

I. Introduction

- A. One company had a sign in the office, and, even though this was a business, it would make an awesome motto for a follower of Jesus. The sign read:
 - 1. The difficult we do immediately. The impossible takes a little longer.
- B. God deals in the category we call impossible. And His people trust Him for that. Today, I want to talk about SCARY FAITH.
- C. This is week five in our series called BIRTHRIGHT. Follow this logic:
 - 1. God is very rich.
 - 2. He has children.
 - 3. He wrote a will—a last will and testament. That's why your Bible is called the New Testament and the Old Testament.
 - 4. The death of Jesus activated God's last will and testament. So there's a long section of the Bible that begins with this statement:
 - a) *Now when someone dies and leaves a will, no one gets anything until it is proved that the person who wrote the will is dead.* (Hebrews 9:16, NLT).
 - (1) It ends with this statement:
 - b) *Jesus Christ] came once for all time, at the end of the age, to remove the power of sin forever by His sacrificial death for us.* (Hebrews 9:26, NLT).
 - 5. Therefore, God's children get to spend tomorrow's inheritance today. And remember statement 1: God is very rich.
- D. This is your birthright. Every believer in Jesus has present access to a supernatural portfolio of divine assets. Long before you were born, God looked ahead, down the corridors of time. He knew every day of your life. And in every day, He knew everything you would face. God knew every trial, every opportunity, every illness, every happiness, every depression, every recession, and every detail of every circumstance of every day of your life.
- E. God knew.
- F. But God didn't stop at knowing. God also provided.
- G. He provided everything you would need: Every encouragement, every comfort, every relationship, every idea, every strength, every hope, every love, and everything.
- H. God provided for you exactly what He provided for Jesus.
- I. God knew.
- J. God provided.
- K. Because that's how much God loves.
- L. All that provision is your birthright, your inheritance. It's yours. God already gave it. The will is in force. The testator has died, the treasures are yours. Delivered. Birthright. That's what this series is about.
- M. Which raises a huge question:
- N. How do you get it? How do you access your inheritance? That's the question that faced Joshua and his people 3,400 years ago, and that's the exact same question for us today.
- O. And in all those years, the answer has not changed one little bit:
 - 1. The way to take hold of your birthright is by FAITH.
- P. Routine faith every day and scary faith on some days—let's see what that faith looked like in Joshua 3.

II. Scary Faith

- A. *So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan.* (Joshua 3:14-17, NKJV).
 - 1. Moses is dead. Joshua is the leader. God told him to march the children of Israel straight toward the Jordan River—in flood season.
 - 2. God deals in the category we call impossible. And His people trust Him for that.
 - 3. The Ark of the Covenant led the way. That ark symbolized Jesus. It symbolized how Jesus once for all justified God's holy love for very unholy people like us. The people were supposed to follow the ark, and look at the ark, and think of the ark.
 - 4. Which was pretty much the same as saying, REMEMBER JESUS. We celebrated the Lord's Supper today—remember Jesus and His sacrifice.
 - 5. But there's a huge danger here. The Jordan is in flood stage. And the Jews are 2 million people. Just like a crush of people at a concert or a megastore on the day after Thanksgiving, once you get 2 million people moving toward a rushing river, there's a huge possibility of disaster.
 - 6. Which is exactly where scary faith comes in.
 - 7. How would you like to be the guy who orders 2 million people to march toward a fast running river?
 - 8. Faith means believing that what God has said is true enough to act like it.
 - 9. Scary faith means believing that what God has said is true enough to act like it in the face of EPIC FAILURE.
 - 10. Now let me say really quickly that the normal life of a Jesus follower doesn't call for scary faith all the time. Plain old faith is the norm. Scary faith is the exception.
 - 11. It's such an exception that SCARY FAITH has to be a clear and unmistakable call from God.
 - 12. Because sometimes Christians can get goofy. And we can do irresponsible stuff and justify it as scary faith.
 - a) It isn't legit to quit your day job to become a rock star, and tell your wife its scary faith, without an unmistakable, verifiable call of God on your life that both marriage partners believe in.
 - b) It isn't legit to remortgage the farm to start a new hot dog stand business unless that calling from God is clear and unmistakable to both marriage partners and maybe a few wise counselors too.
 - 13. Don't confuse scary faith with irresponsible religious hype.
 - 14. But when you do have a clear, unmistakable call from God to head toward EPIC FAILURE—you'll make two discoveries:
 - a) God is the Lord of outcomes.
 - b) Scary faith makes you feel alive.

