Andy Wood:

Hey, everybody. It's so good to be together with all of our campuses. Today is a great day as we're continuing our message series, The Anchored Life, and stepping into this challenge that we've been going through as a church to read through the New Testament over an eight-week period of time. I've been looking forward all week to this message, been praying and anticipating. God's put a word in my heart to encourage you today. But as I was preparing on Wednesday afternoon, I had this horrible ear ache, like a piercing in my ear, and I thought I probably should go to the doctor. My throat was sore and get tested. So I went to the doctor, one of my friends the week before, somebody from our staff had strep throat. So I'm like, I should go rule that out. So I went to the doctor and the doctor said, "We need to test you for COVID."

And so they tested me for COVID. I was boastful about the fact that in four years I've never gotten COVID, but unfortunately I came down with it. So today I am giving this message from a stage. Nobody's really close to me, but I know God's going to use this message to encourage you. I feel great, family's healthy, but I want to be careful to not spread and get anybody else sick.

Now, today, as we are continuing this series, I want to talk about a subject that is so very important, the subject of faith. Being anchored in faith. Now, this challenge that we've been going through as a church, we've been reading through the New Testament with the Immerse Messiah Bible, and over an eight-week period of time, our whole church together is reading through the New Testament. In fact, this week I heard that 21,479 people have said yes to the challenge, and that's worth celebrating. We'll just celebrate right now that God is moving in the hearts of our people. And maybe for you as you're taking this challenge, it's getting a little bit challenging to do the challenge. You're about one fourth of the way through, and I want to encourage you to hang in there, hang with it.

And what I want to do today as we are talking about the subject of faith, I was thinking about our church this past week as Pastor Rick brought the message, and we celebrated 44 years of God's faithfulness to our church. Last week, 44 years ago, as we celebrated, seven people gathered together for a Bible study with a dream and a vision, and God's blessed that. And one of the questions I was thinking through this past week as I was praying about my message was, what is it about Saddleback that God has so blessed? What is it about our church family that God has found favorable and poured out His grace on us over and over again? And in conjunction with this, the church that Stacey and I started in the San Francisco Bay Area back in 2009, they're celebrating their 15th anniversary this week.

And so I was thinking through both of these churches that I sow deeply love. Saddleback, the church that God's called us to now. Echo Church in the Bay Area, the church that God called us to start. And asking, what is it about both of these two churches that God seemingly has blessed, and Saddleback for over four decades? And one of the things that sticks out to me, this pattern or this heart that is in you is this heart of faith. From the very beginning, our church has been a story of God's grace that has come in conjunction with your faith. In fact, the leaders and the staff and the people of Saddleback have time and time again rallied around God's dream and vision with faith. We are a people of faith. And today I want to encourage you with that.

I want to encourage you, maybe you're here and you're new to faith. Maybe this is your first time coming to church or following Jesus, you're new to this whole journey. This subject of faith is so vital and very important to the journey of following Jesus. And today I want to unpack, what does that look like? As you go through your reading this week, you're going to read through the book of Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and the book of Galatians. And what you're going to see as you open up these books, they're all letters written from the apostle Paul to the early churches. The church in Rome, the church in Corinth, and the churches in Galatia. And you're going to see a theme of faith emerge over and over again in these letters. And I want to pull out some of these verses on faith and give us some encouragement and challenge to live and be anchored in faith.

Now, I want you to see, in Romans Chapter four, how Paul highlights the subject of faith. And he gives us a snapshot through the angle of Abraham in the Old Testament. And he says this. "Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping, believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, "That's how many descendants you will have." And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead, and so was Sarah's womb." Now, Paul, as he's writing this letter to the church in Rome, is trying to encourage them with the pattern of Abraham's faith. And he's trying to help the church in Rome understand how God interacted with Abraham. God gave him a covenant, and God was faithful to fulfill that covenant. And that covenant that God gave to Abraham was that he would be the father of many nations.

