

## **Faith Growth spurts**

### **by Bill Aumack**

Good morning.

You're familiar with growth spurts, right. Especially if you've been a parent, you've had kids, right? They, they grow in spurts. I used to think that, you know, growth happened to kind of, you know, a nice smooth growth, but it doesn't we get these little growth spurts. And Linda and I used to laugh at the boys, because you always tell when a growth spurt was common because they get real hungry. And they start eating and eating and eating and eating and you're like, oh, we're getting ready to grow.

And I know that one time, I had a big growth spurt when I was younger. I was in eighth grade. And most of you know that. I grew up at Adventist boarding schools. My dad was a boy's Dean for much of my childhood. And so we lived on the campus, and we had an apartment in the dorm. So all the high school kids knew me, and I was the Dean's kid. You think being the pastor's kid is bad. You should try being the Dean's kid and living in the same building with all the people all the time. But um, they all knew who I was. And I hadn't hit any big growth spurts yet, I was kind of short. And the summer between my eighth grade year and my freshman year, and how long a summer break when you're in school, two months, two and a half months, something like that. I grew three inches in two months. And you know, when you grow three inches in two months, there's a lot of things that can go wrong. You know, there's coordination issues, pants never fit. You know, fortunately, it was summer times, we were all wearing shorts. My shorts just kept getting shorter and shorter and shorter. During the summer, you know, the hard part was Sabbath morning and going to church, because every week the pants were too short, you know, it just was tough. And when you know, my eighth grade year kind of ended, and all the high school kids went home for the summer, I was one of the short kids. And when they came back in the fall, I wasn't I wasn't the tallest kid. But I was three inches taller. People didn't recognize me, because I had grown so much during the summer.

And sometimes our faith does that too. We can have these growth spurts in our faith. And they often come with some difficulty in some trials. And they sometimes they come in the hardships of our lives, and in the darkness in the storms and the craziness that goes on.

Because sometimes we wonder, like, how do I get my faith? You know, I don't know if you remember this, or maybe you're going through this right now. But sometimes when we were, you know, younger, of course, like everybody's younger than me anymore. But you know, when we were younger. Maybe you were a teenager or young adult... And you wonder like, how do I get my faith? And you know, we read the Bible, and Esther had like a five gallon bucket of faith and I just have a little bit. Noah, he's had a whole boatload of faith and I just have a little bit. Abraham, you know, all these names. And we think Man, these people had faith, how do I get

my faith? And we seem to have this concept of like, you know, the one day we'll be walking down the street, you know, we've got our earbuds in and we're bebopping into some good music. And somehow in heaven, God will say it's time and he'll drop the cosmic water balloon on us. And we just got my faith. Right. And we just expect it to happen. You know, it may be it'll be magical when I turn 21 or when I get married or when I have kids, and I'll have faith. But I don't think it works like that. At least not in my experience. Maybe for some of you if you've had that experience. I would love to hear it. Because I've really never met anybody with that experience.

But I think it comes in a different way. So because really what happens is faith is a decision. I've given away the whole sermon again with the first bullet. So please listen to the rest. But faith is a decision. And I want to talk about that. And I want to unpack that a little bit today. Because we don't often think of it that way. But let's talk about something besides faith for a minute. Maybe you know, somebody who struggled with an addiction, alcohol or drugs or something, right. And some of them make a decision to get clean. We have some of those folks here today. Right? Amen is right. And it's a tough decision. Right? It's not easy. And there's struggles, and they have to go to rehab and AA meetings and, and get support from friends and family. And it's tough, but it's a decision they make. Other people sometimes make the decision, and it doesn't seem to stick. I had a boss, a co worker once at work. He liked to smoke. He knows smoking wasn't good for him. I mean, I think everybody knows smoking isn't good for him. But he liked to smoke. And he used to say quitting smoking is the easiest thing in the world. I've quit like 37 times now. Right? quitting is easy. Making it stick is hard. Right? Making it stick is hard. And I don't think his decision was necessarily very firm. You know, he was a single guy, he didn't have to worry about you know, I gotta be here for the kids or whatever. And he liked to smoke. And so it was difficult for him to make that decision, and to stop. And we've probably all made decisions like that. I know I should eat better. But tacos, right? And it's hard to make those decisions. And our faith can be the same way. And it's not just a decision you make once it's not something you just go to, you know, like when you're 12 years old, and you get baptized and you make the decision, and then you never have to think about it again. This is a decision that you have to make every day that I will follow Jesus. Remember the old song, I have decided to follow Jesus. Right? There's truth in that. There's truth in that.

