

PULPIT COMPANION

FROM
BELIEF TO
BOLD
OBEDIENCE

ISAIAH 29:13

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This powerful message challenges us to examine the difference between mere belief and active faith in Christ Jesus.

Using the flight metaphor, we're reminded that as we journey through 2026, we must release all baggage, past failures, old labels, and yesterday's regrets, to move forward with genuine faith.

The sermon draws from Hebrews 11:1-6, revealing that faith is not emotional wishful thinking but a settled reality, a foundation that holds everything else up. The Greek word 'hypostasis' teaches us that faith is the supporting structure beneath our spiritual lives, without it, everything collapses. We discover three profound cores of forward faith through the story of the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17-22.

First, running to Jesus doesn't mean surrendering to Jesus, many of us want Jesus as an advisor rather than as Lord. Second, we can have a checklist of good behaviors without true conversion, producing pride instead of progress. Third, we often receive invitations from God that cost us too much because they threaten our control. The rich young man's story reveals that the real issue wasn't his wealth but his unwillingness to relinquish control.

This message calls us to move from belief to bold obedience, from admiring Jesus at a distance to following Him closely, and from managing our lives to yielding control to God's leading.





SCRIPTURES FROM PULPIT AI

Explicitly Mentioned References:

1. Hebrews 11:1-6 - Main text defining faith as assurance and conviction
2. Mark 10:17-22 - The story of the rich young ruler
3. Isaiah 29:13 - People honoring God with lips while hearts are far from Him
4. 2 Timothy 3:5 - Having appearance of godliness but denying its power
5. Luke 9:23 - Denying oneself, taking up cross daily, and following Jesus

Themes and Relevant Supporting Verses:

Theme: Faith vs. Belief

- James 2:19 - "Even the demons believe—and shudder"
- James 2:17 - "Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead"

Theme: Obedience and Surrender

- 1 Samuel 15:22 - "To obey is better than sacrifice"
- John 14:15 - "If you love me, you will keep my commandments"
- Romans 12:1 - Present your bodies as living sacrifices

Theme: Trust and Control

- Proverbs 3:5-6 - Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on own understanding
- Matthew 6:24 - Cannot serve two masters
- Philippians 3:7-8 - Counting all as loss for Christ

Theme: Drawing Near to God

- Matthew 15:8 - This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me
- James 4:8 - Draw near to God and He will draw near to you

Theme: Letting Go and Following

- Matthew 16:24 - If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself
- Philippians 3:13-14 - Forgetting what lies behind, pressing forward





DEVOTIONAL

Day 1: The Foundation Beneath

Reading: Hebrews 11:1-6

Devotional: Faith is not wishful thinking or emotional enthusiasm, it is hypostasis, the supporting structure that holds everything up. Like the foundation beneath a building that you cannot see but upon which everything depends, faith is the settled reality that sustains us before we see results. Today, examine what your faith is built upon. Is it merely agreement with God's existence, or is it the assurance that anchors your entire life? Faith pleases God not because of perfect understanding, but because of unwavering trust. Without this foundation, everything collapses.

Ask yourself: What am I truly standing on? Is my faith a firm foundation or shifting sand? God rewards those who earnestly seek Him, not with answers alone, but with His presence that transforms belief into unshakeable conviction.

Day 2: Running Versus Surrendering

Reading: Mark 10:17-22

Devotional: The rich young ruler ran to Jesus, knelt before Him, and asked the right question—yet walked away unchanged. His story reveals a sobering truth: proximity to Jesus doesn't equal surrender to Jesus. Many of us run to Christ in crisis but resist His lordship in our daily decisions. We want Jesus as advisor, not as Lord. We seek His wisdom while maintaining our control. True faith requires more than religious enthusiasm; it demands relinquishing the driver's seat.

Today, honestly assess your relationship with Christ. Are you consulting Him or surrendering to Him? What are you holding onto that prevents full obedience? Jesus looked at this young man and loved him enough to confront what controlled him. Real love doesn't affirm what will ultimately destroy us. What is Jesus lovingly asking you to release today?