Yet when the promise that God gave to him came Abraham first, in Genesis Chapter 12, was 75 years old. And by the time the promise was fulfilled, Abraham was 100 years old. And I want you to notice how Paul ties this concept of faith into Abraham's journey of how he was unshaken with his life. It says that he did not waver in unbelief. In fact, in verse 20, it says, "Abraham never wavered in believing God's promises. In fact, his faith grew stronger. And by this, he brought glory to God. And he, Abraham, was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. And because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous."

Now, Abraham had faith at 100 years old that he and his wife Sarah could have a child, and that God could bless him and make him the father of many nations. He had to deal with the fact that his body was aging. He had to deal with the fact that it was very uncommon for people to have children at this age. But the Bible says that Abraham never wavered in his faith. He was anchored in faith. Against opposition, against confusion, against the reality that was in front of him, he still walked by faith. Now, Paul is encouraging us that faith is this stabilizing force in our life. In fact, in Second Corinthians Chapter five, verse seven, there's another verse that Paul uses to encourage the church in Corinth of how they're to live by faith. And I want you to notice his words. He says, "For we walk by faith and not by sight."

Now, this contradiction here or this comparison of walking by faith and by sight, it's an interesting conundrum to think about. How do you walk without sight? How do you walk when you can't see? A couple of weeks ago, I was coming down the stairs at my house, and we've all had these moments where you're walking through a room, it's pitch black, and maybe you're walking timidly to get through the house or timidly to get through a building. And sometimes you walk through the dark because you think you know what's already there, and you walk with confidence. Well, on this particular day I came down, it was early in the morning. I already had my bible, my journal in hand. It was pitch black in the house. I had my coffee cup in my hand, and as I'm walking down the stairs, I fail to recognize that right at the bottom of the stairs, about three feet away from the stairs is this huge gymnastics mat that my daughter Carys has put out.

And not even paying attention to it, I'm walking full force, and my body just flips completely over this mat. My coffee cup goes in the air, my Bible goes flying, my journal goes everywhere. And thankfully there was no coffee in the cup. I just hysterically started laughing in this moment. Unfortunately, there was nobody there to see it, but it was awesome. I'm sure God was laughing at it in the moment. And maybe you've had moments like this where you're walking and you run into something and you're so thankful. If you walk through a room when it's lit, you're thankful for that light to see.

But Paul says there's a way that we walk that is not by light or by our ability to see, but there's a way to walk that is by faith. And he's comparing and contrasting two ways of living. He's saying there's a way that you can walk and live in life based upon sight, and there's a way that you can walk and live in life based upon faith. Now, in your notes, I want you to write a couple of these things down. If I walk by sight, what happens is I'm focused on temporary things.

So my eyes are set on things that maybe are short-term. Maybe it's the things in front of me with the meals I need to eat and the job in front of me, all those things that matter, making money, all the things that consume our mind can become the obsession of our lives. And Paul is saying that when you do it this way, and you're focused on what's in front of you, there's this temporal view that we have. There's also a circumstantial view, so I'm focused on my circumstances and I'm focused on people's opinions of me and ultimately on human odds. And this is the reason that a lot of people find themselves unstable in life, confused, tossed back and forth, because they're walking based on sight, based on what they can see with their human eyes. Paul says that there's a different way to walk.

When you walk this way by sight, you live in a way that your faith is inconsistent, unstable, and we find ourselves constantly drifting away from the life that God intends for us to live. So the question I want to wrestle through is how do you build that kind of faith in your life? When you can't see physically in front of you and you don't live based upon the circumstances in front of you, how do you live by faith? How do you develop a strong faith that transcends what you see in front of you with your human eyes?

Well, Paul gives us another clue in Romans Chapter 10, verse 17, and I want you to notice what he says here. He says, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." So Paul is saying that there's a different way that you can live in your journey spiritually. In following Jesus, the way that you can live is by hearing the words of Jesus, by listening. So it's less looking at my circumstances for direction, and it's more listening to the voice of God through His word. That's why this book is so very important, because this book is the primary-

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Very important because this book is the primary means that God uses to speak into our lives and to build faith into our lives, that's why we're doing this challenge, and every time I come to it, I can come with faith that God is going to speak to me through his word. Now, we're working really hard to put these books inside of everybody's hands, but there's another thing that I've found to be so incredibly helpful this week as we've been journeying through, is to listen, on our Saddleback app, all of the words from the Bible in this Messiah version of the Bible, new Living Translation. All of those words are on a journey in our app so that you can listen as you're reading, so that you can hear the word of God.

