtue, us today that we are going to have to make a decision. Are you going to serve the Lord or are you not? Each of us needs to make that decision. Listen. It's not just a one-time thing. It's not just simply saying a prayer or walking down an aisle to make this decision. It's a decision you and I have to make every single day.

When we rise up out of bed, we are functionally having to decide who we are going to serve this day. Why is Joshua making this call here at the end of his life? Why does he feel impressed to really put this in front of people? Well, as he looked out over the crowd, just as I'm looking out over you guys today, he saw two types of people.

The first type of person he's seeing and saying this to is someone who has never truly served God at all. Hear what he says. He says this in verse 14: ***"Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD."***

Here's the subtext: some people never got rid of their false gods and were secretly worshiping them. They were living after false gods. Another name for that is *idols*. *Idols* are the things we worship to make our lives work. We're going to get back to that soon.

He's talking to these people who, by all appearances, were the people of God, but they were not. That's some of *your* stories. By all appearances, most people would think you are a follower of Jesus Christ, that you are living your life for him, because you know the right things to say. You do all of the right church things. You may know every word to every Michael W. Smith song.

But really, at the end of the day, you're the same person you always were. You're not serving God; you're serving yourself, or you're serving something else besides God. So, God is calling that type of person there in front of Joshua or here in our seats today. Who are you going to serve?

Here's the second type of person he was talking to. There were people there who were genuinely trying to serve and follow God, but they were also doing that with other gods too. I think that's many of us today. I think many of us are genuinely trying, with all of our hearts, to love and serve God, but we're also inadvertently or intentionally following other gods and trying to make both of them work.

Joshua is saying you can't do that. That is not possible. Jesus says it another way. He says it's impossible to serve two masters. You and I are going to have to decide today. Are you going to be a follower of God or aren't you? You can't be both. You can't keep walking and trying to straddle that line.

If we are genuinely... And I hope many of us are. I think we would say we are. We're trying to follow and serve God. How do we do that? One of the first things we're going to have to do is identify the idols we're also worshiping. If we're going to truly identify as followers of Jesus, we have to first start by identifying those idols in our lives.

How do we do that? Most of you probably don't have little statues hidden around your house or under your Sleep Number mattress that you're hiding away. It's like, "Okay, I can't figure it out off of that." So, let me do a couple of things that are, hopefully, going to help you identify what some of those things are in your life.

Joshua shows us there are two types of idols we are particularly susceptible to. The first is the *idols of our fathers*. You see this in verse 15. He says, "***And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River...***"

Some of our idols are secondhand. Idols have a sneaky tendency to be passed down from generation to generation. Here's what this means for parents in the room. You need to work very hard to figure out what these idols are in your life. You need to identify them, because here's the truth: whatever is not transformed will be transferred.

When it comes to the idols in your life, parents, if you are not diligently seeking to transform those in your life, they will be transferred to your kids. There are a lot of different idols that can get passed on from generation to generation. Here are just a few of them.

For some families it's addiction, whether that's alcohol or drugs or Diet Mountain Dew. One study showed that kids who had an addicted parent were eight times more likely to follow in the footsteps of their parents. Eight times! It's generational. Another one is work. That's a good example of something God made for good that we turn into a god thing.

Parents don't know how to interact with it. They see work as the lens through... "Man, my highest priority is either financial or professional achievement." When kids see their parents operate that way, that's how they begin to interpret their own lives. It happens very early. That's something that gets passed down from generation to generation.

How about *this* for moms? Sometimes it can be image. When you're constantly dieting or comparing yourself to the other people around you and wanting to look more like somebody else, do you know what your little girls see? "I need to do the same thing." We wonder why our little girls are so anxious or insecure all the time. It's because they're getting it from their moms. It's the idol that's being passed down.

Guys, you need to hear, what is not being transformed will be transferred. So, we have to identify these idols, these gods of our fathers, in our lives. Joshua points out a second type of idol. It's the *gods of our culture*. Here at the end of verse 15 he says, **"...whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell."**

Here's another hard truth. The church is called to evangelize the culture around us by sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, but what often happens is the culture evangelizes the church with the gospel of *their* gods. So many of us... We are being evangelized all the time with all of these different things, and we have to be able to see what these are.

On the screen behind me, you're going to see five questions that come from a guy named David Powlison. He was a great counselor. He wrote these to help us try to identify what some of these idols are for us. I want to read these over you, and I want you to take a moment to think about this. Maybe it'll help you identify what some of those are.