- 15 . And here go the Jews, and the river piles up in a big heap, and they cross over on dry ground.
- 16 . God deals in the impossible, and His people trust Him for it.
- 17 . Four centuries of hoping finally came true. They did it. They made it. They entered the Promised Land. They took the first faltering steps into their birthright. And they did it by scary faith.
- 18 . You know what this chapter of the Bible says to me? It says, **BILL GIOVANNETTI, YOUR GOD IS TOO SMALL.**
- B. *And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, and command them, saying, 'Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.'" Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; and Joshua said to them: "Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel." (Joshua 4:1-5, NKJV).*
- 1 . The people are going to make two memorials. These will each be pillars made of 12 big stones.
 - 2 . Get this: God's into commemorating because we're into forgetting.
 - 3 . That's why we do the Lord's Supper. And that's why we do baptisms, so we can see and participate and REMEMBER.
 - 4 . The first pillar goes where they pitch their tents in the Promised Land, on their first night there (v. 3).
 - 5 . The second pillar goes in the middle of the Jordan River, at the place where the priests stood all day with the Ark of the Covenant (v. 9).
 - 6 . How many stones went into each pillar? Twelve. One for each tribe of Israel.
 - a) Everybody was invested.
 - b) Everybody was represented.
 - c) Everybody owned the miracle.
 - d) Everybody knew that God had kept His Word to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 - e) Nobody hid in a corner.
 - f) Nobody was left out.
 - 7 . As I was preparing this message, I had to ask myself about the scary faith in my life lately. You know there's one big one on the table for us as a church and for me as a pastor, and for my family.
 - 8 . It will either be a monumental success or an EPIC FAILURE.
 - 9 . This Monday, we had a big meeting of our core team for our Building on Grace Campaign. If you don't know what that is, we will be having meetings shortly to bring you up to speed.
 - 10 . We're building a new building here on this present campus.
 - 11 . Our project managers came up from Southern California. Our architects came from Colorado. Builders and engineers came from Redding. And they met with our leaders. We're reviewing the plans, and trying to contain the costs, and make sure that we build what God is calling us to build.
 - 12 . The project management team looked over at me and asked how I felt about the project. I said, "Scared."
 - 13 . These guys have built churches all over the place, and they laughed, which made me feel just great.
 - 14 . We are building a new building, and for me, it is all about SCARY FAITH. And I hope you're a part of it, because if you're not, you will lose out. You will lose out on the blessing.
 - 15 . Or you'll be shielded from the EPIC FAILURE, if that's how you see it.
 - 16 . More than anything else, when our new building is complete, and we stand together and sing of God's Amazing Grace, and when we open God's Word together, and it's electric, and incredible, and beyond description. And then when we have our first experiences of worship and then stories of people coming to Christ in that building we sweat bullets to build—do you know what I want more than anything else?
 - 17 . I want YOUR TRIBE to own a part of that building—nobody missing. No tribe unrepresented. Just like in Joshua's day: 12 tribes, 12 stones, Neighborhood Church—all of us.
 - 18 . I know it's scary, but believe me, when I think of Neighborhood Church, and when I think of us getting everybody moving forward on this building, and when I think of the risks and the costs, AND THE ECONOMY, and the potential for EPIC FAILURE:
 - a) I am a lot of things, but there's one thing I am not: I am not bored. And you won't be either if you hop on board.
 - 19 . Are there giants in the land? Yes. Will they stop us? Not me. How about you?
 - 20 . Joshua explains two reasons why the Jews leave the memorials. Here's the first reason:
- C. *"That this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever" (Joshua 4:6, 7, NKJV).*
- 1 . Reason one: tell your children. If God has done anything great in your life, tell your children. And don't just tell them once; tell them again and again.
 - a) God parted the sea.
 - b) God whipped a giant.
 - c) God got me a wife.
 - d) God got me a husband.
 - e) God got me a job.
 - f) God paid my rent.
 - g) God answered a prayer.
 - h) God healed a disease.
 - i) God restored our marriage.
 - j) God comforted my grief.
 - k) God came beside me in my loss.
 - l) God used my efforts.
 - m) God gave me hope.
 - n) God saved my soul.
 - o) God changed my life.
 - p) God gave me the victory.
 - 2 . Stack up your stones. Make a pillar. And tell your kids.
 - 3 . Christianity is never more than one generation from extinction. That's the scary part. It's almost extinct in Europe.