Because you see, your faith isn't real if you didn't choose it.

Right? Your faith isn't real, if you didn't choose it. If you're just here, because, you know, mommy and daddy were Adventist Christians and grandma and grandpa were Adventist Christians and great grandma and grandpa were Adventist Christians. And so I'm here. That's not real. That's tradition. Your faith isn't real, if you didn't choose it. Right. And it's not a one time thing. You've got to keep doing it and doing it and doing it.

And so today, I want to look at a story. We're gonna get two stories, but primarily one in particular. And that's a story we all know, open your Bibles with me to Genesis chapter 29. And while you're getting to Genesis 29, this is the story of Joseph, super popular story, you've

probably heard it 10,000 times, but I'm hoping to connect some things for you that maybe you've never connected before. And I'm hoping that we can look at it and maybe a little bit new way.

But while you're going to Genesis chapter 29. I want to give you a little bit of backstory. Okay. So let's back up a little bit. And we'll go back all the way up to Abraham and Sarah. Remember Abraham and Sarah? They were supposed to be the parents of this great nation. they don't have any kids. We have the whole Hagar and Ishmael mess up. And I want you to remember that name Ishmael that will be important later.

So we got Hagar and Ishmael, finally Isaac comes along, right? They're very happy. Sarah dies, it becomes time for Isaac to get married. And Abraham sends his servant to go get a wife for Isaac remember this story? Okay, now we have no concept of Jews or Israel or anything. But essentially what happens is Abraham sends his servant back to his people. The Jews, if you will To find somebody who worships God, okay? And is a great story, if you remember, the servant goes back and he has this prayer and has a miracle and finds Rebecca. Now Rebecca comes from Abraham's brother, Abraham's brother gets married, they have a son, their son has Rebecca, and Laban.

Okay. And so here we go, Rebecca comes back, marries Isaac, and they have two boys, what were their boys names? Jacob and Esau, twins. But but not identical twins, they're different in nearly every way. physically, emotionally, they're just different. Okay. And remember, the younger one, Jacob is promised that he's gonna be the one that you know, gets the birthright and kind of leads the family and takes on. And so Esau sells the birthright to Jacob for what? A pot of lentils? Dude, man, I wouldn't give you a broken pencil for a pot of lentils. You can keep them. Right.

And he sells the birthright for a pot of lentils. And then when Isaac is old and feeble, and getting close to death, it's time to give the blessing. And Rebecca and Jacob trick Isaac into giving the blessing to Jacob instead of Esau. And Esau is one kind of angry, right? He's like, Hey, I didn't get the birth. Right. And I didn't get the blessing and he is fit to be tied.

How dysfunctional is this family? I mean, this is crazy. We talked about families being weird a couple of weeks ago. This is beyond weird, right? This is just dysfunctional. So Abraham sends Isaac where? Back to my people kind of the ancestors of the Jews, right? And who does Isaac find? Laban, his mother's brother, his uncle. And Laban has two daughters. Right? remember their names? Rachel and Leah. Rachel, Leah was the oldest. And she had beautiful eyes. The Bible says tender eyes. But Rachel was beautiful everywhere.

Okay. And Isaac falls in love with Rachel and agrees to work seven years for Rachel's hand in marriage. He gets tricked on his wedding night. Right? And has to marry Leah.

What? What father does this to his daughter? You know, that guy thinks he's marrying your sister, but we're not gonna do you. I want you to go there and marry him. Really? I mean, this is

this is this is beyond dysfunctional. I don't know what word you use for beyond dysfunctional. But this is beyond dysfunctional. Right.

And so naturally, Isaac complains. And this part I want you to pay attention to because I don't know how many years I got this wrong. Because I thought Isaac worked for seven years and got Leah and then worked for seven more years and got Rachel which isn't right. He worked for seven years and got Leah and Rachel. But he had to work seven more years to pay off the debt. So now, Rachel gets gyped out of a wedding. She doesn't even get to have her wedding. Ladies, how would you feel about that? Not good, right? Yeah, I'm bridezilla. And now Jacob is married to two women, one he loves and one he doesn't. Can you imagine the home life in this home? How wonderful that must be. Right? This This is horrible, right.