DEVOTIONAL

Day 3: The Checklist Without Conversion

Reading: 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Isaiah 29:13

Devotional: You can follow all the rules and still miss the relationship. The rich young ruler had kept the commandments from his youth—his behavior was impeccable, his record clean. Yet Jesus identified what he lacked: a surrendered heart. Obedience without surrender produces pride, not progress. Many believers are disciplined but not dependent, knowledgeable but not trusting, good at avoiding sin but equally good at avoiding sacrifice. This is "look good faith", having the appearance of godliness while denying its power. God isn't impressed by compliance; He desires complete surrender.

Today, move beyond measuring your faith by habits alone. Stop asking, "What have I done right?" and start asking, "Who am I trusting?" Let God disrupt your comfort zones. True transformation happens not through perfect behavior but through intimate relationship with the One who changes hearts.

Day 4: The Cost of Control

Reading: Luke 9:23-25; Matthew 16:24-26

Devotional: The rich young ruler wasn't primarily wrestling with money, he was wrestling with control. Control is the quiet idol we don't want to name, the thing we cling to when we don't fully trust God. Jesus loved this man enough to expose what controlled him, not to shame him but to free him. What you refuse to release will always compete with who you say you trust. People don't reject Jesus; they reject the cost of surrendering control to follow Him. We love Jesus until He touches our finances, our comfort, our identity, our autonomy. Forward faith demands we deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Him. This means releasing the wheel and trusting God knows the road better than we ever could. Today, identify what you're controlling that God wants to lead. The cost of following Jesus is high, but the cost of not following Him is infinitely higher.





DEVOTIONAL

Day 5: From Belief to Bold Obedience

Reading: James 2:14-26; John 14:15-24

Devotional: Belief alone is not enough. Faith without works is dead. The question isn't "Do you believe?" but "Do you trust God enough to let go?" Forward faith moves from admiring God's promises to surrendering to God's process, from managing life in our own strength to yielding control and letting God lead. This is not about emotion or feelings, it's a decision. When we release control, God releases clarity. When we release baggage, God releases blessings. When we surrender fully, we can finally move forward. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." True faith demonstrates itself through obedient action.

Today, stop negotiating with God and start obeying Him without conditions. Move from hands clenched in fear to hands lifted in praise. Declare with your life, not just your lips: "I'm moving forward with faith." Release what you've been holding, and watch God chart your course into purpose.

Reflection Questions for the Week:

- What baggage am I carrying that prevents me from moving forward in faith?
- Where am I seeking Jesus as an advisor rather than surrendering to Him as Lord?
- What does my daily life reveal about whether I truly trust God or am merely maintaining control?
- What is the "one thing" Jesus is asking me to release in this season?
- How will I demonstrate bold obedience this week, not just belief?





SMALL GROUP GUIDE :

Forward Faith - Moving from Belief to Bold Obedience

Opening Prayer:

Key Scripture:

Hebrews 11:1-6; Mark 10:17-22

Icebreaker Question

Question: Share about a time when you had to let go of control in order to move forward in life. What did that experience teach you?

Sermon Recap

This message challenged us to understand that not all belief is faith in Christ Jesus. True faith requires more than intellectual agreement—it demands surrender, obedience, and release of control. Through the story of the rich young ruler, we learned that we can run to Jesus without surrendering to Jesus, follow rules without transformation, and receive invitations from God that cost us too much when we're unwilling to let go.

Key Takeaways

1. Faith Has a Core (Hypostasis)

- Faith is not wishful thinking or emotion—it's a settled reality and firm foundation
- Faith is assurance (hypostasis): the supporting structure beneath everything
- The opposite of faith is not disbelief, but lack of trust and obedience

2. Three Cores of Forward Faith

- **Core 1:** You can run to Jesus without surrendering to Jesus
- **Core 2:** You can have a checklist without conversion
- **Core 3:** You can receive an invitation that costs you too much (when control is your idol)

3. Control vs. Surrender

- Many of us want Jesus as an advisor, not as Lord
- What we refuse to release will always compete with who we say we trust
- Real love confronts rather than affirms what will ultimately destroy us





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Discussion Questions:

Opening Up (15 minutes)

1. What part of the sermon resonated most with you? Why?
2. The pastor said, "Running to Jesus does not mean surrendering to Jesus." What's the difference between the two? Can you identify areas where you've run to Jesus but haven't fully surrendered?

Going Deeper (25 minutes)

1. On Belief vs. Faith:

- How would you explain the difference between believing in Jesus and having faith in Jesus?
- The sermon stated that "not all belief signals faith." What does faith-filled belief look like in practical, everyday terms?

