

# Losing the Faith Game

Faith & Doubt / Greg Boyd

January 16, 2011

## Sermon transcript

We are going a little off script here these days. I was supposed to get into the book of Luke or back to the book of Luke at the beginning of the year. But I just felt led to go in a little different direction in the light of some of the struggling that was going on in some people's lives during the holiday season. So we started on talking about the legitimacy, the okayness of wrestling with God and being honest about that. It's okay to have issues that you're working through. In fact, that's why Jacob was renamed Israel and why they were called the Israelites. 'Cause the term means "struggling with God". So the distinctive mark of the people of God is that we're out loud and real with some of the struggles that we go through. The last week we talked about faith and doubt. And something about that message hit a chord. It activated something in me and in a number of other people where it just had a sense of - some of the terms that folks used were "game changer" or "it just revolutionizes everything". It just felt huge. Felt huge. And actually as I have looked at this, that just the concept of faith, that we put out there last week. I've talked on that before in different times, but I've never really made it a distinct topic in and of itself. And it just struck me that we're saying something that is really necessary to say, that is rarely said out there, but has the potential to set a lot of people free. And so the team, that deals with kind of the content of messages, felt like we're supposed to just park here for a little bit and hover on this. Last week we talked about being the heir of and the damage that's caused, when we think of faith as though it was certainty and the absence of doubt. So we're gonna stay on this for a little bit. I don't know how long. You know, this is gonna be one of those series, which is gonna sort of define itself as we go along here. Maybe another couple of weeks, maybe a month, maybe another couple of years... Who knows! Who knows! But it raised a lot of questions that people have. "What about this verse? What about that verse?" So we're just gonna kinda hover on this topic.

Today I wanna cover some of the same material, I covered last week but from a sort of a different angle. And it's very much a teaching message. So I want you to be paying close attention. Take notes if that helps you remember - and it does for a lot of people. That's just stuff that we got to internalize. For some folks it's gonna be a complete different way of looking at things. A "game changer". And it has the potential, as I said, to set a lot of people free.

I'm calling this message "Losing the Faith Game". And you'll know what kind of game I'm talking about here in a minute. And I wanna read from the book of Mark. Chapter 2 verses one through five.

A few days later - it says - when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.- 'Cause that's where he was from. - They gathered in such large numbers that

there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of his friends. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, - too crowded - they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus - notice this - saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

"When Jesus saw their faith!" So I wanna chew a little bit on this concept of the visibility of faith. Faith as something that you can see. Something that you can observe.

Pray with me here for a moment: Father, many of us, and many of those listening through podcast, television or other means, have been, without knowing it, unwittingly put in bondage by a concept of faith that is just not biblical or helpful. And I pray, Lord, God, that you would set the captives free, that you would, God, open our eyes and hearts and minds to really recover a biblical understanding of faith. This is so profoundly foundational, God, it and I have a sense of gravity about this, importance about this. And I pray, Lord, that you help me to release this and trust your spirit to do the work that words can never do. Give this message your authority, Lord, God, just infuse it with your power and use it to build the kingdom in our lives, in our hearts, in our minds. Confront what needs to be confronted to. Tear down what needs to be torn down. Heal what needs to be healed. In Jesus name we pray. And all of God's people said: Amen! Amen!

And by the way, occasionally, I do like 'amens'. I've always. You know, it's a way of letting me know that you're there and that you're tracking with me. And so I'm totally cool with folks going "yes!" and "amen!" or "wow!" or... I'm just not cool with saying "jerk!" or something like that. As long it is positive, it helps. So "amen" and amen.

So, as we said last week, most people, in western culture anyways, in the last several centuries anyways, but never more so than now, most folks assume that faith is the absence of doubt. Faith is psychological certainty. Your faith is as strong as you are free of doubts. Your faith is as strong as you are convinced that you are right. And see that's why most folks think that faith is the antithesis of - or the opposite of - doubt or wrestling with God. Can be doing both.