So let's pick this up. Now. Genesis 29. I think about verse 31. It says, The Lord saw that Leah was not loved and he enabled her to conceive as she starts giving Jacob sons. Now at the beginning of Genesis 30. Rachel's upset because she doesn't have any children. And she's jealous of her sister. So what does she do? She gives her servant to Joseph. As to Jacob, sorry, to Jacob. Where did that come from? Grandma and Grandpa, great grandma and grandpa. Right? And so he starts getting sons from them. Well, then Leah quits having sons. So she gives her handmaiden, and then more sons. So this goes back and forth this battle of like, who can give us the most sons, and Rachel's not having any sons and she's upset. And in verse seven, Rachel says, I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won. Can you imagine what it's like in that home? The animosity that is going on in that house. Right? What a horrible way to live. Now, finally, in chapter 30, verse 22, we see that God remembers Rachel, and she has Joseph. Okay. And then a couple chapters later, we have Benjamin, I've spent a long time on this backstory, because I want you to realize how dysfunctional this family has been, not just in this family, but for generations. And it seems to be getting worse, right? starts with a little something, it gets a little worse, it gets a little worse than I thought it gets down to here. It's just full blown. Out of control. Right. Now, finally, in about verse, I'm sorry, Chapter 37, we get to the part that I really kind of want to focus on. So turn with me to chapter 37. We're going to read a couple of verses here, starting at verse two. With me? amen. All right, here we go.

This is the account of Jacob's family line. Joseph, a young man of 17, was tending flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah, and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them. Now, who were Bilhah and Zilpah, those were the handmaidens that we talked about, right? So we have one Father, four women, and 11. Kids. Okay. And we don't know what this bad report was. And we don't know if the brothers deserved it or not. Maybe the brothers really were messing up and deserves to have a bad report taken home to dad. Maybe they were, we don't know. But what happens when the 17 year old is going home to tattletale to daddy. How do you think that makes the other brothers feel? Not so good, right? I mean, it sounds like we're talking about a five year old.

Right? He went home to tattletale the daddy. And he's 17. Let's figure it out. verse three. Now Israel love Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old

age, and he made an ornate robe for him the coat of many colors. And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them. They hated him, and could not speak a kind word to him.

Ouch.

Ouch.

Verse Five, Joseph had a dream. And when he told you his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said, Listen to this dream I had. We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, and your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it. And his brother said to him, Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us and they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. And then he had another dream. And he told it to his brothers. Listen, he said, I had another dream. This time the sun and the moon and 11 stars were bowing down to me. Now. If you had a dream about the sheaves and you told your brothers and they hated you for it, and you had a second dream, what would you do?

Zipit! Just keep that to yourself. Now Joseph had another dream, you're bound down to the sun, the moon and the stars, right? Can you imagine how his brothers feel about him now?

Right?

Verse 10, when he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, What is this dream you had? Well, your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bowed to the ground before you, his brothers were jealous of him. But his father kept this matter in mind.

Now, the rest of 37 is about Joseph being traded by his brothers into slavery. And we're not going to read that whole thing. But let's look at a few highlights. Right? His brothers see him coming in verse 19. They go, here comes that dream or they said, Come now, let us do what? Kill him, and throw him in one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. And then we'll see what comes of his dreams.

All right. Let's do a little poll here. How many of us have brothers and sisters? nearly everybody. How many of us had fights or arguments with our brothers and sisters at some point? Nearly all of us. Don't raise your hands. How many of us actually wanted to kill them? You know, I mean, we get upset at our brothers and sisters and we scuffle and we argue, but kill. Really? I mean, that's, that's crazy. That's crazy. And so you remember Reuben, the oldest has no, no we can't kill him. Just throw him in the cisterns. And Reuben must wander off to try and figure out, like, What do I do? How do I get Joseph out and sending home and have him not tell dad and not let the brother's kill him. And so I imagine he's out wandering around trying to figure this out. When along comes the slave traders. Remember this, they sell to the Midianites and they get 20 shekels of silver. And I wondered how much 20 shekels of silver was. 20 shekels would be about eight ounces of silver. Silver today goes for about \$28 an ounce. They got \$560 for selling their brother. Now another way to think about that is 10 brothers 20 shekels they each got two

shekels which would have been 56 bucks. But you have really sell your brother into slavery for \$56. I mean, we spend more than that going out to eat for dinner. Right? Really \$56

