

The Power of One
Hebrews 11:1-6

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Sermon preached from the pulpit of Boca Raton Community Church on Sunday, January 14, 2001, by Dr. David H. McKinley, Senior Pastor.

There is a story told of an old man who was out in desert conditions and had been wandering and searching for something to drink. After a long search on a hot day he finally came across the remains of an old shack and as he approached that old building he went in hoping that maybe he would discover something that would give him an answer to relieve him from the heat and to help him find the strength to go on. As he went into the shack he found that the windows were gone, that most of the roof had been torn away, that only a section of walls were standing and in reality he wasn't even going to get much protection from the sun in the remains of this old building.

He made his way outside of the building and as he stood there looking suddenly he saw something that made his heart light up. He saw an old pump several feet away from that building and he went out to the pump and he took the handle and began to move it up and down and it would squeak and rattle. He pushed and pushed but after a matter of moments he suddenly realized the pump was dry. Dejected he put his head down and walked back toward the building. "Surely I thought I would find something to relieve the heat and give me a respite." When he looked on the ground there was a jug. He reached down and as he picked up the jug he could tell there was something in it. He pushed the dust off the front of the jug and there on the front of the jug it said, "Use this water to prime the pump and when you are finished be sure and refill the jug." The man was thrilled. He popped the cork out of the jug and sure enough it was a jug full of water. It was warm because it had been baking in that jug in the sun and he took it and as he stood there with it he suddenly realized he was caught in a dilemma. Did he take the jug full of water, water that would certainly give him something to drink and would help him in the moment of this crisis or would he in fact take the instructions and go over to the pump and pour the entirety of that jug of water down there against the pump to try and get it primed and to somehow tap into a well. For the next few moments that man stood there with a jug of water and with a pump trying to decide which way to go. Let me ask you something. If that was you, what would you do? I mean it is hot, dessert conditions, this is the only drop of water you have seen or been near and you are thirsty and you are needy and you are waiting for a moment to somehow be refreshed; you've got the jug, you've got the water, all you have to do is start to drink it. But on the other hand, if somehow that pump would work, then not only would you have that jug but you could literally have enough water to splash on yourself and to refresh yourself and you could not only drink that jug of water but many other jugs of water. And you could make it if you could somehow tap into a resource that was much greater than the little supply found in that jug. And yet to do so required pouring out every drop of water. Trusting the inscription on that jug and acting on what it says. I don't know what you would do; I'm not absolutely sure what I would do if I found myself in the same situation but I will tell you that every day in life you and I are faced with decisions that either call us to a place of faith whereby we have to step out on something that we have seen and something we have heard and act on it and believe it or else we have to live in the arena of a world where we see and we believe that all there is to life is that seeing is believing and that's where we live every day. Between the visible world and the invisible world. Between the things that are seen and the things that are not seen. Between the bird in hand so to speak and some kind of greater reward that could come if only we would believe. It is the difference between faith and sight and this man at this moment found himself in that dilemma and you and I find ourselves in a variety of different contexts. Maybe we're not in the dessert, maybe it's not thirst but in all of the needs, in all of the cravings, in all of the hungering pains of life we find ourselves having the answer to the question, will I go the way of faith or will I go the way of sight. Faith in its very essence is a crisis of decision and a crisis of action between the visible, physical world and the invisible but revealed Word as it is given in the Word of God. So, we are going to involve ourselves in a series of study on the subject of faith. We're going to learn together and investigate the scripture together in such a way that we learn the dynamic, the incredible extraordinary power of faith released in the lives of people who were willing to believe God and who were willing to venture with Him. In fact, in this year 2001 my goal at the outset is

that you and I would discover the power of one in our lives. The power of being one man, of being one woman, of being one student, of being one boy or one girl who is willing to say I will believe God and I will venture with Him. I am not just going to live life on the ordinary plane; I'm simply not going to be limited by all of the normal limitations of life. But instead I am going to move to a new arena, the power of one becoming one person who will believe God and who will act with God and who will begin to experience the extraordinary power of God released in your life and in my life.