So we introduced last week the whole idea of the faithometer. We have this faithometer understanding of faith (see g. 1). Where it's sort like the more certain you can make yourself, the more the faithometer goes from absolute disbelief to absolute belief, that we're on the right. It's a faithometer concept and our job is to sort of convince ourselves it's true. We're the lion of the Wizard of Oz, going "I do believe, I do believe, I do, I do, I do believe." And that's a virtuous thing to do. To try to talk yourself into it and to get that faithometer meter reading up there into the red zone. And so if this is been your model of faith - and it is for a whole lot of people - well then you read the Bible through those lens. And so when you come upon a verse for example that says "According to your faith be it done to you" - so many people asked me about that verse last week: "What about that verse?" - It seems like it's measuring faith. "According to your faith be it done to you." What do you hear when you read that? Do you hit the requisite level? You did it! You got your faith up there into the right zone. So if you got your faith up there in the green zone, that is sort of the realm of salvation. You had enough faith to have salvation. "According to your faith be it done to you." But men,



Figure 1: Faithometer

when you're getting into the 70%, now you're in the blessing zone. So God will help you find a good parking spot, and your sports team will win a little bit more often, and you get the best deals at Target. And if you keep on believing, press it up there, press it up there, maybe you'll even get into the healing zone. You know, when you're in the 90% range and you're certain, well now you're able to get some really good healing and stuff like that. And if you wanna win the lottery, you gotta be 100%, you know. So good luck on that one! But it's like you gotta push it up there, push it up. The lion in the Wizard of Oz: "I do believe, I do believe, I do believe." And the more certain you are, the more you gonna get. And so Jesus heals a blind man and says, "According to your faith be it done to you." And what we hear - if we're looking at this through the lens of our faithometer theology - what we hear is, that we have to get the meter reader up there enough to receive your healing for blindness.

So now, you can see, unfortunately, that also then means, that if you didn't get healed, it's because you didn't get the faithometer up there. It's your fault. If you would've had enough faith you would've been healed. Or if you had enough faith you would not be disabled in other ways. Or you wouldn't be broke and poor. Faithometer theology ultimately blames the victim. It's your fault. It's your fault. It is a devastating, psychologically devastating, tormenting psychological gimmick-tree sort of model of faith. It torments you because, see, it's not just that if you had enough faith you would be healed, and you would be out of the wheelchair, and to be able to see, and you wouldn't be poor. But [also] your kid wouldn't be blind, if you had

enough faith. Your kid would be out of the wheelchair, if you had enough faith. Your kid wouldn't have died in a car accident.

I've seen this theology devastate people. I've seen it drive people into despair. I've known several people who've committed suicide as a result of this theology. And yet it's all over the place. Tormenting! The Wizard of Oz lion trying to talk yourself into believing. And so much is at stake! Heaven and hell is at stake! That whether your kids gonna be able to see or not, that's at stake! "I do believe! I do believe! I do, I do, I do believe!" And if it didn't happens, it's your own fault.

And if you think about it, now, if you think about it, this idea that faith is about talking yourself into something, who would be good at that? And the people who would be good at that - and God bless them now - but people who would be simple, they can talk themselves into believing a reality or people who are delusional are able to very effectively talked themselves into believing certain things are true. Even if they, on a different level, don't really believe it, folks who are more rational and grounded in reality are gonna have a tough time with this. So it's not surprising really, if that's the model that's dominant out there, that model sort of self-selects out the well-grounded, rational people and self-selects in the simple and delusional people.

And once you get that, you gonna not be surprised any longer, that so many wacko things are said in Jesus name! And they get on the news! If it appears to you, as you watch the news or listen to the radio, and you hear about some of the things Christians say in Jesus name. If it occurs to you that most evangelical Christians are loony, it might be because they are! Sorry! I don't know what your theory is on why birds died in Arizona, but I'm telling you. I'm just saying if so much of this topic gets on the news, well it makes sort of sense. If this is... The heroes here are the ones who are able to do the lion in the Wizard of Oz thing. Really! "I do believe" and they convince themselves, something is true.