Verse 31 says, then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat dipped the robe in the blood, and they took the ornate robe back to their father and said we found this examine it to see whether it is your son's robe. He recognized it and said it is my son's robe. Some ferocious animal has devoured him, Joseph has surely been torn to pieces. Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourn for his son for many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. No, he said I will continue to mourn until I joined my son in the grave. And so his father wept from him for him. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph to Egypt, sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar for one of one of Pharaohs officials, the captain of the guard,

And I kind of want to stop here. Okay, we know the rest of the story right real quickly. Joseph rises to prominence and Potiphar's house, right and is in charge of everything gets falsely accused and get sent to jail. What's worse than being a slave in Egypt, being a slave in jail in Egypt, right, just when you thought it couldn't be any worse than being a slave. It gets worse. Right and then he has the cup bearer The baker come and he interprets their dreams. And it's going to be good for the cup bearer. And he says, Remember me, tell them I'm down here falsely accused. And for two years, the cup bearer forgets about him. Okay. And we know this, this part of the story. Okay.

But I want to spend a moment and think about the part that the Bible doesn't cover that trip from wherever the brothers were to Egypt. We don't know anything of what happens there. What do you think you're feeling if you're Joseph on that trip? Sad. I mean, that's a horrible trip, right? You're being taken farther and farther and farther and farther away from home, you don't think you're ever gonna see your family again. You're never gonna see your homeland again. You don't know what's going to happen of you. You could make a lot of decisions in a situation like that. Or you might decide, well, I'm a slave, I'm just gonna do the bare minimum just so I don't get whipped. And you know, that's it, I'm done. You might decide to even give up. Some people might try to take their own life and say, This is hopeless. I just I want out and give up on life itself. You could give up on God. God, why did you do this to me?

But I don't think Joseph made any of those decisions. And the reason I don't think Joseph made any of those decisions, is Turn with me to Genesis chapter 39. I guess I don't have that one. Okay. Genesis 39. Oh, before we get there, I'm sorry. Let's go back to 37. I'm sorry, let's go back to 37. Real quick, 37 of the top two and four. We just kind of read this. But I want I want this to hit home for you. 37, 2 and 4. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate[a] robe for him. 4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

What can we derive about Joseph? He is spoiled brat. Right? he tattletales he gets to sit at home and lounge around in the expensive coat while his brothers are out in the field working and they hate that. It's that they hate him so much. They don't want him in the field with him. So they're glad he's home. But they hate him for being home and not having to work for him. Right. And Joseph comes off as like this little spoiled brat. So what do we know about him? Number one, Joseph is the favorite son. I you know, hopefully none of us grew up in a house where mom and dad loved one of the other kids more than the rest. Right? That would be horrible. Sergio is not assuming that Denise was loved more than Sergio. Right? We don't want that. That's bad. But Joseph is the favorite son. What else do we know? Joseph is a tattletale. Joseph is a spoiled little brat.

So now let's go on to Genesis 39. Genesis 39, ready to top verse two. Verse one, actually, now Joseph had been taken to Egypt, Potiphar an Egyptian who was one of Pharaohs officials, and a captain of the guard bought him from who? The Ishmaelites who had taken him there. Who are the Ishmaelites? Remember Hagar and Ishmael. These are the Ishmaelites. But the other verse said the Midianites What happened? How did we get from the Midianites to the ishmaelites. The ishmaelites and the Midianites. That term is used interchangeably. It was two people groups, the kind of live together, they look the same, they dress the same their culture was the same was kind of a nation in a nation. And that term is used interchangeably for the group of people. And we can see it several times in the Bible Judges, chapter six is one example. And the Midianites. And the ishmaelites refer to the same group who like couldn't tell apart, you couldn't look at him and tell who was a midianite. And who was an Ishmaelites, because they looked and acted in their culture was the same until the Bible uses these two terms interchangeably. And I want you to think about that when you read these old testament stories. And it talks about the Midianites attacking Israel, because who were the Midianites, the ishmaelites. And that war was already beginning even in the Old Testament. All right.

So verse 2 the Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, 4 Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. 5 From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. 6 So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Wow.