4. Your kids need to know that God's story isn't just yesterday's story, it's today's story too.
 5. And if you can't tell your kids, or won't tell your kids, could it be because your storyline has diverged from God's storyline? Could it be because you're written God out?
 6. For five hundred years after Jesus, Northern Africa was the cradle of Christianity. It was mainly Christian. But Christianity went extinct in North Africa, and today, North Africa is Muslim.
 7. For 1,500 years, Europe was the shining beacon of Christianity: The home of the Reformation, the cradle of the church. The churches in Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands have seen double digit declines for decades. We sent a short term mission's team from our church to Sweden, and when they handed out literature about Jesus on the streets, young people took that literature, and crumpled it up, and threw it to the ground in front of our mission team members. In parts of France, Sweden, and Netherlands, church attendance is less than ten percent. (<http://bit.ly/UFsYK>)
 8. In the U.S., 60% of twenty-something who were involved in church as teenagers are already gone.
 9. Another study shows that of students who attend church as high school seniors, two-thirds drop out of church for at least a year during college.
 10. For every 10 students who are spiritually active as teen-agers, only 2 will still be spiritually active at age 29 (<http://bit.ly/2IP6uq>). That's an 80% dropout rate!
 11. And I ask, what happened?
 12. I have a hunch. My hunch is that we're telling our kids what to believe but not telling them what happens when you believe it, because we're just paying lip service, and not putting our money, and our lives, and our time where our mouth is.
 13. So we have no pillars. We have little personal history of the mighty works of God. We're doctrinally correct but theologically shallow and experientially stunted.
 14. And why?
 15. Because we do not mix the word of God with SCARY FAITH. Maybe the only reason you've never crossed a Jordan River is that you never tried.
 16. If you don't stick your neck out, you'll never get to set up a pillar.
 - a) If you don't serve, you won't have a story to tell your children about how God used you.
 - b) If you don't break out of your Christian bubble, and show some love to somebody who needs Jesus, you'll never tell your kids and grandkids about the big one that got away.
 - c) If you don't start tithing, you won't have a story to tell about your finances.
 - d) If you don't sell your brand new house of your dreams in Chicago, the one which you designed, the one where you could walk out your back door and catch a 4 pound bass in the morning before work. If you don't walk away from a lifetime of friends and family and familiar places, a place where you are connected, and successful, and well known and go to a new state where nobody knows you and half the people suspect you—you can't tell your kids of a God who can reconstruct a life turned totally upside down.
 17. No guts, no glory.
 18. No scary faith, no pillars. And without those pillars for each upcoming generation, the house of faith collapses.
 19. No Jordan, no promised land. No inheritance. No birthright.
 20. So God said march toward the rushing river, and they marched and God parted the river. And then He told them, tell your children.
 21. But that's not all He told them.
- D. *And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land;'* for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever." (Joshua 4:20-24, NKJV).
1. Tell your children. But don't stop there.
 2. Tell the world too. "That all the peoples of the earth may know."
 3. God loves the idiot next door who plays his music too loud. God loves the girl down the street who dresses so skimpily you cover your son's eyes when she walks by. God loves the guy in the Jiffy Lube who changes your oil. And God loves the lady who cut and colored your hair in the salon last week.
 4. He wants everybody to know about Jesus.
 5. And that takes us right to the core of who we are as the people of God. We are on a mission from God to the whole world.
 6. Some of you read my blog, and you know that I asked a question about church this week in my blog (www.maxgrace.com).
 7. What do you want out of Neighborhood Church? Do you want us to be a cruise-ship or a battleship?
 8. CRUISE SHIP: hassle-free, entertaining, self-indulgent, relatively pointless tour with no objective beyond your own pleasure. Relationships exist for mutual satisfaction tends to be shallow.
 9. BATTLESHIP: mission-oriented, Spartan, focused, self-sacrificing journey to achieve a victory for what is good, right, and true. Relationships exist for the sake of the mission tend to be deep, forged in the heat of battle.
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| 10. | <u>Cruise Ship</u> | <u>Battleship</u> |
| a) | <u>VIP'S</u> | I'm here for I, Me, My |
| | | Already on board |
| b) | <u>PRIORITIES</u> | My preferences |
| c) | <u>KEY QUESTION</u> | Do I like this? |
| d) | <u>RELATIONSHIPS</u> | We are here for the relationships. |
11. Joshua describes the Conquest of Canaan. Is this story more like life on a Cruise-ship or a Battleship?
 12. It's a battleship.
 13. God left us in this world to be a light to the nations. To be witnesses of a coming King, who, when He comes, takes over. We are soldiers in a battle. We are part of a spiritual insurrection. We're reclaiming this world for its rightful owner.
 14. We're taking back our birthright.