What are the reasons why this kinda magical view of faith, or the psychological gimmickry view of faith, this faithometer theology? One of the reasons why it is so popular, in Western culture, is it in very well with our overall paradigm of our relationship with God. We talked about this before here at Woodland hills Church a number of times. We in the West tend to construe everything, understand everything as sort of a court of law paradigm. A legal paradigm. We understand faith and salvation and everything in a paradigm where God is the judge and were the defendants. And we're guilty. And the main goal is to be acquitted. The main objective of live is to keep from ticking o the judge, so we can stay acquitted. That said, then the main paradigm that we've operated in, at least since the Reformation, is this legal paradigm. And if you so bring this faithometer theology into that paradigm, which you end up with, is God is the judge.

Maybe he's really the meter reader. Okay. And what God does is always looking at our faithometer and checking this out (see g. 2). And our job is to impress him by getting that faithometer up there. You know, the mere salvation zone, you know, that's acceptable. But we wanna get into the "I-get-the-special-parking-lot"-zone and then eventually into the healing-zone. And maybe even into the "I-win-the-lottery"-zone. That God is the meter reader. "How are you doing?" So if you register enough faith for things, you're saved. If you register enough

faith for things, you get the spouse you're praying for, or you get the healing, or you get the jackpot, or whatever!



Figure 2: God judging your faithometer

Salvation in this paradigm, this legal paradigm, this faithometer paradigm, salvation becomes to mean something like we're on a faithometer prisoner release program. This faithometer prison release program. We had enough faith to get released. The trouble is we're not told clearly what the terms of the release are. We are on release, we're on probation, but what are the terms? Which is to say "What exactly do we need to believe and how strongly do we need to believe it to stay acquitted?" And since heaven and hell is at stake here, or at least whether your child's gonna see or not, or get out of the wheelchair, since a whole lot is at stake, you can understand why people - at least some people - obsess on this. So much is at stake! And yet we don't know for sure what are we supposed to believe. How strongly do we need to believe it? Am I believing all the right things and am I believing them strong enough to get the blessing? To stay saved?

I mentioned that several month ago a lady - one of the exact that got me thinking about this series - as the lady, the dear lady who came up, and says "You know, I believe in the Bible, I believe in Jesus, [but] I'm just not sure about all the stories in the Bible. If they are all inspired or if they are all to be taken literally. Am I still saved if I'm wrong?" And see, that's the thinking, the tormenting thinking that I am addressing here. "Am I believing all the right things and am I believing strong enough?" And see, on this model of faith, put in this western paradigm, the stakes are so high! Stakes are so high!

It's like in this faithometer prisoner release program. Everything you believe, everything you don't believe, can be and will be used against you in the court of heavenly law! But we're not told exactly what the terms are! So it can make us very nervous! How high do I have to register on the faithometer? I know, I need to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. Got that! [But] how high up there does it have to be and how consistently? Is 92% gonna cut it? And what if on some days it's 92%, but on other days it's only 51%, you know. What happens then?

And the trouble is we don't really have access to any faithometer! So we really don't know how we're standing. What if I'm believing some wrong things? What if I'm believing the right things, but just not strong enough? What if I'm not 100% sure that the Bible is inherent? What if I'm like 87% confused about that question? I don't even know what it means! Am I still in? Do I still cut it? What if I'm not 100% sure that all the stories are supposed to be taken literally? What if I'm like 80% confident that some kind of evolution is true? And what if that turns out to be wrong? Am I still gonna be in? What if I'm not sure that all the stories are supposed to be taken as literal descriptions of what happened? Or what if I got the wrong view of the end-times? What if I'm wrong about predestination? What if I'm wrong about foreknowledge? What if I'm wrong about hell? What if I'm just not quite certain of the traditional view of hell? Am I still in? Do I still might quit all? Am I cut out of all the blessings?

And see, those are all important issues and interesting issues and issues that can affect our lives. But see, what happens in the faithometer theology is, we're betting a house on every single one of them. Or at least we might be betting a house on every single one of them. The healing of your child and maybe even your salvation hangs in the balance here. It's all part of the faithometer prison release program.