What happened? How did Joseph go from tattletale and spoiled brat? to a very successful man that's in charge of everything? What happened? Now verse two says what the Lord was with him? Is the Lord with spoiled brats and tattletales. Does the Lord bless spoiled brats in tattletales? I don't know. Can the Lord change the heart of a spoiled brat? And a tattletale? Yes, yes. See, I think Joseph made a decision. Somewhere on that trip. And with all the decisions he could have made, he finally said, I am deciding to leave this into God's hands. Primarily because you don't have much of another decision. Right? We hear this from the people that have addictions. It's not till you reach rock bottom and ain't nowhere else to go with. It's you make a decision? Sometimes, right? And when you get to that last bit of rope, then he's like, Alright, God, I guess I'll trust you. And Joseph makes a decision to trust God and to leave the outcome in God's hands. And he could have said, you know, hey, I've gone from being the Spoiled Brat son of a rich man to be in a slave, and I'm just going to give up. Or you could say, I'm going to do the best that I can do. And leave it into God's hands. You know, and then this took a while for this to happen, right? It says Potiphar was blessed in the fields. That would take a number of years for the cows or the sheep, or whatever it was, he was raising, to have more babies and to grow and less deaths. And so this took years, probably at least three to five years minimum. You know, we think it just happened overnight, because it's only you know that much in the Bible when we read it. But this was years of time. And then he ends up in jail for something he didn't do. And then the cup bearer forgets him.

What do we learn from that? See, having faith doesn't make life easier. You can have all the faith you want. It does not make your life easier. Look at all the people in the Bible that had a rough go of it. Was Paul's life easy? Was Noah's life easy. Was Daniel's life easy. Was Joseph's life easy. Will your life be easy? Oh having faith doesn't make life easier. having faith makes life possible. Now, some of you might be saying, Well, you know, Bill wait.... I've got some friends that aren't Christians, and they're having a pretty good life. They seem to be having a good life without him without God. And I would say, but are they really? Because we all know of people, we've all heard the stories of very successful people who seemingly made it all who were sad and empty and lonely, still searching for something. Sometimes they, they even commit suicide, in the middle of their heights of fame. It doesn't sound like they're having a good life, see, maybe a better way to say it is having faith makes a meaningful life possible. I don't know about you, but I want to have a meaningful life. I want my life to have mattered to somebody for something that I helped point somebody to Jesus, that I did something for not meaningful in the way of, you know, I got to know I want statues built for me or whatever, right? No. I want my life to have eternal significance. And faith is what gives us that. Faith is what gives us that.

And just real quickly, I'm going so long, but I'm having fun. I hope you guys are.. all right.

Real quick, Daniels life, we're not going to spend as much time on Daniel's life. But if you want to turn with me to Daniel chapter one, we see a lot of similarities between Daniel and Joseph. He's ripped out from his homeland and taken away and made a slave in a foreign land, right?

Babylon comes in, takes a bunch of the Jewish folks back home. And we don't have all of the information about Daniel that we have about Joseph. But we do see some things that we can learn from it. So if you're with me and Daniel chapter one number, verse four. When they get back there, they start testing the young people to see who should work for the kingdom. And verse four says they're looking for young men without physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and the literature of the Babylonians. Okay. Daniel and his friends, what can we surmise about them? They were good looking. They were smart. They did well in school. So we're not talking about kids that were drop outs and slough off. And you know, I didn't want to do it..... these were good young men. Okay, good young men, that had worked hard. And now all of a sudden they find themselves as slaves. And, you know, they could have asked the same question, God, what did we do to deserve this? We've been good. We went to school, we learned the lessons. How come this is happening to us? And immediately, you know, we see the Daniel asks for the healthier food. He wants vegetables instead of the rich food off the Kings table. And we see the God's with him just right from the start. Because there is no way of guard would risk his neck for a slave. Right? There's no way a guard going. No, not doing that. You know what the king will do to me? I ain't doing that. You eat what we give you and shut up. Except they use more colorful language. I don't know what swear words the Babylonians use, but I'm sure it was laced with all that in there. Right? We don't do that here. Don't you know who's in charge? And don't you know your spot and my spot? Right? But somehow God's with them, and he does it. And they do well.

We see in Daniel chapter two, that Daniel remembers and interprets the king for the dream of the great statue with different metals and stuff. We're not gonna go into all that. But in two, verses 48 to 49, the king Daniel course gave credit to God said God helped me do this. But the king gives credit to Daniel, verse 48, the king place Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him and made him ruler over the entire providence of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its Wiseman. Moreover, at Daniel's requests, the king anointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the providence of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained in the Royal Court. Okay, again, this didn't happen overnight. The King doesn't take some guys gotten to Babylon. He's only been there like three weeks and making you know, second charge. This took years, years.