"What do I worry about or daydream about the most? What do I often lead with in conversations or make sure people know about me early on? What, if I failed or lost

it, would cause me to feel that I did not even want to live? What do I run to in order to comfort myself when things go bad or get difficult? What prayer unanswered would make me seriously think about turning away from God?"

I don't know about you, but for many of us, this is cropping up all kinds of things, potential idols in our lives. That could be control or safety. It could be sexuality or ideology of some kind. It could be some resource or relationship the Lord is bringing to our mind. Maybe you're not thinking of anything. Maybe that means you've attained sinless perfection in this life. Congratulations. Or maybe that means you're simply blind to your idols.

So, here's another helpful step you can take. If you don't know what your idols are, ask someone close to you what they think they are, because what may not be apparent to us is probably very apparent to somebody else. If we ever want to hope to be able to genuinely serve the Lord and follow after him instead of other idols, we have to do the hard work of identifying it.

But you have to be able to move beyond that. Most of us are content to stop there. We might feel good or smug about ourselves. It's like, "Oh, I see it." But at the same time, nothing about our interactions ever changes with it. You never change your habits. You never let anybody speak into it, or you constantly compare your idol to somebody else's to make yourself feel better.

"Well, at least it's not as bad as Todd's weird Pokémon addiction, or Margo whose whole entire universe revolves around her kids. She clearly has a bad idol." That's where most of us stop, just simply identifying, but that's not what we're called to do. What we're called to do is to repent, move beyond identification to repent of it, and we need to repent boldly.

Here's what Joshua says about our idols in verse 14: **"Put away the gods..."** Again, Joshua is a very polite, kind guy. Here's another way you could translate that Hebrew word. It means "Root it out." It means "Cut it off." It goes even further. "Behead it." Is that how we are thinking about our idols? Because that's how Joshua is. What are you doing to kill it in your life?

Some of the ways we need to do that, to root it out, to behead it... One of the things you need to do is plead with God over your idols. Some of us pray to God about our idols, but not many of us actually plead with God over our idols. Do you know why? It's because, at the end of the day, we love them. We don't see them and feel about them the way we should.

The only way your heart is going to interact with that idol in the way it needs to is through the help of God, so you need to plead with God. "God, help me to see these

idols in the ugly, damaging ways that I need to see them. Help me, by your power, in my heart, put them to death." Plead with God over your idols.

Another thing we need to do is confess them, not just to God but to other people, and not just talk about them but actually confess them in all their ugliness and the way they're affecting your life. Confess them. That maybe needs to be your spouse or your Community Group, maybe a godly coworker or classmate you do that with.

Listen. You can't just do this as a one-time thing, because our idols are like hydras. Every time we behead it, two more heads are going to spring back up. That means, over time, over your life, you're going to have to confess these idols over and over and over again and behead them over and over and over again, because that's how we have to do it. We have to keep fighting against it. So, we fight, and we repent by confessing.

Another way we repent of it boldly is by actually doing what Joshua says: to cut it off from your life. Many of you, if at all possible, are going to have to find ways to actually cut it off. Maybe you're going to have to get a dumb phone. Maybe you're actually going to have to delete that account. Not just deactivate it for a little while but actually get off of it completely.

Some of you are going to need to end that relationship or maybe even find a different line of work because you can't handle it. Are you willing to do the hard work of repenting boldly in order to serve Christ? Then we also see we move beyond that even more. It's not just simply identifying it and repenting of it, but we're also committing to something else in its place. We see this here.

A good understanding of repentance is not just turning away from something but turning also *to* something. That's what Joshua says in verse 14. "Put away the gods of your fathers..." Then what? "...and serve the Lord." We replace our idols with another one, one that is truly worthy of our worship, God alone.

What that looks like is we serve him. The word *serve* is used 16 times here in this chapter, because at the heart of idolatry is selfishness, but at the heart of Christianity is selflessness. The question we ask our idols is, "How can you serve me?" but the question we ask Christianity is...*How can I use all of these things to serve God and serve other people?* So, we're replacing it with something new.

So, how might the Lord be calling you to commit boldly to him? Let me ask you this. What would it look like for us, as a church, to stop making half-hearted commitments? So much of our lives, it's these half-hearted commitments. What would it look like for us to actually commit boldly to do what we see here in Joshua 24?

Here are some of the things I think it's going to look like. I think it's going to mean us burning the ships. Let me tell you what that means. Back in 1519, there was a guy named Cortes who, with a bunch of people, went to Mexico, and everybody was afraid about what was going to happen there, so he said, "I need to do something, because these guys are going to run."