And just to make it more fun, there's plenty of heavenly probation officers running around in various churches that will tell you what the criteria are. Somehow they know they know and they'll be very happy to tell you whether you made the grade or not. Somehow they can just inspect these sorts of things.

So I've been taken off the faithometer prisoner release program in the minds of some. For a number of infractions, had the wrong view of sovereignty: out! The wrong view of foreknowledge: out! A wrong view of hell or just not confident enough in the right view of hell: out! I am mistaken about the age of the earth: I'm out! And one guy said I was out because I dated the book of Daniel wrong. Alright for some of these probation officers, the test that you have to pass is pretty strenuous. And you have to be pretty much a 100% certain on every one of them. You have to believe all of these right things and you have to be certain about all of them, otherwise your probation is at least in question.

And this view is so widespread! Sometimes more explicit, sometimes more implicit, but it permeates a great deal of the church. And I think it's so misguided! And I think it is so damaging! Notice how self-absorbed the faithometer theology is! This is a first indication that's something is seriously wrong here! How self-absorbed it is! It forces you to always be inside your head: "How am I doing? Am I believing the right things? Am I believing them strong enough? I need to maybe increase the intensity of my beliefs! I do believe! I do believe! I do, I do, I do believe!" But you're inside your head! It's a self-absorbed way of looking at things.

We talk about it, being all about Jesus! We talk about being all about God! But in faithometer theology, everyone is out to save their own behind! We're always trying to get that register meter up there. We're all just trying to complete the faithometer prison release program. It's all about me! Saving my own skin, as I mentioned last week.

We talk a lot about grace and mercy salvation by grace. But if you look at this thing objectively, in faithometer theology it really is a form of salvation by works! 'Cause you're saved by cranking that self-certainty up there. Convincing yourself that salvation by self-certainty - it's salvation by how certain you are of your own rightness. It's certainty by how good you are at playing the psychological gimmick game. Heaven and hell are wagered on how good you are playing that game.

And ultimately, folks, it's a form of idolatry! Because we're not getting our life and our worth and our security and our identity despite trusting in the mercy of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, we're getting our well-being and our sense of security and our identity by how good we are at cranking up the faithometer meter and convincing ourselves that we're right.

The biblical concept of faith has got nothing to do with that kind of magical thinking! It's got nothing to do with the psychological gimmick! The biblical concept of faith is not something that you can go inside your head and manipulate. The biblical concept of the faith is a covenantal concept! A relational concept. And when it's present, it's visible! It's a relational concept. A covenant concept. And when it's present, it's visible.

We frequently say this around here, but because it's so foundational: if you want to understand the biblical idea of faith, don't go to court of law analogy or a court of law paradigm! If you wanna understand not just the biblical concept of faith, but also of salvation and pretty much everything, don't go to a court of law paradigm where God's the judge and you're the defendant! Go to a marriage paradigm where God's the husband and you're the wife! Because God's ideal relationship with us is not that of a judge to a guilty defendant. God's ideal relationship is that of a husband to a wife. And so we need to construe everything in that context.

So faith is not some kind of psychological gimmick, where I'm trying talk myself into self-certainty to impress a judge. Faith is a matter of me pledging my trust in my heavenly Lord. And pledging my trustworthiness to my heavenly Lord. So when you're trying to understand the nature of faith, don't think somebody trying to do the Wizard of Oz lion thing "I do, I do, I do believe!" Rather, to understand the nature of faith, think of two people at the wedding giving the wedding vows saying "I do!"

When Shelly and I, 32 years ago, said I do. When I said I do, I wasn't giving a report about the level of psychological certainty I had about various and sundry matters. I wasn't looking inside my head, when I said "I do". When I said "I do", it wasn't about me so much as it was about her and our togetherness. Faith, biblical faith, like biblical love, is another oriented concept! Instead of getting us inside of ourselves, it should get us outside of ourselves looking at another. To say "I do" means "I trust you and I pledge to be trustworthy towards you!" It's another oriented concept.