The question that is going to be begged over and over in this series of messages is my life is it going to be more the same or is it going to be more the same or is it going to be more of the same, just content to know a few things about God that we may have learned in Sunday School or in a sermon or is it going to be something more, something more that you have ever known or ever experienced, the release of a power source in your life that will have a supply that will be so much greater than any demand that you have ever faced that you will begin to prove who God is and what God is like with you.

If we are going to study the subject of faith, there is one chapter in the scripture that articulates one by one the names and experiences of people who were willing to believe God and that chapter is found in the Book of Hebrews, chapter 11. It is in that chapter that I want to embark on in this study today as we begin to consider the dynamics and the difference between faith and sight in life and when we begin to unveil and understand what it means to live, the power of one, one man, one woman, one boy, one girl, one student who is willing to believe God and to follow Him. Last Sunday morning I asked a question of everyone who was here, "Will you be the one? Will you be the one who will understand that God has a purpose for your life? Will you be the one who will see that God is looking for people who have their hearts faithful toward Him?" Carrying that theme even a step further I want us to take it and personalize it in a much greater way as we investigate Hebrews 11. I am going to read versus 1-3 and then I am going to skip down to verse 6:

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders [that is, those who have gone on before us] obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible."

That is, God made this world, and everything we see and we assume is part of the physical material world, while it is physical and material, was not made of something physical and material. God made it out of nothing. The incredible confusion of the scientific community continually over the issue of the origins of man have to do with the fact that they believe that time plus chance equals everything. The reality is that God made specific things out of nothing and in that specific creation comes incredible variety and incredible diversity, incredible continuity, and incredible beauty that is visible in the world but it is something we see that was made out of something that was invisible. Beginning with creation and moving through all of the different key characters of the Bible in Hebrews 11 it is as though we unveil God's hall of fame. We read of the accounts and the stories of men and women of faith who embraced God and believed God. Right here in the opening portion of Hebrews 11, in verse 6 we come to the crux of the entire matter and we come to the heartbeat of this test and the heartbeat of this pastor as I stand on this platform.

"But without faith it is *impossible to please* Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is [that is, he is real, he exists, that is what is revealed of Him is true in this Book, he who comes to God must believe who He is], and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

In life, no matter who you are, what you attain, what you do, how good you live, how right you may appear in the sight of others, the Bible says that without faith it is *impossible to please* God. God is real and God rewards. That is the message of faith. Anyone who is willing to take a step in faith and to embrace what is revealed of God will ultimately prove that this real God rewards a faith act in life. But just like the man who was standing there with the jug in hand and the pump in the field and having to decide, do I drink what I have or do I pour it out, everyone finds that in all of the varieties of circumstances, crisis, and experiences of life, we are constantly caught in the tension between what we seek and that which we have heard about God.

Lets begin this study by taking a further step of investigation of faith. I want to read the first verse from the New International Version, the NIV:

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

It is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. That basically provides us with a definition. It basically begs and answers the question, "What is faith?" If this is the Biblical description and definition of faith, it sure is different than what most of us seem to think and understand about faith because according to the Bible, faith is something that is sure and faith is something that is certain. According to the Bible those are the words that characterize faith. But the reality is if you were to ask the average person on the street what faith is I can promise you that these are the last two words you would ever hear about faith. In fact, I am afraid that to many people who sit in church pews would not always be that faith would be seen as something that is sure and something that is certain. We have other concepts of faith, we have other understanding of what we think faith is. But if the Bible's definition of faith is right, that it is something sure and it is something certain, then that means that you and I have to address some of the erroneous concepts that we have about faith and some of the confusion that so oftentimes dominates our thinking. One of the things we tend to think is that faith is like a leap in the dark. But the Bible would say that faith is not a leap. How many people would say faith is taking a big step, a big leap. That is what so many people think faith is. Its like that guy who go too close to a cliff as he was standing there and suddenly it gave way and he reached up and grabbed a branch and as he was going down he was hanging there off the edge of that precipice and he was crying, help, help, help! And suddenly a thunderous voice said, I will help you, trust Me, let go. The guy was dangling there and he said I can't let go, help, help, please somebody help me! And the voice thundered again, this is the voice of the Lord. I will help you, just trust Me and let go. The man screamed again, help, help, I am falling! And He said, this again is my command to you, let go and trust Me. Suddenly the man dangling there started looking and screaming and he said, is there anybody else up there? Thats how we live, isn't it. Somehow we just believe that its getting caught on the precipice, hanging over the edge, clinging for life, and trying to decide, do I just let go? So many people think that faith is just a leap, just a leap into the darkness. But you see, faith, real faith is not believing without evidence. Faith isn't just believing without any evidence or any understanding for the Bible says that faith is the evidence of things hoped for. It is something based on evidence that has been given and revealed to us in the Word of God. So faith is not a leap into the dark, it is a step based on evidence, based on confidences, based on assurances that have been given to us in God's road map to us, the Bible.

There's something else we tend to see faith as and this is one of the things we have to address and that is we have to come to an agreement and understanding that faith is not a cup that we have to keep filling up. So many people seem to think that faith is like a cup and its something that when it gets empty we have to make it get full so we have to keep trying to fill ourselves up with some kind of a faith feeling; that we have to feel faith. And that somehow if I can keep that faith feeling going on inside me, just keep getting my cup full and feeling like I have got that faith feeling, I believe it, I believe it, I believe it, that somehow thats how faith operates in life. Its like when you go on a diet. Have you ever noticed when you go on a diet you don't have to be on a diet but a couple of days before you start feeling, boy, I'm getting skinny. I'm loosing weight, I can just tell it, I just feel skinny. Let me tell you how to shatter that skinny feeling -- just get on the scales one more time because the amazing thing is all you have to do is miss a few meals and you feel skinny but the reality is when you weigh-in you find that that weight has not left quite so quickly. In fact, that is the reason you can be on a diet several days and then absolutely blow it on another day and then suddenly feel like you just started all over again.

We tend to try and ride the crest of feelings. Sadly so much of the teaching about faith you see on television that has been propagated and promoted has been this whole idea that if you will just feel faith inside that somehow that faith feeling is going to make a difference in your life. But if faith is something that is sure and faith is something that is confident and faith is something that is built on evidence, then it is more than just a feeling because feelings change all of the time. Therefore, faith is not a leap into the dark without evidence and faith isn't just a cup that we have to try to keep filling up on our own.

Something else we have to understand about faith. If we're going to believe what the Bible says that faith

is, that faith is sure and certain, and we're going to confront what we tend to think about faith, then we have to understand that faith is not a remote. "Oh, I have a crisis, I have to get hold of it, let me see, God, what would You do for me today?" You know there is no power like having the power of a remote in your hand. You can constantly change what you like and don't like. You can move as fast as you want to through those television channels on the television set and for many of us that is exactly how we perceive things. Its like a remote we grab and we begin to push the buttons and we want faith to be, "Okay God, I want You to go to this channel, God I don't like that program here, don't enjoy this at all, God, I want to change the picture, I want to change the sequence, I want to change the tune. God I am going to push the button and You are going to do it!" We hear people tell us that all that you have to do is get the faith remote and just start changing the channels and God is going to snap to it for you. The Bible is clear: God rewards those who diligently seek Him. But the Bible never portrays faith in any fashion that would make us seek it like a remote where we can simply change the channel and move the direction and cause God to do what we want Him to do. So, faith isn't a leap, faith isn't a cup, and faith isn't a remote. What is faith?

