Well, good morning Grace Hills. How many of you have had just a great week? Raise your hand. Alright. And let's be honest, anybody had a tough week? A difficult week? Yeah. I find that every Sunday, week after week it's a mixture. Some of us walk in here encouraged and fired up, and ready to go, and bring it on, and some of us walk in going, "Look, I barely survived Thursday. I'm coasting on fumes int Sunday, and here we are." And that's okay. We're a body, and we're diverse, and we have different issues, and problems, and highlights and all kinds of things.

And I'm so thankful to get together every week to pray for each other, lean on each other. Maybe those of us that have had a good week just decide, "I'm going to adopt somebody that had a bad week. I'm going to pray for them all of this week, and we'll get better together."

Welcome to week one of a new message series called faith forward. We've just wrapped up a series and we're kind of getting ready to move. This is one of our last four Sunday's here. I know I said that in first of December, but trust me this time. It's a very, very, very strong likelihood that this is one of our last four Sunday's here, and that March third we will have a grand opening over at the new building. If that doesn't happen we'll let you know, but we're going to count on it as of today, and I'll tell you up every week.

And so, we're looking forward to some great things. When I talk about faith forward I think that we're at a moment as a church where we need a particular message. I spend a lot of time during the week, between Sunday's thinking about Grace Hills, and thinking about Northwest Arkansas, and thinking about my friends, and my family, and the people that I meet with and worship with. And I find myself as a pastor, as kind of a shepard sort of, burdened for the pains, and the problems, and the suffering.

And also, thinking through the potential and the possibilities of what happens when a church full of people are becoming what God wants us to become. And out of that burden, out of some things that God has been doing in my life personally, an area where I have needed to grow, where I've asked God to stretch me and grow me in the last year or so of my life comes this message series called faith forward.

I've spent a lot of time studying the life of Joshua lately and so, we're going to get four snapshots from the life of this old testament hero named Joshua. We don't get to cover all of his life, that would take a year or so of preaching, but we're going to just catch some snapshots from the life of this old testament character.

In fact, only two of these messages really come out of the book of Joshua. The first two come out of previous books that mention Joshua, but what I want to ask God to do in the next four weeks is to stretch our faith. To grow our faith as believers.

When I look at the bible, and I kind of look at it as a whole and I just thumb through it, and think about the stories and the verses, and the highlights that really jump out it's really overwhelming how much the bible has to say about faith, about believing. From the old testament, to the new, from one character, to the next. Some of the experienced great victory, some of them walked through terrible suffering, but over and over the bible gives us this example of people who stretched their faith, who hoped against hope, who believed great things about God. And I just want to ask God over these next four weeks to stretch the faith of the people who attend Grace Hills Church on Sunday.
That if we can walk out of here believing God more our community will be different as a result. I'm convinced of that. I'm convinced of that. And that I sometimes tend to focus on certain areas of scripture, or areas of theology and sometimes I got to come back to the basics. To the core issues. And one of the core issues is faith, and here's why this burdens me so much.

When I look around at culture and I look around at society in general, and maybe even a Christian sub-culture within our larger culture what I see I think, on the whole, is a lot of discouragement. A lot of people wondering if God really is as good as we say he is. If life can be as dynamic, and faith-filled, and such a pursuit of his will as other people talk about.

Because what I think I see, and what I've noticed a tendency in my own life to do when I'm not consciously developing my faith is that I tend to coast on autopilot. And I think that a lot of us do that. What we wind up with is a people who sort of settle for mediocrity.

We start to get it in our heads that life can only get so good, and for a lot of us it's really not that good. And so, we'll do our best to try to be as happy as we can be but, "I'm not really going to believe it can be great. I'm not really going to believe it can be a great adventure, or that it can be dynamic. I'm just really going to try to get through my problems, do the best I can, go to church, check off the list, be a good person, and die."

And we kind of coast along sometimes in mediocrity. And then I see, and they've become heroes to me, I've seen certain people who, in the faith decide, "I'm not going to settle for normal. I'm going to go for something more. I'm going to believe God for more. I'm going to break out and try something new. I'm going to take some risks. I'm going to step out in faith. I'm going to attempt some great things for God."

And then crazy as it is, it works. Right? And these people get to kind of, soar so to speak in their faith. And I look at that and for all my life I looked at that and go, "I want to do that. I want to try that." I envy the people who really step out.