And what Shelley and I and every married couple needs to know when you go into marriage - and this counts, this applies for every deep friendship as well - but what we need to know is:

the blessedness of our marriage will be directly proportionate to how much we trust, how trustworthy we are. And that's basically what Jesus is getting at when he says "According to your faith be it done you." According to your trust and trustworthiness be it done to you. It's not a magical gimmicky thing that we do in our head, it's a trust thing! It's a relational thing!

In fact you can go into the Gospels and take out the word "faith" whenever Jesus talks about faith, take out faith and put in "trust" and you're not gonna change the meaning of the passage very much at all. It's a covenantal term. It's covenantal trust which brings us to the main point of this message.

It's this: The evidence - Holy Spirit help us to receive this - the evidence that we're exercising covenantal faith isn't found by getting inside of our head and looking for a nonexistent faithometer! The evidence that we're exercising covenantal faith is that we're in fact living out that faith! And that's why it's always visible! Covenantal faith is always visible!

That's why Jesus could see their faith! He saw their faith! Because faith is an action term! When you have trust in someone and you're walking trustworthy with them to that degree, it impacts your behavior and so it's evidenced! That's why James says in James chapter 2 that faith that doesn't have any deeds, well that is useless! It's useless! It really has the connotation "it's not real faith!" It's not real faith! You're tricking yourself, if you think you believe and it doesn't impact your behavior at all! Well then it's not real faith! It's a useless faith! If you can't see it, it ain't real!

So how do you know to stay with the marriage paradigm? How do you know that you're exercising faith in your marriage? Well, it's not rocket science! It really is not very complicated at all! Think about it. When you got married, you promised to love and cherish and honor and support your wife or your husband. As it's the case maybe, you promised to do that for better or for worse, in good times or in bad times. So the question is in front row: Are you doing that? Are you doing that? If you are, you're exercising covenantal faith! If you're not, you're not! It doesn't matter what you're convincing yourself you are doing, you ain't exercising covenantal faith! Are you keeping the vow of your covenant? And this applies to deep friendships as well. Whatever that the relationship is, are you honoring the terms of that relationship? If you are, you are exercising covenantal faith! If you're not, you're not exercising covenantal faith!

In fact - notice this - when a spouse goes inside their head to determine whether or not they're exercising faith towards the other spouse, it is usually an indication that they're lacking faith! Think about this! Why would a husband or wife in a good healthy marriage all of a sudden get self-absorbed inside their own cranium and start asking questions like this: "How certain am I of my marriage? How much do I trust my covenantal spouse? How much do I feel? What's my feelings of love towards my spouse on this day?" See, spouses who live in that self-absorbed psychological world are either on their way to trouble or they're already in trouble. And that's why they're in their head! Think about it!

'Cause maybe you didn't get the memo. But when you say "I do" at the altar, part of what it means is you're not gonna ask those questions anymore! Does somebody say "amen"? The time for asking those questions is done! 'Cause when you say "I do", you're pledging your life to move in a certain direction, to walk in a certain direction, to reframe your existence in a certain way! To no longer think as a "me", but to think as a "we" and to redo all that. And one



of the things that direction does, is it cuts out all those getting inside of myself absorbed head! These absorbed questions, it rules all of those out! When you say "I do", you commit to go in a certain direction!

And really, now the state of your psychological certainty and the level of your feelings on some kind of register inside of you is irrelevant! Now it helps if they're there once in a while, but whether they're there or not doesn't determine whether you're having faith in the relationship or not! What determines that, is are you living a certain way? Are you moving in a certain direction? It's always visible! And the evidence that you're doing it, is that it is visible! And you'll receive according to your faith, for better or for worse!

If you're in your head asking questions like "How certain am I of my marriage? How much do I trust my partner here?" If you're asking those kind of questions, according to your faith be it done to you! You are gonna have a sucky marriage! And if you're doing that with your best friend, you gonna have a sucky friendship! You're heading in that direction, whatever you are in faith for! That is what you're going to get! And so it's a matter of what kind of quality relationship you have. And going inside yourself is a sign that you're pulling out of the relationship! That something is seriously wrong! Something is odd here!