Now, as we're reading and listening to the word of God, there are some people, this is important, there are some people who will be changed with this journey more than others. There are some people, your life is going to be revolutionized over this eight week period of time, and there are some of you that you might just kind of go through the motions, check off the boxes. I want you, we want our church to be the kind of people that are changed through this challenge. So how do I read the Bible in a way that I'm attentive to the words of Jesus so that they build up my faith, so that they strengthen my faith? Well, I want to look at three important decisions that we can make as we're reading through this week in our reading. The first one is to pursue God's precepts. I want to read the Bible in a way that I'm on a journey to pursue what it is that God says about how life functions and what he values.

So all throughout the pages of scripture, there are precepts and principles that God outlines that changes the way that we live. So the Bible is meant to be obeyed, it's meant to change us. Now, you might be here again listening to my words and you're not a follower of Jesus. You still can apply the teachings Testament, of the Bible to your life and see what God does through them. I love when I read the Bible, if I'm reading through the filter of understanding God's precepts, I start to see that God has things to say about my relationships, God has things to say about my sexuality, God has things to say about my finances and my thinking, and there's a way to read. Even these few letters that Paul wrote, one of the things that Paul would often do, and you see this in Revelation when Jesus commends the churches, he will commend them for the things that are good according to God's precepts and he will warn them with the things that are not good according to God's precepts.

All the letters we look at this week, there are things that the churches are doing well and there are things that the churches are not doing well. There's some things they need to be encouraged with, some things they need to be warned with. And the same is true for us as a church. There's this encouragement, we're a group of people who live with great faith all throughout our history, but there are some things that God is changing in us and he's forming and shaping in our church family. And I want to encourage you, when you read this week, to let the word of God change your perspective and correct the things in your life that are not the way that they're supposed to be. So often when it comes to reading the Bible, we want to be encouraged, which is good, but we don't want to be corrected.

It's kind of like we want all of God's blessings without all of God's boundaries, and the Bible is filled with boundaries that God gives us, and all of those boundaries are for our blessing. So the filter I want to encourage you to look through is what does God value? What does God bless? Read through this week with that filter on. Now I'm going to show you just a couple of verses just as an example of some things that I would see as I'm reading through these passages of scripture. I'll give you one from Galatians 6:7 & 9 that says, "Don't be misled-you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So let's not get rid of doing what is good," Paul says, "For at just the right time, we will reap a harvest of blessing if we do not give up."

What Paul is saying is there is almost this double-edged sword when it comes to the ways of God and the ways of this world, that when I live according to the ways of God, according to what's pleasing to him, my life is blessed, it's like seed that I sow. And it's like a farmer, that is the farmer is faithful with the way that God has orchestrated the world to work. When that farmer is faithful, he reaps a harvest, but when he's not, he suffers as a result of it. So all of these warnings come out of these questions of what does God promise to bless and what is pleasing to God? What is it that God finds favor in with our lives, with our choices? Now, again, let's go to a couple of really specific examples. How about for our relationships? In Galatians 3:26 & 29, the Apostle Paul talks about the way we relate to each other, and he says, "For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ like putting on new clothes." This is why we celebrate baptism, it's like the jersey changing, it's representing a new identity.

And then he says, "When you're baptized into following Jesus," listen to this, "There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Now, he's not saying that all of that goes away, like you wipe away ethnicity and you wipe away gender. No, he's not saying you wipe away all that, he's saying that God is forming one beautiful, diverse family with Jews, Gentiles, rich and poor, men and women, and he's forming all of this together in a way that brings great glory to himself. "And now," he says, "That you belong to Christ, you are true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, sons and daughters, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you." So this week, we are so grateful this week as we're celebrating Black History Month here in the United States of America, there are so many people who follow Jesus throughout the ages, throughout generations here in the United States of America and all over the world that understood the heart of God, that God created all people groups and wants everyone to know him, and wants to form together this beautiful church that diversely represents his creativity, his beauty, his majesty.