And we're not talking so much that they have great circumstances in their life, I'm just saying out of their life they stretch, and they go, and they reach, and they attempt, and even when they attempt and there's failure their faith continues to grow. I want that for us, and here's why.

I'm convinced that there lies within our church, and churches like ours across this nation, there lies tremendous, untapped potential. And it's just beneath the surface, because of who God is and how he's wired us. And if we just have some faith I believe everything changes. Everything changes.

Now, I didn't bring you here to just say that and go, and you can walk out, "What'd you talk about Sunday? Well, he said believe more. Oh, is that it? That sounds really simple." I want to dig a little bit deeper and I want to talk about this principle of God's blessing. I want to talk about what it is that we have faith in, and I want to dig into, and just get really honest this morning about why we're so afraid to talk about these kinds of things.

So, I want to give you some truths at the very beginning of this message. We'll read about Joshua in just a second, but I want to say some things and I want you to know I am saying these things unapologetically. I believe what I'm about to say. Believe it strongly. Okay?
The first one is simply this. Well, let me give you the title of the message first. This is really important. No, we’re not there yet. Okay? That’ll make a whole lot more sense in just a moment. How many of you have been on a vacation and you hear the kids in the back say, what? What are their question? "Are we there yet? No, we just left the house six minutes ago." You know?

And then they ask over, and over, and over. Sometimes my boys, they realize this annoys me so, they’re doing it over, and over really rapidly on purpose, and like, No, we get there when we get there. I’ll wake you up when we get there. Just, here’s a pill ..." just, don’t go there.

No, we’re not there yet. So, we’ll come back to that in just a second, but I want to proclaim this big, big truth unapologetically and then I want to talk about why we struggle with it. Here’s the truth. God wants to bless you. God wants to bless you. Okay? And I’m going to take it one step further and say something else that I also believe. God wants to bless you massively. Massively.

Now, some of us in the room go, "Yeah." I didn't hear any, "Amen's." But some of us are like, "Amen." So, if you believe that just say, "Amen." Okay? And some of us, if we're honest we go, "I don't know where he's going with this." Blessing. And you say, "Well, are we all going to get rich here? We can send in a check and then we get a mansion here on earth?" No.

But the bible says over, and over, and over, and over God blesses his people. God blesses faith. Story, after story, after story of people whom God blessed. The scriptures are clear that every spiritual blessing belongs to those who are in Christ Jesus. All of heavens resources, and power, and the affection of God, and the approval of God, and the grace of God is freely available to his people. God wants to bless you and he wants to bless you massively.

Now let’s talk for a second about why we struggle with that statement. Because a lot of us go, "Yes, okay I believe the bible teaches that, but when I start talking about my life, for me to say God wants to bless me, that suddenly sounds a little funny to me." And there's some reasons why.

First off, I think that some of us maybe who've come ... We've had a history in Christian culture, right? We've been going to church for a long time, or we at least have been very exposed to what Christianity looks like in America. Some of us hear something like that and we immediately think of all the guys on TV. Right?

And we go, "Well, there's this theology out there. This sort of, what some people call a prosperity gospel." Right? And so, there are those that teach that if you believe, and if you send in your check then God wants you to be rich and wealthy, and he's going to just shower cash upon you and you're going to get a Lamborghini, "And you get a Lamborghini." And it's that kind of thing and so, we sort of buck against that and we go, "I don't want anything to do with this prosperity gospel thing." I don't blame you. I don't blame you.

The gospel is about a Jesus who suffered, and died, and gave his life. He bled out on Calvary, spent six hours on that cross dying for our sins, and rising again. And to get to the father, to get to heaven you come through Jesus only. You trust in his death, you take up your cross. You believe in him, you lay it all down, you repent of sin and then when you repent of your sins and you trust in Jesus guess what? Life might get worse for you.
The new testament is really clear, "You might endure persecution, and suffering, and go to your death for following Jesus." So, no. No prosperity gospel here. This is still true. This is still true.

Just because a few people have twisted it let's just sort of, weed that out of our faith and ignore them, and come back to the scriptures. Yes, God still wants to bless you massively. I think some of us struggle with this not because of that, we really don't care about that, "Who cares what the guys on TV say." But maybe we've got other reasons.

Maybe we were brought up in sort of, a household in which you don't talk about good things. I think this is very prevalent. You don't share good stuff. Let's say you get this great promotion and your salary doubles or something, and someone says, "How's like?" We're taught to not go, "Life is great. I just got a promotion, double the salary. Just bought my wife a Lamborghini." You know? We don't brag about that kind of stuff. Why?