The best way to know how much faith you have in a covenant partner, in your marriage or in your best friend, is not by going inside your head and looking for the faithometer thing! The best way to know whether you're living out faith in your marriage or your friendship, is to ask your spouse or your friend! Ask them! Or to ask others, who are in on your life. "What do you see?" Because faith is always visible! "Am I honoring my wife? Am I being a good husband? Am I being faithful? Am I living out my covenant vows? Honey, you tell me!" or "my best friends, what do you see here?" And in fact that's a very good thing to do 'cause we're so prone to being self-deluded.

And it's the same thing in our relationship with God. To know the extent of your faith, don't get self-absorbed and go on an endless search in the labyrinth of your messed up psychic world, looking for a nonexistent faithometer! I wrote it down. So I'm gonna say it again: To know the extent of your faith, don't get self-absorbed and go on an endless search in the labyrinth of your messed up psychic world, looking for a nonexistent faithometer! 'Cause it ain't there! Rather, honestly, take the set of questions and ask them honestly of yourself and of you spouse and or your best friends! Those who are in on your life. Ask questions like this "Am I moving in the direction of the kingdom?" Because remember, it's not where you're at, it's the direction that you're moving! And so you ask "Do you see a ow in my life here? That I'm reflecting kingdom values? Am I really a person who is trusting God for my worth and my identity and my life and my security? What do you see? Those who are involved in my life, do I reflect the kind of person who really is trusting in God for my worth or am I really getting life from my house, and my car, and my success, or what people think about me, or my abilities, my achievement, my good looks, or what have you?" And see, people close to you will know that. And if you give them permission, and we all should, well then then can speak. Say "Well, here's what we see."

It's not an indicting thing, it's just an honesty thing. And maybe an affirming thing. 'Cause I don't know how it works with you, but sometimes I feel like I just suck as a Christian. And if I ask this question, friends would remind me about stuff that I've grown in, but I just got used to

it and so it no longer registers in my own brain. It's like you define a new normal, and so it becomes normal to you. So you can feel like you are really not doing very well, but in fact it's because you're doing so well. You've grown a lot, you just got so used to it and you forget that normal people in the world don't live like this. So it's not a matter of being indicted or anything, it's a matter of saying "Let's get real!" Am I manifesting the character of God in my relationships? Am I trusting in the character of God? Am I and are we living as a faithful bride in Christ? Is it reflected in our life? Do we reflect the values of our heavenly husband? Are we reflecting the values of our heavenly king? Are we abstaining from adultery with the gods of this world? The gods of wealth, and comfort, and esteem, and convenience, and power? Are we abstaining from adultery, not just idolatry but adultery? Because all of that sin is a way of committing adultery with our heavenly spouse! Is our faith visible in ways? Do we reflect the distinct values of our true citizenship, our true kingdom? Do we display am I displaying - are we displaying? Are there people in our life, who can say this out loud? Are we reflecting our singular allegiance to the kingdom that is coming in how we live? Faith is always visible!

Now it's not always visible in the same way. It doesn't always look the same way for everybody. And you got to avoid this too. Because some of the probation officers out there, they have a model for how it was supposed to always look! And they might say things like "Well, if you don't live where we live, and you're not doing the ministries that we're involved in, and you haven't made the sacrifice that we live in, and if you're still living out there and driving that kind of car, well then you obviously don't have real faith!" And they're just judges walking around. You gotta rebuke that as well! Only the people who are really in on your life, that you've invited in your life, can know the visible difference it's making on the whole! Although sometimes it's good to go to your enemies and ask these questions "Do I reflect the character of Jesus in the way that I respond to you, even though you are the grudgiest boss I've ever had in my life?" You know, you maybe don't wanna put that in there, while you're asking them. But see, we need to get our eyes outside of ourselves that we can see the visibility of our faith.

One of the things - Holy Spirit again help us to be honest here - this is something that just landed on me this week and it has a weight to it - we're supposed to pay attention to one of the reasons why I think faithometer theology is so popular in our culture and why there's a part of us that so attracted to it. It's that it allows us to avoid all of the kind of questions I just asked. Think about it it! I can just go inside of my head and do the lion of the Wizard of Oz sort of thing "I do believe! I do believe! I do, I do, I do believe!"