Daniel chapter three, we have the familiar story of the king building the golden image, right? And Daniel, I don't always see sick or he's out of town on business or something. He's not there. But you know, we know the story of Rack, Shack and Benny and how they don't bow down. But this brings us one of my favorite text out of the Bible. And Daniel chapter three, verses 16 and 18. If this is not underlined in your Bible, it should be Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.

My God will deliver me and even if he doesn't, not gonna do it. Sounds like they made a decision. Right? They made a decision. Now, I don't know how they made the decision. I don't know if they gathered around, you know, and huddled up and said, All right. I'm not gonna bow, you gonna bow? Not gonna bow.... Okay, already break no bow. I don't know how they made their decision. But they made the decision, and they stuck to it. And I'm telling you, it's tough to stick to it. When you're standing there looking at the fiery furnace. Right? There's no ands ifs or buts about what's gonna happen here in a minute. Right? The whole nation is there. The army is there. The guards are there. You know, what's going to happen? Now, why would they expect God would walk around in the fire with him? That's never happened before. So you and I, if we were in this place, we say, Well, God did it for Rack and Shack and Benny, maybe he'll do it for me. This never happened before in the history of the world.

That's faith that comes in the storms of life that is rooted in a decision that we will not bow.

We know the story of Daniel in the lion's den in chapter six, where they try and trick him. Because Daniel leans out his window to pray every day, and they make it illegal to pray to anybody but the king for 30 days. And Daniel leans out his window and we have the whole story of the lion's den. And sometimes we're tempted to say, Well, why didn't Daniel just you know, pray from inside the living room? Right? Does anywhere in the Bible tell you have to lean out the window? No. You don't have to lean out the window to pray. In fact, I would bet that nobody here is leaned out the window to pray and their entire lives. It's not a requirement. So why doesn't Daniel just you know, I'll just pray from the living room and not lean out the window.

Is it a sin to pray from the living room? No. But maybe it's an issue. When you don't trust God enough to put him first and say, I always pray leaning out the window. And today is no different. And I trust God, no matter what happens. Maybe that's where the issue is, is too many times are willing to fall back to a spot that's not a sin. It's not a sin to pray from the living room. But we gave up representing our God, and the way we always have. And maybe that's the problem. And Daniel makes a decision. Of course, we know that he's saved from the lions den.

And when we look at the carefully at the people in the Bible, we see this a lot, they made a decision. Esther makes a decision, Noah makes a decision. Daniel makes a decision. All these people we think of being great heroes of faith, they make a decision to do it, and they stick to it. I'm sure some of them wondered what was going on? Why God, are you putting me through this? And it's not a sin to wonder. It's okay. See, no matter where you are on this faith journey, whether you have just a little bit of faith, and you're hoping to grow, or whether you're some kind of spiritual giant, and you have lots of faith, we can always grow a little more, have a little more faith. Because none of us have reached perfection yet. I know some of us are close. But none of us have reached perfection yet. You have to decide to do it. And it's okay to ask God for more faith. Remember, when the man brings his demon possessed son to Jesus, and says, you know, heal my son. And Jesus says, it's because of your belief. He says I believe and help my unbelief. It's okay to say God, help my unbelief. Help me believe.

How many of us here today are willing to say, I believe, Help my unbelief. You may have never made a decision for God and it may be scary. You may be like my coworker who quit smoking 37 times. He said, I've made 37 decisions for God. They've never stuck. It's okay. Make a decision today. None of us are guaranteed tomorrow. And if you do get tomorrow, make the decision again. And again, and again. And that's how you make it stick. Until you can say, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from it. But even if he does not, we will not bow down.

If you've made that decision today for the first time, we'd love to hear from you. Please leave us a note. Let us know, text us, email us, use the card. You can even actually talk to us, that's still okay. Sometimes we talk about all these ways to contact us, you can actually just talk to us. We'd love to hear it.

If you're thinking about you'd like to make that decision but you're scared. Please talk to us. We'd love to hear from you.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, Lord, help us to make the decision. Help us to understand that the faith is something that will come slowly but surely, these little growth spurts help us not to be impatient. But help us to make the decision, Lord, to make the choice that I have decided to follow Jesus. No turning back. No turning back. Lord, be with us this upcoming week. Help us to continue to make that decision and to continue to grow our faith Lord. Be with us now. In Jesus name. Amen.