Because we're taught in our culture, "You keep hush, hush about good things in your life." As a matter of fact, if we're not careful some of us begin to assume that anybody out there that has signs of God's blessing them in a way that he hasn't blessed us, we start to feel a little jealous and we even create a kind of, negative picture of them. Right?

If you've got stuff and you've been successful then there must be something wrong with you. There must be something unethical about you. And so, those reasons why we sometimes are hesitant to say, "God wants to bless me massively." God wants to bless you massively.

So, sometimes it comes out of that. Sometimes it comes out of fear. Fear that, "If I say it, and then I don't think I experience it, it's going to mess up my faith." In other words, "I don't have much faith, I don't want that taken away. So, I'm not going to try, or risk, or trust for anything of any size, or value. I'm just going to coast along, because I've got this much faith, I'm going to hang onto it and I'm not going to challenge it by saying, "Maybe God actually wants to do more in my life than what he's currently doing, than what I'm currently experiencing. I'm just going to hang onto what I've got." Which actually says something about the size and the value of the faith that I've placed in him. We're just afraid of failing. We're afraid of messing up. We're afraid that, "It'll hurt my faith in some way."

I think also, some of us have been brought up with a ... Just sort of, a negative culture. As far as our faith in Christianity goes. I mean, to us faith us all about the things you're not supposed to do. It's all the rules, "Don't do this, don't do that, and don't smile too much." Right?

And it's this kind of faith where it's heavy, and it's burdensome, and it's not supposed to make you happy, or give you joy, or give you peace or any of those things. No, faith makes you holy and that is it. That's the only affect of faith and so, you better not be happy about being holy, because that's off limits.

And so, we've grown up with this negative kind of tendency, or we've grown up with negative people in our lives. Right? And so, every time something starts to go well there's somebody there going, "Man, I bet this is going to end badly. That's been my experience. Watch out. If you're happy today man, get ready. Tomorrow something's going to go wrong in your life." You know?
And so, we kind of, have grown up with this sense of negativity. In fact, sometimes if I'm really honest, in Christianity we sometimes elevate negativity as a virtue. As a virtue. We're taught to be critical and anyone out there that experiences something good, we begin to pick it apart.

So, I want to take all these reasons why we shy away from believing for God's massive blessings and I want us to set them aside. We don't have to believe in some kind of weird prosperity gospel, it isn't biblical. We'll just chuck that to the side.

We don't have to believe that you got to be negative in order to be holy. We'll cast that aside and we'll start to understand that in scripture is presented to us this challenge throughout of how to believe God for bigger things.

Here's the longer version of the truth that I want to share. God intends, intends, and again, I say this unapologetically. God intends for every person to experience life more abundantly, and an ever expanding influence in the world around us.

Now, let me unpack that for a second. When I say God intends for every person to experience it, some people argue and go, "But some people don't, so God must not want everyone to be blessed." I disagree. I have been down the road of a kind of theology that teaches that "God's got his favorites and he sends everyone else to hell, and there are no other options, and that's just the way it is." And I don't believe it.

Our very good God created people and he loves every last one of them. He is willing to save every last one of them. If you've come to know Christ as your savior you are in. You're in the family, you're headed for heaven. And so, the idea that God created billions of people on the planet just for the purpose of damning them to hell forever to display his greatness, I reject that theology. Period.

Instead, I would say that when God creates a person, that person bears the image of God and is the object of God's love and affection from conception until death. Right? All the way in between. And that if you bring any person right here to the front of this room, I don't care what their background is, what their story is, I don't care what life has looked like for them, if there is a human being in this spot I promise you God loves them and will save them, and wants to save them, and desires to save them. I promise you that. Okay?

God intends every person to experience life more abundantly. Does every person experience it? No. And there are all kinds of reasons for that, but I believe God's desire is for every person to experience life. I say that because Jesus said it. Right?

He said, "The thief comes," to do what? "To kill, steal, destroy, but I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." Jesus said that. He came to give life more abundantly.

So, God intends for every person to experience life more abundantly, and an ever expanding influence in the world around us. Now, that's very important. It's very important because you got to realize that this idea of enjoying God's massive blessings is not about just making you happier.
It's not about making you comfortable. It's not about making life easy for you, or making things convenient for you. The purpose of God's blessing in your life is ultimately to show the rest of the world around you the goodness of God. It's not about you.