If I can convince myself of that, in fact, I believe because of some kind of feeling of certainty that I have. Well then, how do I actually live is pretty irrelevant. The criteria, that's not on the radar. For the criteria, that's altogether irrelevant. I am in my head. I got this little certainty in my head and now, how I actually live becomes quite irrelevant.

It's a little bit like a diluted husband, to stay with the marriage analogy now, who convinces himself that he loves his wife. Somehow he does some trick in his head, but it's all psychological gimmickry, and he is just "I feel such love for my wife! I love her so much! She's so dear!" And he is never around, doesn't support her, doesn't ever court her! They never do anything together. Maybe he treats her like the house pet. Oh, but he's sure that he loves you because he's got this feeling on the inside! Dude, you're deluded! You're deluded! If you wanna know

whether you are a good husband or not, don't go inside of your head, 'cause your head is messed up! If you wanna know whether you are a good husband or not, ask your wife! And ask friends who know you! Friends who have got some kind of healthy model of what a good husband would be!

But see, it's easy to go in the self-diluted world and convince yourself of something. That's why the people who are prone towards self-delusion are good at this sort of faithometer theology! They can convince themselves of something, that is not real! Well, it's the same thing with our relationship with God! "Oh yes! I just have such a love for Jesus!" And da da da da ... And yet, if there's nothing in our life that is impacted by, it's not reflected in anyway, that's delusional! That falls under James: Faith that isn't visible, it's not genuine faith!

Or am I working in a different way? Maybe you're not good at convincing yourself of some truth that isn't reflected in reality. maybe you're rationally and really grounded in reality. So you're not good at the gimmickry kind of faith. The faithometer kind of faith. But you can still benefit by going inside your head and wrestling forever with the thing. But at this wrestle with that faithometer and struggle with it, so you go in your head. And this is the one that is most tempting to me. And so you're asking the questions "What does it mean to love God? What does it mean to trust in Jesus?" And maybe if I get it figured out, I'll actually do it, but in the meantime there's so much to struggle with and wrestle with. "And how exactly are we to interpret the Bible? Is this story meant exegetically speaking now, not hermeneutic? So which is actually Jesus? Is it meant to be literal or is it figurative? And what depends on this? And what is the real anthology of judgment?" And ba, ba, ba, ba, ...

And there's some wonderful questions! Some great questions! Interesting questions! Questions that impact our lives for sure! I write books on those questions! "Yea questions"! But see, if we're not careful, that can become part of our self-delusion where we actually think that we're doing the Kingdom because we're thinking about it. And this is like a "philosophical husband", who sits around and is always asking the question "What does it mean to love your wife and to be a trustworthy partner? What's the meaning of that? What does it look like?" And they never get around to actually doing it!

But see it's not rocket science! Go back to your wedding vows and do 'em! It's pretty... It's really that simple! Are you doing it?

And there's a place for asking all those kind of questions! Those are great questions! Evangelistically and apologetically important questions! But they should never be distracting questions!

I've got 1 million questions! The longer I live, the more questions I have. And honestly, my faithometer you know, as in so far as I can measure how certain I am of this or that particular belief, whatever it is, it's all over the chart. And some of you may be really surprised. A lot of stuff that the probation officers say are absolute criteria for heaven and hell, I am 50-50 on. But I don't think that they're all that important. Which is maybe the worst sin you can commit in their eyes! You know, it's all over the place!

But for me to be a kingdom person, there is only one question I've got to ask! It's not rocket science! And that is this: "Do I have enough confidence that Jesus Christ is Lord to commit my life to him?" And that doesn't even mean that I'm psychologically certain of it. Maybe I am on

some days, on other days not. But I'm willing to wager my life, living this way, going in this direction! Do I have enough confidence to say "I do" and if I do have enough confidence to say "I do", now it's time to commit and shut the door on that one!