15. Neighborhood Church isn't here for just us. We have 100,000 people in this county and every one of them needs to know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that they might fear and trust and revere the name of the Lord who saved them through the blood of His son Jesus.
16. We can't rest till we've touched all 100,000 people. And that's just here. There's Africa and Asia and Europe and South America—there's a world going to hell without Jesus.
17. Sound scary?
18. I hope so.
19. That's our battle. That's our mission. We're mobilizing an army. Will you let us mobilize you? Heal you, comfort you, train you, equip you, and deploy you? Or will you push back and resist and fight us, your own church and your own leaders. That's too hard. I want the all-you-can-eat buffet and the line's toooo loooooong.

III. Conclusion

- A. In the late 1800's there was a famous athlete in England. His name was C.T. Studd, and he was a rock star at the game of cricket. C.T. Studd had the perfect name—this guy was a star athlete, a celebrity. Plus he was filthy rich because his dad left him a massive inheritance.
- B. He had it all, right?
- C. C.T. Studd, star athlete and rich guy gave away all his money, and all his possessions. He split up his money between Moody Bible Institute, and an orphanage movement led by George Mueller, and then a ministry for the poor in England, and then the Salvation Army.
- D. He went out as a missionary first to China, then to India, and then to Africa.
- E. Scary faith. He died in Africa at age 70 because he couldn't get good treatment for gall stones.
- F. He wrote:
 1. Last June at the mouth of the Congo there awaited a thousand prospectors, traders, merchants and gold seekers, waiting to rush into these regions as soon as the government opened the door to them, for rumor declared that there is an abundance of gold. If such men hear so loudly the call of gold and obey it, can it be that the ears of Christ's soldiers are deaf to the call of God? Are gamblers for gold so many and gamblers for God so few?
- G. Here's his most famous saying:
 1. Some want to live within the sound
Of church or chapel bell;
I want to run a rescue shop
Within a yard of hell.
- H. You know what?
- I. Me too.
- J. And you know what the cool thing is? You get your cruise ship. You do. I promise you, it's so good you can't describe how good it is.
- K. Christian, you get your cruise-ship, its called heaven.
- L. Until then, prepare for war. We have a birthright. Somebody has taken it from us, and we have to fight to get it back. And we have to fight for our children. And we have to fight for our neighbors and our co-workers and our family. We have to love the world Jesus died for.
- M. Are you in?
- N. One last C.T. Studd quote:
 1. Let us not glide through this world and then slip quietly into heaven, without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Let us see to it that the devil will hold a thanksgiving service in hell, when he gets the news of our departure from the field of battle.