It's not about your enjoyment of things. If you said to me, "God really wants to bless me with this big mansion and a comfy couch, and he wants me to sit there and watch TV all day and just be happy." And I'm going to go, "Why? What's the point of that?" No, I believe God wants to bless you massively, but not just so you can be happy but so that your life influences other people. So, that beyond you, you can become a giver. You can become one who speaks on his behalf. You can give glory to him. You can encourage other people. You can minister to other people. That out of the abundance you have experienced you're going to overflow and bear fruit in the lives of people around you. It doesn't end with you. You're not the end game. Okay? The rest of the world is, and that's why Jesus commissioned us.

And so, he talks about giving us life more abundantly and then right before he goes back to heaven he says, "By the way, I'm sending you guys out and I want you to go tell everybody about me, and I want you to give up everything in order to get it done, get this job done, because I want everybody else to come to know me as well."

And so, his blessings are massive yes, and we should believe that God wants to bless us massively so that we can have an ever expanding influence in the world around us. Now, let's get to the biblical example of that in Joshua.

I want to introduce you to this guy. He's always been one of my favorite bible characters to study partly because I'm 41 years old, okay? So, I don't know how you rank 41, it depends on what age you're at, and what age you feel, right? Some of you are like, "Man, he's young." And others of you are like, "Man, he's old?" I don't know. Both old voices, just to not be discriminatory there, but you know, I'm 41 years old and when I look in Joshua's life, Joshua served alongside Moses from when he was probably around 20 years old.

And Moses spent 40 years wandering through the wilderness. At the end of that 40 years he turns everything over to Joshua. So, if you do the math, about how old is Joshua? At least when he starts his leadership. 60. Some of you aren't willing to say it out loud in case you're wrong. Yes. If he's 20ish when he starts his ministry, and he spends 40 years following Moses around and then at the end of that 40 years Moses says, "Okay, it's yours. Lead the nation."

Then he's about 60 when he starts. So, if you walked in this morning and you say, "Okay, this faith stuff, this blessing stuff that's great for the young whippersnappers out there." Not that anyone says that anymore, but you know, if that's what you're saying and, "That's not really for me." You got to go, "Bologna." I mean, you know, God fills the scriptures with stories of guys who started later in life.

So, here we are. Joshua, i want to read about him in Numbers chapter 27. Numbers chapter 27. Ignore that, that says Numbers 13. The verses were right, the chapter's wrong. Numbers 27, verse 12 says this, "One day the Lord said to Moses, climb one of the mountains east of the river and look out over the land I've given to the people of Israel. After you have seen it, you'll die." That's encouraging right?
"After you've seen it, you'll die like your brother Aaron. For you both rebelled against my instructions to the wilderness of Zin. When the people of Israel rebelled you failed to demonstrate my holiness to them at the waters. These are the waters of Meribah at Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin. Then Moses said to the Lord, Oh Lord, you are the one, you're the God who gives breath to all creatures. Please appoint a new man as leader for the community. Give them someone who will guide them wherever they go and will lead them into battle, so the community of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd. The Lord replied, take Joshua the son of Nun, who has the spirit in him, lay your hands on him."

"Present him to Eleazar the priest before the whole community and publicly commission him to lead the people. Transfer some of your authority to him so the whole community of Israel will obey him. When the direction of the Lord is needed, Joshua will stand before Eleazar the priest, who will use the Urim, one of the sacred lots cast before the Lord, to determine his will."

"This is how Joshua and the rest of the community of Israel will determine everything they should do. So Moses did as the Lord commanded. He presented Joshua to Eleazar the priest and the whole community. Moses laid his hands on him and commissioned him to lead the people just as the Lord had commanded through Moses."

So, there's are sort of, introduction to Joshua's life. We're jumping into the middle. He's already had 40 years of training, he's about to have quite a few years of success ahead of him that we'll get to in weeks three and four of this series, but today I want to just focus our attention here for a second on the transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua.

Joshua is in this interesting place. I believe God wants to bless Joshua massively. He wants to bless the people of Israel massively. Right? If you've got a theology that says, "God just wants to hurt you and wants the worst for your life until you die." Then you're missing out on the symbolism here of moving toward the promised land. Out of slavery, through the wilderness where there's cleansing, and repentance, and hard stuff, on into, across the Jordan River, into the promised land.