Instead of going inside my head on that one, start living that out! Now! The most important of all the questions I like to wrestle with and that are good to wrestle with, the most important question is not one that's answered by manipulating something in my head! The most important question is lived out this way: "What does it look like for me today, right now, to manifest the terms of my covenant, my relationship with Jesus Christ? What does it look like right here, right now, in this moment? Is it always present for me? To love you with the love of Christ? And for me to love enemies with the love of Christ? And to me to forgive? And for me to manifest the values of the Kingdom? Am I doing the 'I do'?" See it's not an intellectual question. It's if you will an existential question. It's an action question. It's a question that we answer, not by falling into the cranium of our brain, but we answer it with our volition, with our will, by doing stuff! Moment by moment! We manifest what is already there! The faith that is there!

And inside of that, now, we still have a lot of questions perhaps. And we answer them, and we ask them from the inside of the faith, rather than as a precondition to it. This whole thing about it, well, once I get clear on this issue, then I'll be able to commit! It's kinda like the person - and there are a number of people out there - who can never get around to getting married, because they have to be absolutely certain of everything before they say "I do". Well, you know, they get used to living their single life 'cause you gonna stay single. That there's only really one important question to ask out when you're getting married and that's: "Do you have enough confidence in this person to commit your life to them?" And then all the other stuff, how good they are fixing sinks or not, now, you answer those questions from the inside of the covenant.

And so also in a relationship with God! There's a lot of questions. But see, this is why we're Israelites! We wrestle with a lot of stuff out loud! But what makes us disciples, is that the center is defined in the Lordship of Jesus! It's defined! Our life is submitted to him!

And so I end with just this challenge and these encouragements. Number one: There are some folks here who need to be freed from that faithometer theology and I pray you get freed! And if you're burdened by that - there are a number people I know who are maybe you even wanna come up afterwards and pray and just to get free of that. Well sometimes it doesn't happen over night. It's you have to reframe things in in your life. But to get free from that! Some folks have been massively wounded by that theology! 'Cause you lived in the "it's my fault" kind of thing and I pray you'll just receive healing! To get healed from that!

There's others of us, who the issue is not to getting freed so much or getting healed so much, the issue is being confronted. Are we doing the delusional thing? Are we escaping? Are we using the questions as ways of getting away from actually living it? Or are we doing the delusional thing by getting inside of our cranium, our head and convincing ourselves that we love Jesus, but as a way of avoiding asking the real important questions of "Is my faith visible?" And I wanna challenge everybody in this room, and everybody who's listening through podcast or some other means, to ask one person, the person who's maybe closest to you, or at least who shares your value system - could be your spouse, could be your best friend or somebody

else - to give them permission to say "What do you see?" The one who knows how you spend your time, and how you spend your money, and knows your real attitudes. The one who's on the inside to say "How is my faith visible?" And maybe "How is our faith visible?" And "What needs to change, if it's not visible?"

And when it needs change, just know this: that's not a matter of say "Your mark doesn't go! And just try harder!" It's a matter of, once again, submitting yourself to the Lordship of Christ and saying "Lord, change us from the inside out! Send your spirit! Fill us with your spirit! Fill us with your power! Give our rekindle the flame of love in our heart, that we in fact live out our covenant vows!" 'Cause vows that aren't lived out are simply delusional! Recall that, to be a delusional people, a Wizard of Oz "I do, I do, I do!"-sort of people, a people rather who say "I do" once and now live it out! Day by day, moment by moment!

Pray with me here: Father, we are - all of us, who trust in you, are your bride and we wanna be a faithful bride! Not just a word or internal sentiment, but we wanna be a faithful bride in our life! Father, give us, remind us of your grace that gives us permission to be real with ourselves and with one another, even when reality bites! Lord, help us to have the courage, the confidence in your grace, to be honest! We don't need to pretend or anything, Lord, God, to face reality. And then, Father, send your re to give us a love! A love, that actually does change the way we do life in in every area! Lord, God, give us the re to be a passionate bride, who lives out our love for you and lives out your values, day in and day out! In Jesus name we pray! And all of God's bride said: Amen!

God bless you guys! Love you! Live out your faith! The altar is open.