

30 July 2023

**Celebration and Relationships Part 6: Intentional Celebration of Faith
Pastor John Bendixen (WTB)**

Scripture reference: Hebrews 11:1-3, 5, 7-8, 10, 23, 31-40 (NKJV); Hebrews 12:1-2 (NKJV)

Pastor Sharon Bendixen:

We thank You together here this morning, loving, faithful Father. We thank You loving, faithful Jesus. We thank You loving, faithful Holy Spirit that You are present now as the message comes to us, the message that comes to us from Your lips. The voice which Pastor John heard in his spirit, the words that You come to bring us now. We are not like those in the wilderness, Lord, that when you preach the Gospel to them they hardened their hearts. No, Lord, we are like those whose hearts are ready and soft. Our hearts are soft to receive, Lord, all that You have to say to us this morning. We receive the seeds of Your Word engrafted into our hearts, Father. Father, our spiritual ears are open, our spiritual eyes are open, Lord. We see, we hear, Father, and we receive. We thank You for Your anointing that's upon Pastor John, Your Spirit that's upon him to bring this message to us this morning. Your Spirit that is upon us, Father, to receive it and we bless him. We bless Pastor John this morning as he comes to speak Your words, in Jesus' name and we all say, Amen. You may be seated, unless you want them to stand, Pastor John. Hallelujah.

Pastor John Bendixen:

Hallelujah. I'm made to believe that there are some places in the Northern Hemisphere that are experiencing a heat wave. We're experiencing a cold wave. Hallelujah. Thank you, praise the Lord. Well you know, when they chose the songs, they had no idea what I was going to preach on this morning. I'm grateful that the Holy Spirit had them sing the songs that they did because of the message that I'm going to minister to you today. Amen. Are you ready for the Word? [*Congregation replies: Yes*] Are you sure? [*Congregation replies: Yes*] You better be. Hallelujah. I'm going to minister on *Intentional Celebration of Faith*. So this morning we are going to celebrate our faith together. Hallelujah.

I want to remind you that in the year 2020, the year of 2020, Brother Jerry prophesied that it would be *The Year of Supernatural Increase*. Can you tell me when COVID started? 2020. Can you tell me when we did all of the stuff at the back of the auditorium here? 2020. That was a year of supernatural increase. We started off the year not knowing what the year would bring, with so much uncertainty and so many difficulties facing churches, facing our nation, facing the world. A pandemic that we, in the modern age, had never seen. So what did that do to change the word of the Lord for the year of supernatural increase? It doesn't change the words that God spoke. The circumstances do not change the words that God speaks. The words that God speaks stand bigger than the circumstances and probably, I would say, in our ministry in the natural, we experienced a greater movement and shift going forward than many other years put together. Because we steadfastly declared that 2020 would be a year of supernatural increase.

Do you remember that 2021 the Lord spoke *A Year of Abundant Overflow*? A year of abundant overflow. So, a year of supernatural increase doesn't go away. When the

Lord speaks a word it stands forever and the next word builds on it. So supernatural increase and abundant overflow, well, those are things that must go together. Once again our ministry experienced the abundant overflow regardless of what had happened in the previous years. If you remember the Lord spoke through me to say we must *Go Big and Go Bold*. Right? I'm just reminding you that we have something to celebrate in our faith. Yes.

2022 Brother Jerry prophesied that it would be *The Year of the Open Hand of God* and there would be unusual, extraordinary and supernatural provision. If you remember the Lord spoke to me and said, *Go Big and Go Bold* even bigger and bolder than the previous year - *Version 2*, if you like. We haven't slowed down in the ministry. We've done changes to the buildings, we've had an increase of people coming into the ministry, we've had an increase of how many albums we've done in the ministry, we've never stopped going on mission trips, sowing seed into foster homes; Break Free as a rehabilitation, skill centre and rehabilitation. As a ministry we've kept growing and going and kept trusting the words that God spoke.

And so this year is *The Year of Maximum; the highest level attainable*. You will remember that before Brother Jerry brought this word out, I had a word from the Lord that said, *Step up and Step into*. You know, if we remember these things that the Lord has given us, then we have already got reason to celebrate our faith that together as a community, as a people, as an ecclesia, our faith is active and it's working. We are not going backwards, we are gaining territory. We are making significant moves going forward. This last 18 months or so, we have been focusing on what God wants for us in Ethiopia. We've been focusing on what God is doing in our Community Centre here for children, for families. There's been a growth in MiXchange. We just keep pressing into more things. Hallelujah. So we are in the process of taking ownership of the house across the road here and we have purchased it, we have already paid monies to make sure that we have it, and now we are going to start refurbishing it, and make sure that we, as a ministry, have got space to grow across the road. We are growing and there's more to come; much, much more to come.