And Billy Graham, who so many of us are familiar with, in the spring of 1957 was doing all these revivals and recognizing that only white people were coming to his revivals, and it bothered him. Because as he read through the Bible, what he saw was that God cared about all different types of people and he wanted people to serve together and live in community just like he wanted to divide the wall between Jew and Gentiles, God wanted to do that with all people groups. And so as Billy Graham would preach and he recognized only white people were at his revivals, this bothered him. So in 1957, he made a decision to move his revivals into Harlem where there were more black people who lived. And not only did he do this, but he invited a preacher by the name of Howard Jones to come stand on stage and preach with him, and he crossed ethnic barriers and began to break down walls as a way of representing the love of Jesus.

Now, you could imagine in 1957, Billy Graham encountered a tremendous amount of resistance for this, and so did Howard Jones, but they were committed to the ways of God, to do life and ministry in a way that represented the beauty, and majesty, and diversity that is in the heart of God. So many times when it comes to our journey of faith, when we read the Bible, we want to read the Bible to affirm our choices, to affirm the way that we live. But God, he's not really interested in picking your side or my side. I love a story in the Old Testament when an angel of the Lord shows up to the Israelites and there's one of the leaders, Joshua and the crew, they want to know is the angel for the Israelites or not. And the angel of the Lord says, "I'm really not here for you or for them, I'm here on behalf of the Lord God, Almighty." And the truth is, God is not here to take sides. God is really here to take over. So when I read the Bible, the Bible challenges my thoughts, the Bible challenges our culture, it challenges all different political views.

Some people who view the world one way, it challenges, other ways, it challenges. The Bible is challenging our view oftentimes of our relationships with one another. But the Bible is also challenging the sexual ethic of our culture. That when you read the Bible in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul says this, listen to what he says. He says, "Run from sexual sin. No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who lives in you and was given to you by God? For you do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body." Now, what Paul is saying is that you are one, if you are a follower of Jesus, the spirit of God is in you taking up residence. And so the purity of your body matters and we want to live in a way that is pleasing to God, and what Paul is saying is run from sexual immorality and run towards purity. He's challenging the belief of the church in Corinth and the way that they're living with their sexual impurities and their relationships, and he's saying, "This is what is honoring and pleasing to God."

I'm sharing all of this out of a father's heart, out of a loving heart. The same desire that I see from my kids and wanting children, and wanting family members, and wanting our church to live in the fullness of God's blessing, all of God's boundaries he lies down or gives to us for blessing. And you might want to write that down. All of the precepts of God, all of the ways that God structures the world with his principles, he illuminates them so that we can live in the fullness of the life he's created and truly flourish. So I want to read the Bible through that filter. And part of the reason I'm tying this to faith is because sometimes in the moment when you live according to the ways of God, it doesn't make sense to the world around you. Sometimes when you look at the life of other people who are doing what they want, seemingly in the short run...

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People who are doing what they want, seemingly in the short run, they're succeeding. But over the long haul with our lives, what I've seen over and over again is that when I apply the ways of God, the precepts of God to my life, I'm blessed as a result of it. Another place that the Bible challenges our thinking is with our finances. Sometimes we have this mentality like, "God, you can touch every area of my life, but not my finances." And I love 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 says this... In 2 Corinthians 9, it says, "Remember this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. Whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you've decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God," listen to this verse, "is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times having all you need, you will abound in every good work."