And so, God has in front of them this land of milk and honey, this blessing that's awaiting them and he says, "I want Joshua to lead the people into blessing." So, God wants to bless Joshua massively and that's why we're talking about him, but Joshua spends 40 years waiting for the blessing of God to come to pass. 40 years to get into the promised land. He waits all that time.

So, let me go back to, one of the reasons why we fail to believe that God wants to bless us massively is because we have very short time frames in mind. We assume, "If he wants to bless me massively than my next week is going to go great." Maybe not. Maybe not. Maybe the next decade isn't going to go so great for you, circumstantially speaking.

That does not mean God doesn't want to bless you massively. It just means God's timing is very different than ours. From eternity's perspective you can't look at all that the scripture says about eternity to come, about heaven and go, "I don't know if God really wants good for us. I think he wants mediocre." No, streets of gold. How is that mediocre? Right? Even Trump doesn't have streets of gold. Just beds and couches.

But nonetheless, God has this picture dangling before us of what eternity looks like and he says, "This is good. It's this promised land of milk and honey, and I want you to go there and you're going to flourish,

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and you're going to have freedom, and you're going to become a great nation, and you're going to show off my glory to the rest of the world."

God wants to bless Joshua massively, but he's 60 and all he's done is wonder around in the wilderness and watch God's people mess up, and get rejected. There's a story we're going to look at next week in which Joshua almost dies, because the whole nation wants to kill him. Okay?

So, he's gone through some stuff. He has walked through suffering, and hardship, and rejection, and all of the things that you and I feel in our worst moments in life. He goes through loss, he walks through grief, he walks through pain, he suffers temptation, he goes through the delay and the waiting. And that's where a lot of us feel like we are today. Like, "I'm in the waiting room. Like, "Maybe God's blessing is behind that door, but I just feel like I'm waiting, and I'm waiting, and is God ever going to come through?" Yes.

God wants to bless you massively. Massively. That's scriptural. It's biblical. Question is, what do I do right now? While I'm waiting, what do I do? Well, out of Joshua's example I just want to give you five words. Five single words that maybe, will rest on your mind and you go, "If I feel like I'm in a season of waiting ..." Because I really believe this, you're either in a season of tremendous blessing and experiencing God's blessing, or you're in a season of waiting for God's blessing, but there are no other seasons. Okay?

You're either preparing, or experiencing. And in heaven we all experience. In this life some of us experience now, some of us experience later, but God's blessing is a biblical principle. It's just the timing that we sometimes miss out on and so, what do you do when you're in the waiting room? What do you do while you're waiting for all of it to get better? What do you do while you're waiting for God's favor to really show itself?

And by the way, I can't not say this. I have to throw one more thing in before I get to my five words. That sometimes we fail to believe God wants to bless us, because we think blessings are only good things. Okay? The scripture's really clear that sometimes your greatest pain is a blessing. That the things you've walked through that are so hard, they become your story. They become your experience. They're the things that built you, and strengthened you, and grew you.

And so, we perceive all negative as not God's blessing, and everything easy and positive as God's blessing. So, throw that out the window. Sometimes God's blessing involves pain. It involves growth. And growth only comes through the pain of change. Right?

And so, you got to understand, God's blessing is not just the happy stuff. God's blessing is everything God is doing in my life. As a Christian I enjoy the favor of God by the grace of Jesus Christ. I don't deserve it, God has shown me favor. That's the very definition of grace.

And so, God wants to bless you, God wants to bless Joshua massively. It's not happening yet, but there are five things he did that I think we can do as well.

Number one is this. You're going to love this one. Wait. How many of you are like, "Yes, I was hoping he'd say that? That I get to wait." I love to say to people sometimes, "Look, I'm running a little bit late. I'll be there in 10 minutes, and if I'm not just wait longer." You know? You ever do that with folks? "Just wait longer."

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And I think in my Christian walk, in my faith sometimes that's what God would say to me. I would say, "God, I believe that you want to bless me. I'm still walking through this, I've still got this pain in my body," or, "I've still got this relationship that isn't working," or, "I'm still struggling financially. How much longer Lord?" And I think God would just whisper, "Wait longer. Wait longer, because I'm doing something in your life ..." He might say, "That you don't see yet. You don't understand yet, and so, you got to wait." Because nothing builds patience like having to wait. Right?

And so, when you say to God, "I want to be a person of resilience, and a person of great faith. I want to be a person who lasts, I want to be a person who goes the distance." Than God is going to say, "Well, to do that you're going to need patience." And some of us know better, right? And we go, "No, no, no, no I'm not asking for patience."