So what does he do? He burns the ships to the ground, because he says, "If we are going to fulfill our mission, I have to remove the opportunity for escape and retreat. Listen. We are either going to fulfill this mission or we are going to die trying." What would it look like for you to, metaphorically, burn some ships in your lives to make escape as impossible as possible, for you to say, "Man, I am either going to fulfill this commitment or I'm going to die trying"?

Here's one of the ways you can help yourself do that: by committing publicly. What does that look like for you to commit and make it public? Well, I know a guy who can get you a good deal on some billboards on I-40. I'm kidding. Maybe for some of you it's that, but seriously. What might that look like for some of us?

Maybe, for some of you, you have been living a faith that is so under the radar, no one would know you're really a Christian. What would it look like for you to publicly identify with Jesus Christ and say, "I am a servant of the Lord"? Maybe, for you, you've never done that through baptism. Maybe, for you, you need to sign up and get baptized here next week and say, "I love Jesus, and I am going to go wherever he asks me to go and do whatever he asks me to do."

Maybe that means you invite your friends or give them the livestream so they can see. "I want to show you what is the most important thing to me." That's making it public. Here's another way you make it public. You sit down and have a conversation with somebody who you want to see you living differently. Maybe that's you sitting down with your family or your neighbors or your boss or some friends.

Oftentimes, what goes along with this is an apology. It's like, "Guys, I need to apologize, because I know I should have been living this way with you, and I have not. What you have seen from me is not what God has called me to do, and I need to apologize to you right now. What I am committing to you today is you are going to see something different in me from now on." That's making it public.

Another way we can burn the ships down, metaphorically, is by bringing accountability into our lives. So many of us are trying to do this on our own, but this is what would it look like for you to intentionally bring someone into your life. Say, "Listen. This is what I am committing to. I am giving you hunting license to call me out whenever you see me not living out this commitment in my life. I'm giving you

permission to ask me questions, and I'm going to answer as honestly as I can, because I want to see this done in my life, and I need your help."

So, you can make it public. You can make it accountable. Another thing you can do is make it bigger than yourself. I love this. We see Joshua do it. He's saying, "I don't want this just for me, but I want to do this for all of the other people around me as well." We see this in verse 15. He says at the end, "***But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.***" That ups the game, doesn't it?

Your spiritual commitment to the Lord should affect all other relationships in your life. That's the power of our relationship with the Lord. It should affect all of our other relationships. Hudson Taylor, a famous missionary, said it something like this: "If your Christian experience hasn't affected your household, if your father and mother, your brother and sister, the very cat and dog in your house are not better and happier for you being a Christian, it's a question whether you really are one."

By God's grace, may it never be said that those God has placed in our lives have ever questioned that we are really serving and following the Lord. Make your commitment bigger than yourself. Parents, here's what that means for you. You know what? There are a lot of ways you can lead your family spiritually.

You can read the Bible with them. You can pray with them. You can invite questions they have. You can prioritize the local church as your family. But none of those things will ever hold a candle to your kids seeing you repenting boldly and committing to following the Lord boldly every day of your life. That makes an impact. That is how we do that.

That should be the same for all of us, for everyone. Your cousin, your classmate, your coworker, your close friend, and your cat should see you living out your life for Jesus Christ. That's what boldness looks like: inviting everybody else into that. Here's what happens. Our bold commitments for Jesus help other people make bold commitments for Jesus. Look with me in verse 16.

"Then the people answered, 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods, for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. And the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.'"

Do you want to know something beautiful? Commitment is contagious. Do you believe that? Your commitment is contagious. So, do you want to see other people in your life

making radical choices for Jesus Christ? Well, they need to see it first from you. Here's what's true: true and lasting significance comes from us making bold commitments to God and bringing as many people as we can along with us. So, do you want to keep your faith and pass on your faith? You need to remember and share your story, and you need to learn to repent boldly and commit boldly.

03 RUN TO GOD FOR GRACE (OVER AND OVER AND OVER)

Here's the last thing you need to be able to do as well. This is the most important, so listen to this. If you want to keep your faith and pass on your faith, you are going to need to run to God for grace over and over and over and over. We see here God's people got fired up, didn't they?

They see the faithfulness of God in their story. They're ready to turn from their idols. They're ready to commit. They're doing it publicly. "This is who we are and where we're going to be." But listen to how Joshua responds to that. Verse 19 says, ***"But Joshua said to the people, 'You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.'"***

I don't know about you, but I'm sure everybody there was like, "Man! Joshua is a buzzkill. Geez!" Here's why he said that. A generation earlier, he saw Moses giving this same charge to people, and they said the exact same thing. Do you know what happened days later? They were bowing down to a golden calf. We're the same way.