2. On the Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-22):

- Why do you think Jesus loved the rich young ruler enough to confront him rather than affirm him?
- What was the young man's real struggle—money or control? How does this apply to us today?
- Have you ever walked away from something God asked you to do because the cost felt too high? What happened?

3. On Control:

- The pastor said, "Control is the quiet idol we don't want to name." Why is control such a difficult thing to surrender?
- In what areas of your life are you most tempted to maintain control rather than trust God?
- How can we tell the difference between wise stewardship and unhealthy control?

4. On "Look Good Faith":

- What is "look good faith"? Have you ever experienced having the appearance of godliness without the power?
- How can we move from compliance-based faith to relationship-based faith?





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Discussion Questions:

Application (15 minutes)

1. The three cores presented were:
 - **Faith without surrender** (running to Jesus vs. surrendering to Jesus)
 - **Checklist without conversion** (following rules vs. heart transformation)
 - **Invitation that costs too much** (when we won't release control)
2. Which of these three resonates most with where you are right now? Why?
3. Complete this sentence: "The thing I'm holding onto most tightly right now is _____."
 - How might this be keeping you from moving forward in faith?
 - What would it look like to release this to God this week?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge: Choose ONE to focus on

Option 1: The Surrender Exercise

- Identify one specific area where you've been holding onto control
- Each morning this week, physically open your hands in prayer and verbally surrender that area to God
- Journal about what you notice changing in your heart and circumstances

Option 2: From Checklist to Relationship

- List the "religious" activities you do regularly (prayer, Bible reading, church attendance, etc.)
- Ask yourself honestly: "Am I doing this out of obligation or relationship?"
- Choose one activity and intentionally shift your approach from duty to intimacy with God

Option 3: The Cost Inventory

- Reflect on Mark 10:21 - What is the "one thing" Jesus might be asking you to release?
- Write it down and share it with one trusted person who will pray with you
- Take one concrete step toward releasing it this week

Option 4: The Obedience Step

- Identify one thing you know God has been asking you to do but you've been avoiding
- Don't focus on the entire journey—just take the first step this week
- Report back to the group next time about what happened





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Group Activity (10 minutes)

Baggage Release Exercise:

The pastor said, "No baggage allowed on this flight."

1. Take a moment of silence for personal reflection
2. On a piece of paper, write down one thing you need to release to move forward in faith (past failure, old label, control issue, fear, etc.)
3. If comfortable, share briefly what you wrote (or just the category)
4. As a group, pray over these papers, asking God for grace to release what's been holding you back
5. Option: Tear up or burn the papers as a symbolic act of release (in a safe way)

Closing Discussion (5 minutes)

Reflection Questions:

- What is one thing God spoke to you about during this discussion?
- How can we pray for each other as we seek to move from belief to bold obedience?
- What does "forward faith" look like for you personally in 2026?

Prayer Focus

Close by praying specifically for:

- **Release:** Freedom from whatever we're holding onto that competes with our trust in God
- **Surrender:** Grace to move from wanting Jesus as advisor to accepting Him as Lord
- **Obedience:** Courage to take the next step God is asking us to take
- **Each Other:** Specific needs shared during discussion





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For Further Study

Additional Scriptures:

- Luke 9:23 - Taking up your cross daily
- Isaiah 29:13 - Honoring God with lips while hearts are far
- 2 Timothy 3:5 - Having appearance of godliness without power
- Matthew 7:21-23 - Not everyone who says "Lord, Lord"
- James 2:14-26 - Faith without works is dead

Reflection Questions for Personal Time:

- Am I managing my faith like a checklist or yielding to a relationship?
- Where am I negotiating with God instead of obeying Him?
- What would full surrender look like in my life right now?

Leader's Notes

Facilitation Tips:

- Create a safe space for honest sharing—some may be wrestling with deep issues of control
- Be prepared for emotional responses, especially around the control topic
- Don't rush through questions—let silence work when people are processing
- Share vulnerably from your own life to model openness
- Follow up individually with anyone who seems particularly impacted

Watch For:

- Group members who may be dealing with legalism vs. grace
- Those who might confuse surrender with passivity
- Anyone struggling with past church hurt around control issues
- Opportunities to celebrate steps of obedience, no matter how small

Next Week Preview: Continue exploring what it means to live with Forward Faith as we move deeper into 2026.