And what he's saying here is that if you live generously, God will bless you. God will take care of you. He'll provide for you. And so last year, there were 2,687 people that started for the first time on a journey of generosity here at Saddleback. Literally, tens of thousands of people who are already giving, but almost 3,000 that said last year, "I'm going to start on that journey," and my encouragement for you is just with all the precepts of God and particular this one, just try it and see if it doesn't work in your life. Like this weekend at all of our campuses, you're hearing about our kids going on camp this summer and literally thousands of kids will do camp and both for students and for high school students and for kids, and one really easy way to step into that journey is just to give towards camp this summer.

All of that goes directly towards helping kids have life-changing experiences this summer with camp and just a small... Just test it for the first time. If you've never given today, you can do that as you give online or through our app, you can say, "I want to give towards camp." As you check in today, you'll see it there as a button and that one step can begin a journey of generosity that changes your life. What I'm trying to do is I'm trying to lovingly challenge our whole church family to step more into the precepts of God. Let the Bible encourage you, but also let it challenge you. Let it challenge your thinking and your ways of living so that you can step into the fullness of what God has for your life. Now, that was a lot on point one. I have two more points. I'm going to preach them. I preached way long on that one, maybe that's because we needed to hear it today, but the second one that I want to pay attention to build my faith is to pray God's promises.

Now the Bible is chock full of God's promises, literally hundreds and hundreds of them. I don't have time to go into all of them today, but when you check in today, you'll see a place where you can request the guide for more of God's promises to be sent to your inbox this week, and you can use those to pray. But I want you to see just a couple of things here from Romans 4:20, "Notice that Abraham, Paul says, never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, because of his belief in God's promise, his faith grew stronger and stronger, and he was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever he promises. And because of Abraham's faith, God counted that on his behalf, counted him as righteous."

Now, 2 Corinthians 1:20 is a very important verse around the promises of God. It says, "For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding yes, and through Christ are amen, which means yes, this ascends to God for his glory." What Paul is saying is that there are all these promises of God in the Bible and all of those promises that God made throughout all of scripture find their fulfillment in Jesus. There is a resounding yes. Now, God's kingdom is a kingdom of asking, so the kingdom of God. Jesus would say things like, "Ask, and it shall be given to you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and the door will be open to you." And then he'll say something like this, he said this at the end of those words, he said, "If you as a earthly father gives good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask of him?" That's a promise from God.

There are so many promises that when you read the Bible, I want to encourage you this week in particular to look for those promises. And when you see those promises, what you'll notice is that with all of God's promises, there's like this if-then component. And God will often say, "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, if they will turn from their sin, repent of their ways and come to me, I will heal their land." And those promises, there's this if-then correlation. But our job when we get ahold of those promises is to wrestle through what do they mean and then to begin to pray those promises back to God. I love this quote Martin Luther says, "When I get ahold of a promise, I look upon it like a fruit tree, and I shake it until the fruit falls." And what he's saying is, "I come before God, the throne of his grace. When I find a promise and I will not relent, I will pray and ask God to fulfill his promises."

Sometimes part of the reason why we're not seeing our prayers be effective in our own lives is because we're not praying the promises of God. See, when I look at my life, and I look at all that God has promised in scripture, there's a gap. I think we all would agree with all of our lives, our relationships, our homes. There's a gap between where we are and God's promises, and that gap should create a grief in our hearts. That gap should create a sense of holy discontent, but when I recognize that gap between where I am and God's promises, there's a call for us to ask God to make good on his promises. He's a God that hears the voice of his children, and he will fulfill his promises. He is held to those promises as the scripture says.

So I want to come before God with a kind of boldness that the Book of Hebrews says that I can approach the throne of God's grace and mercy to find help in my time of need because Jesus, the one who was sinless and spotless, he's interceding on my behalf so I can join with him and pray the promises of God. I'll give you examples. I would say, personally, there's nothing I pray for more than my kids. I pray over and over again for God's will and the fulfillment of his promises in their lives, and I grab a hold of a promise like this. Listen to this one, Psalm 103:17-18 says, "But the love of the Lord remains forever with those who fear him. His salvation extends to the children's children of those who are faithful to his covenant and of those who obey his commandments."