The Bible says faith is the substance, the assurance of things hoped for. It is the evidence, the certainty of things we do not see. The best thing I can demonstrate faith as is a key. I can go out on the parking lot and immediately recognize that there are a lot of automobiles on the parking lot but there is only one automobile that I can confidently walk to, insert this key in the door, turn the lever, and find that the lock will open it. I can get inside that automobile and stick it in the ignition and turn it and within a matter of moments I am in motion and moving because faith is a key that unlocks the unlimited power of God into the experience of my life. And everyone of us individually has to possess that key. As much as I might want to take my faith and apply it to your crisis and you may want to take your faith and apply it to mine, the reality is faith is day-by-day, taking the key, putting it into the ignition of the power of God, and going with Him in that day in the strength of that journey.

Here's the beautiful thing about the key of faith. The strength of that key is not in me. The strength of that key is in God and who He is.

Jesus says I am the first and the last. I am the living One. I was dead and behold I am now alive forever and forever and I hold the keys of death and of Hades. Jesus Christ is the One who is the key to experiencing and understanding the power of faith in my life. If He holds the keys to death and Hell then there is not another key He does not hold. As I connect myself in assurance and certainty to who Christ is and what He has promised to do I begin to experience the confident power of faith in my life. What is faith? It is something sure and it is something certain.

How does faith grow? If faith is the key that unlocks the power supply of God in my life and the Bible calls me to live a life of faith and tells me that without faith it is impossible to please God, then the question is how does faith grow in my life? There is some simple answers to this if we investigate the Bible. In Romans 10:17 the Bible says:

"So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God."

Therefore, if I am to grow in faith, the way I grow in faith is to hear the Word of God. If you made a decision this year that you are going to get in shape and you are going to get fit this year in your life, then there are two steps that have to take place to get you into shape. One of those is diet and the other is exercise. So if you are going to exercise and grow in faith, the way the muscles in faith grow in your life is first and foremost by hearing the Word of God. That is why you have to make a priority out of a good, nutritional diet in your life. Constantly in your life you are being overloaded by the media-saturation of a world that does not know God, that does not value God, that does not honor God, that does not embrace the Truth of God. It is a world living upside down. Yet, in contrast to that, if you are going to be a person of faith you have to step away from all of the seen and visible things in the world and you begin to connect with and genuinely hear the Word of God. If you are going to grow, you need to constantly be at a place where you will hear the Word of God taught in a way in which it can be connected to your life. But not only in a church setting. It needs to happen on a daily basis that you hear the Word of God for the Bible says faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Its not just hearing anything but its hearing God's Word. The more I study the Word of God the more I understand the person and the character of God

and the higher my view of God the greater my confidence in His ability to handle my crisis. It all has to do with how you view God: if God is a little god kept in a box, God is a little god who is simply at the end of a remote, God is a god who you control and who you call on at will, then you will suddenly find that your god is very small. But if you begin to understand the God who is revealed in the Bible and you hear His Word and you embrace His Word it will amaze you how quickly faith will come by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. You will hear the Word of God and hearing *is* one of the exercises that helps us to grow in faith.

I have come to the realization as a pastor that in all reality, if I had a perfect batting record, I have 52 hours a year to impact your life with the Word of God. That would be if you were here every Sunday. The fact of the matter is many of you are not here every single Sunday of the year and so as a pastor that may mean that the windows of my exposure and opportunity to teach and preach the Word of God to you may actually fall into the 40 hour range. That maybe in the course of what you would put in one work week I do over the course of a year in trying to seek and impact your life with the Word of God. That makes this moment a serious moment every Sunday. No one bears the burden more of the importance of how this moment connects than I do in my heart and in my time with God because I realize that if you are going to hear the Word of God then I need to be faithful to teach the Word of God. This isn't just an hour of entertainment, though I want you to connect and enjoy it. It must be an hour of impact in your life and in my life. It all begins with hearing and then beyond as I said, the sermon and the preaching, Bible studies and teachings, but hearing the Word of God, that is an exercise. But let me be very quick to say that hearing the Word of God is not enough to grow effectively. Not only must we hear the Word of God we must obey the Word of God. That's where the exercise begins to take fruitfulness in our life. We must *obey* the Word of God and through a spirit of faith and of obedience we must begin to *live* the Word of God in life. The Bible says it this way in James 1:22:

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers *only*, deceiving yourselves."