Because when you ask for patience, the way God gives you patience is what? To put you in situations where you've got to have patience, and some of us just remain impatient in those moments and we wonder, "Why is this repeating? I'm always having to come up with some patience that I don't have." Well, because you haven't figured it out yet, right?

And so, if you demonstrate over, and over, "I don't get this, I don't get this." God's going, "I'm trying to build it into your life, so wait longer. Wait longer." Because sometimes waiting is a healthy, spiritual thing. Just waiting, just learning to wait for the right moment.

It's like, when you cook a big hunk of meat. Okay? And you ... Say, you put a pot roast in the oven and it's in there, and it's got the onion soup mix all over it, and the salt and the pepper. And I know second service is really going to struggle with this illustration, because they're going to be hungry. But you know, you do it in there and then you pull it out of the oven, right? And you set it on the platter, and all of the experts say you're supposed to let it rest for 15 minutes. That is 15 minutes of terror. Just torture, you know? But, let it rest.

And I think in our lives we see what we want and we go, "I got to have that, and I got to have it now." And God goes, "If you'll wait 15 minutes it'll be so much better. If you'll wait for a few more years it'll be so much better. If you'll wait for the right person, and not just the person who seems to have your affection in the moment, if you'll wait for the right person it'll be so much better. If you'll wait for the right job it'll be so much better."

Now, if you don't have a job I'm not telling you to not get a job I'm just saying, sometimes there are moments when we wait. "If you'll wait to buy the car til you have the cash it's easier to pay for. If you'll wait until you get the promotion then ..." You know, if you wait for things, and waiting is good.

And so, in a season of knowing God wants to bless you massively, one of the things you got to do is learn to wait, because his blessings don't always come in our timing. Okay?

Secondly, watch. Watch. Here's what I love about Moses. He gets a lot of time ... I mean, love about Joshua. Joshua gets a lot of time watching Moses. When Moses goes up to Mount Sinai to get the tablets guess who goes with him? Joshua. He's the only other person. He travels up the mountain with Moses, and he is ... We don't know whether he was at the very top of that mountain. The scripture kind of trails off. I searched and dug like, "Was he there when Moses got the tablets?" Or, "Did he stop
halfway up and sort of, stand guard?” We don’t know, but what we know is he wasn’t down with the people, he’s up where Moses is when Moses is getting the tablets.

And then, when Moses comes walking back down, and you remember the scene where the people have made a golden calf, right? It’s like, ”Moses has been gone for days now. We’re not waiting any longer.” You see that theme? ”We’re not waiting any longer. We need some kind of God.” So, everybody throws their earrings in and Aaron throws all that into the fire and melts it, and makes this calf and he goes, ”Okay, worship this golden calf and that way we can move forward, because we’re not waiting on Moses anymore.”

And then Moses and Joshua halfway down the mountain, they hear something strange going on and God prepares them. He says, ”Look, you need to know when you get down there what’s going on. They have rebelled against me.” And God even says, ”I’m going to wipe them all out.” Moses begs him, ”Please don’t do that God. Give them one more chance.” And I think that was a training moment more for Moses, than it was for the people.

But they finally get down the mountain and sure enough, they’ve made this golden calf and they’re worshiping. The whole nation’s just been delivered from slavery and they made a golden calf, and they’re worshiping it. And one of the greatest lines in scripture is what happens when Moses questions Aaron about it.

I mean, I can just see him now walking up to Aaron, ”I left these people in your care and what did you do?” And Aaron goes, ”Hey, we threw all this gold in the fire and out popped a calf.” I mean, that’s literally how he replies, ”Out popped a calf.”

Can you imagine being Moses in that moment? Wanting to kill your half brother. So, sometimes you wait. Joshua got to see all of that. When Moses would go into ... They’d move this holy place and Moses would go in and hear from God. Who gets to go in with him? Joshua gets to go and stand guard and be with Moses, and be the person between. He’s sort of the gatekeeper for Moses so to speak. He’s between him and the people. For 40 years watches him lead.

Some of us get upset that we haven’t been promoted yet. Maybe there's somebody God wants you to watch for awhile. Maybe there's something he's preparing you for, and you got to learn a little bit more, and watch what God says about leadership, and about influence. So, wait and watch, and here's the third ... You're going to love this one too. Third one. Serve. Serve.