Well, it's *The Year of Maximum*, it's the year of *highest level attainable*, so we've got to just keep putting our faith out there and trusting God that there's something that we can go for. You can't say, "I'm living in faith," and then you go for nothing. Because faith without works is dead. And so you know, you've got to put your hand to something and you've got to exercise your faith. Amen. Exercising faith is not just about money, it's not just about accumulating goods and possessions, it's about increasing in every area of your life. As a ministry we're increasing in our marriages, our relationships. We're increasing in health, and conditioning, and the way that we live our lives before God. We're increasing. We're going for the maximum. We are pressing for the maximum; the highest level attainable. So what we have to do is step up and step into the things that God's got for us. Stepping is an active thing. You can't step and stand still. Stepping means we're active. Yeah? Right now you're not stepping, you're sitting. You're sitting listening to me but if you're going to step you've got to be active. It's a doing-word. You've got to do something. Step up to, step into, to be able to achieve the highest level attainable. Hallelujah. Many times stepping into the highest level attainable and the maximum that God has for you makes you uncomfortable. It makes you uncomfortable. It will certainly challenge

your status quo. There is no way that you can live in faith and remain where you are. You've got to change your comfort zone.

I'm going to read to you Hebrews 11 verse 1 to 3. ¹ **Now faith is the [a]substance of things hoped for, the [b]evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1 NKJV).** You have to have hope, and hope in itself is an expectation. You can't have hope without expectation. If you don't have expectation you could say you're living in disappointment. You could say that you're living in a state of lethargy, or perhaps even fear, where you are reluctant to go into something new. Because hope has an expectation and it has a sense of reaching for something that's not yet in your hands. Yes. It's the substance of things you hope for, the evidence of things you can't yet see. Amen.

² **For by it the elders obtained a good report (Hebrews 11:2 NKJV).** For some weeks now I've been meditating on this chapter, Hebrews 11, Pastor Sharon and I have had some conversations about it, and I want to take this moment just to bring some accuracy to a statement I made last week because it's necessary to bring accuracy to a statement. I can't defeat the devil with human thoughts. I can't defeat the devil's thoughts with human thoughts but I can defeat the devil by replacing human thoughts with God's thoughts. So when I meditate on the Word day and night, then I am meditating on what God says. I'm not meditating on my human thoughts. If I have human thoughts that cause me to focus on the news of the day, the political agendas of the world, the economic circumstances that face me, and I try and replace them with my own human effort, I cannot defeat the enemy. But I can defeat the enemy by focusing my thoughts and meditating on the Word. Oftentimes though, just the act of self-discipline won't be enough. At first, you need to train yourself by speaking the new thoughts. When you speak those new thoughts you can't speak and listen and think other things. If I ask you to count to five and then ask you to think on a loving thought towards your parents or someone else, you can't do two things at once in your thought pattern. So when you speak, you automatically replace those thoughts. That's a good thing to do if you're going to actively change your thought life. But you can be continuously meditating on the Word of God and meditation is an important thing to live continuously thinking on the Word, rather than thinking about what everything else is going to happen to you. Amen. The more you think about the Word of God, the more likely you are to respond to circumstances with the Word of God. The more you speak the Word of God, the more you put your future out there. That's why it's important that you do meditate on the Word of God but it's also important that you speak words to create a future with words. Thoughts can't create a future, thoughts just replace what you are putting into your heart but words create the future. That's why you can't just meditate on the future with the Word of God, you've got to meditate and speak. I wanted to be a little more accurate and bring some more clarity about something that I said last week.