You must hear but if you hear *only* you deceive yourself. The secret of growing in faith is not just being a hearer but being a *doer* of the Word of God and obeying God's Word. I am absolutely convinced that we as a church have very good teaching but I am also absolutely convinced that the greatest need in our church in the year 2001 is to take what has been taught and begin to put it into action in our life and that the greatest challenge that we face as a church and as individual believers is moving from a good teaching base to being people who begin to exercise faith. I guess the question is, is there anything in your life, is there anything in my life, is there anything in our church that is an expression of the exercise of faith. Being well-taught is great, but being well-taught is not enough. There must be the encounter and the experience of faith whereby I get out of the boat of what I know and experienced to this point and I determine that I will take another step in my experience with God and I will begin in a new and fresh way to obey Him. So (1) hear the Word of God; (2) obey the Word of God; and then (3) we must purpose to walk with God. Again and again the Bible tells us the account and the stories of people who walked with God and walking with God is simply living by faith and not living by sight. It's living my life on God's terms and not on my own. Paul said in II Corinthians 5:7:

"For we walk by faith, not by sight."

The whole of the Christian life grows and matures as we understand that there will never come a moment when we are not dependent. Somehow we want this Christian life-thing to be something where we just confidently strut out in the morning and say, "I've got it all under control." It's not ever going to be that way because the true life of faith is a life of dependence upon God because that is what it means to walk with God. How does faith grow, what are the exercises that develop faith? Hearing the Word of God, obeying the Word of God, and purposing to walk with God.

There is one final thing I want you to see in this portion of scripture before we leave it and that is simply to ask the question, what does faith do? If you go back to Hebrews 11 and you begin to look at all of the names and all of the experiences that are found here you find that so many of the characters that you read about in the Old Testament, the people whose struggles you identify with, whose problems you can see, whose feelings you have experienced, whose frustrations you have echoed in your own life, you suddenly find that they were recorded here not because they were perfect people but because they became a people

of faith. We're going to study about Noah, Abraham, Moses, Samson, Gideon; we're going to study about each of these and how one person with the power of faith experienced what they could become and how God could work in their life. But when we look at them as a whole in Hebrews 11, there are several things we can see and we can understand about what faith does. One of the greatest things I can tell you based on the testimony of Hebrews 11 is that what faith does, it conquers all kinds of problems. Every kind of problem you can imagine can be found here in Hebrews 11. Do you have at least one problem? Lord, I do, I have them everywhere, good problems, bad problems, little problems, big problems, because life is full of problems. And the reality is that faith when we study this passage tells us that faith conquers all kinds of problems because whether we are looking at the problems Moses faced in trying to lead the people of God out of Egypt or the problem that Abraham faced when he and Sarah were beyond child bearing or whether we look at the problems we are faced by those who tried to go in and possess the land of Canaan. There were problems all around them and I have problems and you have problems, but the challenge and the blessing of this study is that we are going to see that faith conquers all kinds of problems. There is something else we are going to learn and that is faith changes all kinds of people. No two people in this passage are alike and yet everyone of them was changed and transformed by the power of faith in their life. One of the greatest things we can learn is that given who we are and where we are, our weaknesses, our limitations, our circumstances, we are going to see that God has the ability to move in and invade where you are living and where I am living and faith changes all kinds of people. That's why I challenge you to begin a new journey in your life, to begin this year with a commitment in your heart that four things would be true of you:

- You would embrace one promise from the Word of God and say this year, Lord, I am going to embrace your Word, I am going to personalize it, I am going to begin to pray it, I am going to see it become real in me as that one promise becomes something that is the assurance of faith in my life.
- Get connected in one place, maybe one place you would serve Christ or one place around the world that would become a place of the heart to you and that you would begin for that place and become aware of that place and to see how God would use that place to change you.
- To be willing to commit to give one percent beyond where you are right now. To give in a tangible, measurable fashion, to literally say I am going to start; if I am giving nothing I am going to give one percent. If I am giving five percent I am going to trust God to let me give one more percent, six percent. If I am giving ten percent I am going to give eleven percent. But the bottom line is I am going to in a tangible, measurable way begin to say, God I am going to go one more step with you, just one step, but I am going to trust You to change me and to teach me in that process.
- To find one person and to pray that God would use you to be the connection between that one person and God and this faith community known as Boca Raton Community Church. Because I believe those kinds of principles when applied to you and to me will demonstrate the power of faith to change every one of us without making us all alike but using us all together.

I want you to know that regardless who you are and what the circumstances are you are going to find that faith changes all kinds of people. You are also going to find that faith creates all kinds of potential. When faith begins to be released in your life and in my life it not only changes who we are on the inside but it creates incredible potential as to what God can do in and through our lives. One of my favorite characters in the Old Testament who is not mentioned in Hebrews 11 but who was clearly a great man of faith was a man by the name of Jabez whose prayer is recorded in I Chronicles 4. In that passage it is not anything more than just a rehearsal of the genealogy of one of the families of the Tribes of Israel. Over and over we read about a name and how they died and another name and we read about their sons and their daughters but right there in the middle there is a name by the name of Jabez and the Bible says, "And Jabez asked the Lord, oh that You would bless me indeed and that You would enlarge my territory, and that You would keep back my life from evil with the protection of Your hand and that You would not let me cause pain." And somehow, right in the midst of a historical record the Bible just explodes with the potential of a man whose life said, God, I want You to bless me, I want You to use me, I want You to *do* something in my life and God did it with Jabez. And God did it with Joseph and with Moses and with Abraham and with David. Listen to me, friend, God will do it with you. All of the limitations that you feel can suddenly become

points where the potential of God's work through you and in you can be released. I am asking God to do something to demonstrate again the potential of this ministry to be used in this community in this day and in this hour. I don't know if you saw the recent census surveys but Florida has grown by 26% since 1990. There are now 15,983,000 plus people in Florida and most of them shopped at the Boca Mall at Christmas, I am convinced of it. But while our state has grown by 10% in the last decade and while we are the fourth largest state in America which is the third or fourth most populated nation in the world, the reality is that our church hasn't grown by that much. The reality is I believe God wants to do something new in us. God wants us to believe there is new potential as to what He can do in us and through us and so in the year 2001 we have embraced a whole new vision of faith for the future of our ministry. We have talked about the fact that in two weeks we are going to launch a second service, believing in doing so we can take the limitation of one hour and one schedule and expand it and stretch again who we are and what we are. Through a variety of different time options, a variety of different style options and a variety of different impact, and invitations that God can use us to grow. I want you to pray for that and work towards that. We have also said that not only will we have one new service of worship but we are going to begin one new outreach impact in our community. Beginning on the first of February we are going to open our doors every Thursday for a lunch targeting the business community. We are going to try to get into the offices of all of these who work around us and create a forum where we can come and see and understand the wisdom and insight and the practical application of God's Word and Light but where we can create a platform for talking and networking and communicating and penetrating the business community for Christ. We are going to re-ignite a global conference in February and that missions conference that is coming back is also going to be a time where we are going to challenge each of us to give over and above in a faith promise to invest in the work of Christ around the world. It is something that we believe God always wants us to do is to live and act locally but to think globally and to give globally and to pray globally. And yet to maintain continuity and connectedness with one another, on a quarterly basis we are going to magnify some times of communion, a community communion that will bring old and young and all of us together and will blend our hearts and blend our lives and let us seek the Lord and let us be clean before the Lord and let God use that to build a community of connectivity. And then we are going to ask God and believe God this year that despite the fact that we are still carrying some debt and are still trying to grow in the area of weekly giving that there are going to be some modifications and upgrades on this property. The bottom line is we use this place so much it is plain worn out. There are a lot of areas that need to be addressed and updated and I have appointed a team of people who are working together to help to bring that together. By faith we are going to believe that God will release new potential through new facilities and through new ministries, new opportunities and new avenues that suddenly in faith we will see God do something in His people known as Boca Raton Community Church. As I said to you last week we have written a new missions statement and the mission of Boca Raton Community Church is to build a community of believers committed to Jesus Christ, connected to one another and challenged to share the gospel. The reality is we didn't make that to make a statement, we did it to make an impact and now to see God flush that out of our lives in ministry. So, faith releases all kinds of potential.