So far this is super motivational, ”I get to wait, I get to watch other people be blessed, and I get to serve. Bring it on.” You know? But that’s what God does for us in the waiting room while we’re waiting for his blessing we serve.

What I love is, that Joshua’s called Moses's minister. Right? Throughout these books of the old testament he's called Moses's minister. Minister is not a word that has to do with the profession of being a pastor. Okay? We've applied it that way, ”Who’s your minister?” Well, you know who the minister's at Grace Hill's Church are? All of us. Okay?

The new testament is really clear. I'm a minister, yes and so are you. Every believer is a minister. The word minister means servant. Servant. Okay? It means to serve. And so, when Jesus is talking among the
apostles and they don’t want to wait, they want to rule, they want to reign, they want to crush Rome, they want to be in charge, they want the right hand and the left hand of king Jesus and they want it now. And Jesus looks back at them and says, "Look, you want to be great?" And they’re going, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. What's the secret to greatness?" He goes, "You really want to be great? Yeah, yeah, yeah. How do we be great?" And Jesus goes, "Serve each other."

And some of them probably go, "What? Serve each other?" But that's what you do, because when you serve other people you're starting to understand the reason why God wants to bless you to begin with. When you practice a life that's about others and not yourself you become a trustworthy vessel for God's blessing, because when he deposits it in your life it gets invested in people around you.

So, learn to wait, keep doing some watching, serve faithfully, and here's the fourth one. Dream. Dream. You know, Joshua is given a special privilege early in his ministry when he's two years in. Right? So, they get out of slavery and two years later they get to the promised land. They get there.

And Moses under direction from God selects 12 people. 12 spies. And he says, "I want you guys to go throughout the promised land, sneak across the river, and go throughout the land and measure it. And take some Kodak photos for us so we can see how awesome this place is. Come back and describe it to us."

And so, Joshua goes across and sees the promised land. Right? He witnesses it firsthand. His feet walk on the promised land, on that soil and he sees it, and he experiences it, and he visits it, and he goes up and down through it. They take their measurements, they come back with a string of grapes that two of them have to carry on a pole between their shoulders and they're like, "This land is amazing. It's amazing."

And Joshua’s one of them, from those 12 spies. He goes, "You guys aren't going to believe how amazing this place is." And then Joshua listens as 10 of those 12 spies go, "But we can't take it. It's too much of a threat. We'll never survive it. In spite of what God says." You know?

And so, God punishes that nation and he says, "Because of that, a whole generation is going to die off in the wilderness. 38 more years you're going to walk around." 40 years with a taste in his mouth of those grapes. 40 years of knowing that, that land that flows with milk and honey, "It's just over there, but we got to keep wondering around."

He has this vision, this understanding, this experience of what's coming. How do you cultivate the kind of dream that God wants you to dream, and the kind of vision that God wants you to have? You keep coming back and seeing what God says about the future. And when you're appetite is whetted enough for what is coming in eternity, you start to dream of it, and desire it, and to think big, and to believe big things about God, and you begin to cultivate this vision of what is to come.

So, dream. Dream great dreams for God. Joel even said, "In the last days." And we are in them. Okay? "In the last days that young men shall see visions, old men shall dream dreams." You're going to dream great things about what God has revealed and said about the future.

So, wait, watch, serve, dream, and then one more word. Grow. Grow. Wait, watch, serve, dream, grow. You've got this time to grow. Okay? Some of you are more advanced in your journey than others, you've
been around longer, you've been a Christian longer, you're growing. Some of you are brand new to the faith. It doesn't really matter. The moment you come to trust in Jesus and turn everything over to him, and you're born again and you start the Christian life, you start eternal life in that moment. You have from then until death to become more, and more, and more like Christ. That's what this life is for.

If that wasn't God's intention, then when you trust Jesus you'd just disappear. Right? Someone else got saved and bam, they're just gone. They're in heaven. Right? They've arrived. But instead God leaves you here. Why? So that you can grow.

And some of you are so discouraged because you haven't reached perfection yet. You haven't reached full maturity yet, but you're still alive so you haven't arrived, because you're still alive. And so, for those 40 years wandering around in the wilderness God wanted Joshua to grow. To wait to get to the promised land, to watch Moses, to serve Moses and the people, to dream about what he knew was coming, and to grow as a leader. To become a leader so that in this passage when he says, "I want you to take some of your authority and transfer it to Joshua." I don't think he's talking about a title. I don't think he's talking about legal authority like, "Joshua we're adding you to the board of trustees. The state of Arkansas will now see you as one of the official owners."