What Joshua is trying to communicate is a couple of things. Joshua is trying to curb our overconfidence. For many of us, we can hear a challenge like this, and we're like, "Let's go!" But what inevitably happens? We fall and fail every time. And what happens when we do that? We're prone to just give up. That's where some of you are today. It's like, "I've heard this a thousand times. I know what I'm supposed to do, but I fall and fail. I can't do this."

I think Joshua is trying to point out, "Yes, you're powerless." Some of us are trying to do this, but we're also trying to do it in our own power. That's what religion is. We're trying to do all of these things by our own strength. And what does that lead to? We will always fall and fail. Listen. Every time you and I fall and fail and see our powerlessness, it's meant to point us to something. You can see it right here, starting in verse 25.

"So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that

was by the sanctuary of the LORD. And Joshua said to all the people, 'Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God.'"

What Joshua gives his people is a stone and a word. It's a word that testifies against them for all of the ways they fall and fail. But do you know what's true for us, as a church? We also have a stone. He's the cornerstone on which the church is built, and we have the Word of God, Jesus Christ. Instead of coming to us and speaking against us, he speaks *for* us.

Do you know what you find when you run to the stone and to the Word? What you find there is grace upon grace upon grace. When you open up your Word, that's why you find words like this in Ephesians 2: ***"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."*** We see this word in Romans 6 that says, ***"For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."***

When you run to Jesus Christ, you will always find the grace you need for whenever you fall and fail. And it's not just a grace that covers our past sins, but it's a grace that covers the sins today when we fail to repent like we should repent, when we fail to commit and live out our commitments like we do today. You know what? It's always going to be there for you.

All you have to do is run back, and you will experience his saving grace in your life. Not only do you experience saving grace, but you see another type of grace, like we see in 2 Corinthians 12. ***"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."***

Or how about *this* in 1 Corinthians 15 that says, ***"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me."*** We don't find saving grace just alone. We also find the grace that empowers us.

The power we don't have in ourselves because we are powerless we find in Jesus Christ. It's the grace and his Holy Spirit that allows us to actually say no to our idols and turn from them to God. It's that same power that allows us to be able to make these bold commitments and see ourselves follow through on those things because of the grace that is alive within us.

So, church, how do we keep our faith and pass on our faith? We need to run to God daily, because it's in his presence that we find the freedom and forgiveness for

whenever we fall and fail. It's where we find the grace that empowers us to do all of these things he has called us to.

Listen. If we can do these things, here's what we can hope to see. In verse 29, it says, ***"After these things Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being 110 years old."*** He died as a servant of the Lord. Verse 31 says, ***"Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel."***

You guys, he kept the faith, and he passed on the faith. Do you want this to be your legacy? Do you want to be able to say at the end of your days, "I kept the faith. I finished well"? Do you want to be able to, at the end of your days, look around you and see the people who were far from God but close to you now following and living their lives for Jesus? It is possible by God's grace.

If you would, bow your heads and close your eyes. I want each person here to truly consider what God is calling you to commit to today. What is the word he had for you here today that you need to take your next step in and truly commit to? Maybe, for you, that's saying, "As for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord. I may not have been doing it the way I needed to, but from this day on, I am going to commit to this."

Maybe, for some of you, it's committing to boldly repenting. Maybe you've only done the work of identifying those things in your life, but you are going to take the next step and say, "I am going to repent of this. I'm going to put it out of my life. I'm going to behead it. I'm going to do whatever it looks like, Lord, because I want to serve you."

Others of you are committing to keeping the faith. You're going to make it to the end. You are going to end well. Maybe you're at the last quarter of your life, and you're saying, "What do I need to do to make sure that happens by God's grace?" Others of you are going to make the commitment to pass on the faith, to share the story about what God has done in your life. Whatever it is you're committing to today, I'm going to ask you this: What do you need to do today or this week, by God's grace, to move toward that?

Father, we come before you, and we admit we cannot do this in our own power, but we know we serve a God who can empower us to do all of these things and more through Christ Jesus whose grace gives us strength. So, help us to run to him for that power. When we inevitably fall and fail, would you help us to run to you and get that grace we need?

God, at the end of the day, for those of us who are in Christ, we know how our story ends. Jesus wins, and our whole lives will be redeemed. That's our story. At the end of the day, we know that all of our battles against our idols will ultimately be won on our behalf by Jesus Christ, and one day, all of those idols will fall flat on their face in worship of the one true God.

At the end of the day, we know that even as we fall and fail, we have a victorious Savior who has future grace for us today to keep fighting these battles. So we pray, Lord, that you would do all of those things or more in this life, in our lives, in this church, Lord, and that you would get the glory. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.