Finally, we see that faith cleanses all kinds of sins. What you do find in this chapter is not just heroes but you find people who frankly were zeros. People whose lives were destroyed by their failures and their weaknesses, by their sins. Yet time and time again we saw that God stepped in and touched and forgave because when people come to God, even broken, even sinful and they believe upon Him and the power of His forgiveness through the shed blood of Jesus Christ we suddenly discover that God cleanses all kinds of sins. Regardless of who you are or what you have been or what you have done in life, I want you to know there is power in God to cleanse, to renew and to give you a new life and a new start. That is the great Good News of the message that we preach in Jesus. So faith solves all kinds of problems, it changes all kinds of people, it creates all kinds of potential, and it cleanses all kinds of sin.

Well, what about that old man with the jug. What did he do? Well, he stood there a few minutes trying to decide but he eventually determined that if indeed he could find the pump it would be worth it. So he took the jug and began pouring the water down into the arena where the prime would take place and he pumped and pumped and pumped but with the squeaking and wining of the pump nothing happened. Inwardly he began to panic but he pumped a little harder and then suddenly a spurting and spewing, a popping of air, and suddenly within a matter of moments the fountains began to open and the water began to pour. He fell down underneath it and just let it fall on his face. He began it into the jug and began to drink it and he just

sat there and took as though it were a bath in that hot sun under that refreshing cool water and when he had finished and been renewed, he refilled the jug. He put it back at the corner of that old dilapidated building but he added one little phrase after the instructions. He put a P.S. and this is what it said: "Believe me, it really works, you have to give it all away before you get anything back."

It was Jesus who said to us, "Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for My sake and for the gospel will find it." I am calling you to a person of faith; I am calling me to a new level of faith; of believing the power of one. That we can each be one person who can prove God in life and as a church we can become one church that will make a difference, not because of who we are or what we have but because without faith it is impossible to please God. Those who come to Him must believe He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. My invitation to you today through this year is to seek and search for Him with *all* of your heart.

You have had the opportunity to hear the Word of God but hearing is never enough. There must always be a point of response and action based on what you've heard. That is most important with anyone who has been searching, who is thirsty and dry and in need of an answer; who has tried jug after jug of the visible things of this world and have found themselves left unsatisfied. I want to encourage you if you have never done so by faith to hear what the Word of God says. Jesus says, "I am the Bread of Life." Jesus said I am the Water and anyone who drinks of Me will have a fountain living in him and flowing up. Jesus Christ can come into your life and create a new source of life and refreshment and renewal that will change you from the inside out. But it begins with a simple step of faith where you understand Him to be the Son of God, the One who died on the cross for your sins, where you confess Him Savior and Lord and invite Him into your life. Faith that can change, faith that can empower, faith that can transform. Its the faith of our God and Father made known through Jesus Christ.

Father, I pray that You will take this moment and that You would teach us in faith to take an exercise of obedience, to take a step to walk with You right now and to let this moment be a moment of encounter with You that will transform our lives. Lord, I know I can't change anyone, I know that no one in this church can, but I know that You can and that You do. I know that You have changed my life and know that You have changed many others. I pray for the empowering work of Your Spirit in this moment in hearts and lives in Jesus Name, Amen.

If you prayed that prayer today, let us help you continue to grow in your faith. We have ministers on our church staff that can answer any questions you may have. We have a Bible we can give you and resources to help and encourage you in your decision to follow Christ. Please contact us, either through correspondence or by telephone.

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