So the way I pray a promise like that is I go before the throne of God and my prayers and I say, "Oh, God, your word says that you are a God who gives salvation from generation to generation to those who fear you. And I'm asking you, God, for your salvation and your grace to be poured out on my sons and my daughter. I'm asking you, God, to be the God who fulfills his promises. What would it say about you, God, if you didn't fulfill this promise of salvation into the lives of my children and future grandchildren?" And God hears those prayers, I'll grab a hold of Acts 2:17. This is another promise I pray for my kids. It says, "In the last days, God says, 'I will pour out my spirit upon all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams.'"

And I'll pray that prayer and I'll say, "God, you said in your word, you'll pour out your spirit on my sons and daughters, and I'm begging you to make good on that promise, God, to pour out your spirit on my kids. What does it say about your ability to fulfill your promise if you don't pour it out?" It says, "Your sons and your daughters." Now, I know there's doubt going through some of your minds and maybe there's seminary professors and they're saying, "You can't pray the promises of God like that." And what I think about when it comes to praying the promises of God, I think about the reality that when my life is over, I will not stand before a theologian or a seminary professor, I will stand before the living God.

And God all throughout scripture promises so much to his people, and there's so much more that God wants to do in our lives, but his kingdom functions on asking. So he's looking for us as sons and daughters to ask him to make good on his promises. There are so many. I could give you more. When you check in today, make sure to grab that promise guide, but I'll just give you a couple more. Psalm 32:8-9, this is another promise, "The Lord says, 'I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Don't be like a senseless horse or a mule that needs a bit in its mouth to keep it under control.'" Let God guide you with his words. And this verse right here, God used so much in our journey to come to Saddleback.

There were so many moments where I would be praying and I would say, "God, you promised to lead me along the very best pathway for my life. And I know that there are moments in my life where you let me make the decision, but when it comes to this call to go to Saddleback Church, I can't preach on that stage. I can't lead in that church without the certainty that it is your will. I want you to lead me along the very best pathway for my life. I don't want to be like a horse that needs to be kicked. My life is yours. Lead me and guide me." And God made good on that promise. God wants to make good on his promises in your life.

Isaiah 26:3-4, this is another one, "You will keep in perfect peace all who trust you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you. Trust in the Lord always for the Lord God is the eternal rock." That the promises that God gives peace to those whose eyes are fixed on him doesn't mean that we don't go to therapy and get counseling or receive so many of the wonderful resources here at Saddleback with our care ministry. It doesn't mean that. It just means that there is a promise that when I over time learn how to focus my mind on God, his peace comes into my life. I want to encourage you, some of you-

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Comes into my life. I want to encourage you. Some of you have stopped praying with faith because your eyes are on your circumstances and not on the greatness and the goodness of God. If you read through the Bible and you just extract in the New Testament all the things that the New Testament says about prayer and the promises of God change, it would change the way that we pray. And I want to encourage you to go before God with a kind of boldness to ask Him to fulfill His promises in your life. Pray the promises of God. Get a hold of one of them and shake it like a fruit tree until that fruit falls in your life and God makes good on His promise. Now, there's one final component I want to finish on, and that is to pay attention to God's promptings. So the spirit of God, when He comes in to our lives, He gives us promptings and those promptings lead and guide our steps. And through his internal whisper in our heart, there will be things that he'll tell us to do.

And what I want to do is I want to pay attention. Sometimes it comes in forms of dreams. Sometimes it's a thought. Sometimes it's an impression. I remember there was one time when I first came here to Saddleback a couple of years ago, right when I was starting, and there was just this internal impression that there was somebody in the service, that they were being led or prompted by God to adopt a child, and they had backed out or they were kind of paused on it and God was saying, "Move forward." I just threw it out there in a sermon. I just said, "Hey, I've got this prompting. If you're in the room today, come up to me afterwards. I want to talk to you." And sure enough, by the grace of God, they were there. I wasn't crazy. Well, I guess I am crazy, but in the moment, God fulfilled that prompting.