I don't think that's what he's talking about. I think what he's saying is, "Gather the two million people in front of you and on the stage affirm and bless Joshua in front of them, so that they follow him." So, he grows and he becomes in those 40 years, the leader God wants to use next.

I think if he had started leading 38 years earlier there would have been some deficiencies, and some weak spots in his ministry of leadership, but because of the waiting, and because of the watching, and because of the serving, and because of the dreaming there was also some growing. And he was getting ready for God's massive blessings.

Now, again, without apology, without hesitation I would say to anyone of you in this room, God wants to bless you massively, but I would also say if you want to have that blessing you got to learn to wait, you got to learn to watch, you got to learn to serve, you got to learn to dream, and you got to learn to grow.

And we have whatever time we have left as a gift from God to make those things happen. Now, let me just ask this question. For some of you it's maybe, not a question that applies to everyone, but maybe it applies to some of you. Maybe this is just really what your heart needs to be asked today.

Why did you stop believing? I mean, I'm not talking about believing in Jesus. I know that for many of you it's like, "Oh, no, no, no I've always been a Christian. I remember when I got saved, and I've always trusted ... My faith is strong."

Maybe you still believe in God. Maybe you still believe Jesus is the savior for you. Maybe you still believe in this whole system of Christianity, but that's not what I'm asking. I mean, when did you stop hoping? When did you stop believing big things about God?

I was listening to Charles Stanley years ago and he asked this question that just nailed my heart. He said, "It's not ..." No, it wasn't a question. It was a statement. Nailed my heart harder than a question would. And Stanley said, "You believe in God ..." No, it was a question. Forget it. Just trust me, okay? Really powerful. He said, "You believe in God, but do you believe God?"
"You believe in God, but do you believe God?" Like, when God speaks do you believe him? Not just intellectually, "Oh, of course I do. I'm a Christian. I believe the bible, so if he said it, yeah I believe it. Got it on a bumper sticker." You know?

No, no, no. Do you believe God in your life? Do you believe God right now? Do you believe? When did you stop believing? When did the enthusiasm about the Christian life begin to wane? Because I believe faith is cultivated, right? It's something that I discover, and I grow in faith. I don't think faith is magical, it doesn't fall out of the heavens.

Some people don't have great faith, because they just stumbled upon it. No. You practice faith, you grow in faith, you choose to believe certain things about God. You choose to believe his word. You choose to believe in heaven, or you don't, but it's your choice. You decide. You decide.

So, if you can look back on your life and go, "Man, I used to be so on fire for Jesus and lately I just ... I don't know. I don't know, I'm just ... Life just seems mediocre." How about this. How about today we choose to believe again? We choose to believe again. Even if it means more waiting, and more watching, and more serving, and dreaming, and growing, let's choose to believe again.

So, today will you believe God? Let's bow our heads. Father, I pray right now for the person in this room that's never trusted in Jesus. They've never believed in the cross, in where Jesus died. Father, right now would you awaken within them, would you awaken within them and revive what was dead? Bring them to life in this moment. May they trust in you and believe in you. If that's you, if you've never believed in Jesus, you've never trusted in him then today would you just declare in your heart, just consider this a wide open invitation to say, "God, I am coming to you today believing that your son Jesus died for my sins. I receive him as my savior, I repent of my sins, I own it. I own my sin. I believe in Jesus. I believe he's alive, and I'm asking you to save me. In Jesus name."

Some of you are believers and you need to pray this instead, "God, I remember when I used to believe you and it was like a red hot passion, and I don't know what happened to that God, but I haven't believed you for much lately. I've become skeptical, and cynical, and closed off, and when people talk about God's blessing I start to smirk and think I know more than they do, because I understand how unrealistic that is. God, forgive me. I repent of that. Lord, I want to believe you again. I want to believe you again. I want to trust you for great blessing in my life. To lean on you, to depend on you for that. God, we as a church, may we keep praying and believing for your blessing. May we trust the scriptures when we talk about the promised land that lies ahead, heaven that lies ahead, the next thing that you have for us. Our influence expanding. A lost world hearing about Jesus."

God, may we believe it. I believe Grace Hills is destined for greatness. I believe the people sitting before me are destined eternally for greatness, because of Jesus. Because of his grace. God, help us believe again. God, we praise you. We worship you. You are worthy, and you alone are worthy. In Jesus name, amen."