And what I've learned to do over time is when these promptings come, God does not give promptings that don't align with His word, His precepts, that don't align with His promises. So God's promptings, if God gives you a prompting, He's not going to give you a prompting to smack somebody or honk the horn and flip one of your fingers at them. That's not a prompting from God. He's going to give us promptings that are in alignment with his character, with his precepts, with His word. And my encouragement is to pay attention to those. It might be to tell you to love somebody in your family. It might be to forgive somebody in your past. It might be to serve on a weekend. It might be to host a small group. It might be for you to say, at my place of work, I'm going to celebrate a certain person's birthday.

It might be that somebody across a different ethnic background, you're going to cross the line and you're going to cross and walk across that bridge and love and meet with that person and have a meal. My encouragement is to pay attention to those promptings. Again, I love as we're this month in Black History Month here in the United States of America, I love the story of Harriet Tubman, who had a bold faith in God and prayed. And she was a former slave who had been freed. And God would give her visions and dreams to free those of her friends and family members that were currently slaves. And on the underground railroad, she would be used by God to liberate 70 people, and she would give credit to the dreams and visions, the impressions that God had placed inside of her heart. I am so thankful for her and countless others throughout church history, throughout world history, that have listened to the voice of God.

I want to encourage you to listen to His voice, to pay attention to His promptings. Galatians 4, I want to read this verse over us, and we're going to just take a moment here in the service to let God speak. In Galatians 4:4-7 it says, "But when the right time came, God sent His son, born of a woman, subject to the law. And God sent Him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that He could adopt us as His very own children. And because we are His children, God has sent His spirit, the spirit of His Son into our hearts." Notice this phrase. "Prompting us to cry out, "Abba, Father.'" That word Abba just means daddy. Abba, Father. "And now you are no longer a slave, but God's own child. Since you are His child, God has made you His heir."

God is fulfilling His promise that He made through Abraham. He's fulfilling His promises into our lives. And through the spirit of God that comes in and takes up residence, that spirit calls us, prompts us to cry out, "Abba, Father, I need your help." That spirit prompts us to move forward in obedience to all of God's precepts, to say yes to Him. And right now in the service, I'm going to invite the band to come. This passage is going to be placed onto the screen, and I'm going to give you just a moment to pay attention to the promptings that God might be bringing about in your heart today. My encouragement in the stillness of this moment is that God is able to speak into your heart. Some of you, it's a correction of an area. Maybe it's something that we've talked about today.

Maybe some of you are living in sin sexually and today God is saying, "I want you to get out of that relationship. I want you to stop with that habit. I want you to take a step and be freed." Some of you, maybe it's God's saying, "I want you to live with more generosity." Others of you, maybe it's a bitterness He's asking you to release. As the band is playing, and this passage of scripture is on the screen, we're going to take 30 seconds right now. Just look at these words and ask God to speak. If you're not a follower of Jesus, you can still ask Him to speak into your heart right now as we meditate on these words.

Now with our eyes closed and nobody looking around for just a moment, just letting God speak. Some of you, perhaps you're not confident of the reality of relationship with God, and today, by faith in Jesus who died on a cross for your sins, and His resurrection from the dead, you can begin relationship with God. And your response to that internal prompting can be, "I want to follow you, Jesus. I need forgiveness." And I just want to invite you in this moment just to cry that out, to say that to God. Others of you, perhaps there's just something right now you need to say to God, an area that God is just working on your heart with.

In just a moment, we're going to go into a song about God's faithfulness to His promises, and I want these words just to sit into our hearts today. Father, we thank you that you, by the power of your Holy Spirit, cause us to cry out, "Abba, Father." Thank you that you're a God that fulfills all of your promises. Thank you that all of your precepts are trustworthy, and thank you that you lead and guide our steps. And today I ask that you would embolden and strengthen our faith. Help us to be a people who live with faith.

Pray that you would speak now, even as we sing this song, that you'd speak into our hearts. Pray these things in Jesus' name, amen. We're going to sing this song together and then afterwards, our campus host will be up to dismiss us.

PART 3 OF 3 ENDS [00:36:04]