³ **By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God,** you see, the world was framed by the words of God. That means we frame our world with our words, **so that the things which are seen were not made by things which are visible (Hebrews 11:3 NKJV).** So faith is basic, its basic nature is what I'm going to talk about a little bit. I'm going to talk about the nature of faith and the fact that the honour that comes with faith and the way faith sees things. The basic nature of faith is that you have to have a hope and you have to have an expectation. The

basic nature of faith is that your hope and your expectation is reflected in your words. This is as basic faith teaching as we can get. Faith has an expectation in line with the will of God, with the words that God gives you to speak and it is created by the words that you speak that is in line with the will of God. That's it, it's not that complicated but it has a measure of persuasion in it. It has a measure of words that you believe, words that you may not at first believe when you speak it but you believe that by speaking the words that your faith will grow with the words that you speak. So it has a nature to it. Faith has a nature, and you can hear when people are living with the nature of faith. You can hear what they're saying. You can hear that if somebody is full of something, that's full of faith and it's out there, you can hear it. You can see actions that are in line with that faith. It doesn't draw back, it goes towards. Amen. By nature, faith honours God's Word. By nature, faith honours God's Word. You can't say, "I have faith," and dishonour God's Word. How do you dishonour God's Word? You will speak words that are not in line with what God says, then you dishonour God's Word. If I speak my fear, then I'm dishonouring God's Word. If I speak my emotional transactions that I'm making with myself then I'm dishonouring God's Word. I should rather speak an emotional transaction with the Word of God. Amen.

You know there's a really well used phrase; you don't live by what you feel, you live by what the Word of God says. That's very true. It doesn't mean to say though that you don't have feelings. I mean feelings are very real, they're real and they're prescribed by God for humans to have those emotions, and have those feelings. We are made to have feelings, we are not made to suppress feelings. Come on now. This should liberate you in your walk with faith. Feelings are not from the devil. But how I express my feelings is what's going to frame my future. So if I take my feelings and I react on my feelings and I'm using my feelings to control my circumstances then I'm likely to want to always be in control with my feelings. Ten to one I'm going to be using harsh words or I'm going to be using defensive words or I'm going to be acting defensively, acting in different ways that will reveal that my emotions and my feelings are driving my future, rather than the Word of God. When I take the Word of God and I put it in my heart, my hope and my expectation begins to come in line with His Word, then my feelings change. Now when I'm confronted between two feelings - which you can easily have - you can easily have a moment of disappointment but you can quickly change. That's what Pastor Sharon and the music team are doing when they say, "Put a smile on your dial. Choose to rejoice." What they're saying is, you came in with a set of feelings, change them. Change them to be in line with feelings that are in line with the Word of God, with joy. It's your choice to rejoice. It's your choice, it's a choice. It's not, I'm going to wait until the feeling comes upon me. You see, if you wait for feelings to come upon you to change your faith, you'll never have faith. You've got to choose to have faith. That's the nature of faith, you've got to choose it. Amen.

I'm so glad that I live with a bunch of people, and I celebrate you today because you don't live by your feelings, you choose to live by faith. Your participation in this service this morning is evidence that you are a faith people. The fact that you are part of this Ecclesia is evidence that you are a faith people because you've already been challenged with many feelings about this world system and how we, as a ministry, must see things differently because of the way God has revealed it to us. And so, you have chosen not to live by your feelings but to live by what God's Word says how we must live together. Amen.

So if we're going to look at Hebrews chapter 11 this morning and we are going to go through it and use some of those testimonies as a celebration for ourselves, we have to recognise that by their faith, the elders obtained a good report. That means all of the - I want to call them the ancients because they lived a couple of thousand years ago - the ancients that were the beginning of our faith people, they lived in faith based on a covenant of promise. They didn't have the fulfilment of promise, they only lived on the covenant of promise. The promise was enough for them to have faith. Wow. If those guys didn't have the Holy Spirit and they didn't have a redeeming Lord and they chose to live by faith, so can we and we do. And we must celebrate ourselves that we live in faith because truly we have chosen the right system to live by. Amen.

So faith is also a way of viewing all experience. Every experience that you have had is a way that you can look at it. There are some people that look at experiences of other people's faith and they say, "Because other people have had experiences that are negative, I'm not going to have the same faith." Well, if you live your faith by other people's experiences then your world view is their world view. You are taking their world view and saying, "I'm going to make their world view mine". If you do that you are permitting someone else's so called faith experience to influence the way you live. Yeah? So, I don't want to be doing my faith walk based on someone else's faith opinion. So, I believe God for healing and I didn't get it so therefore faith doesn't work. Well, you know there's so many factors about that person's faith that you don't know. They may not even be honest with themselves about what they experienced in faith. They may not have been honest about themselves in their speaking the Word. They may not have been honest with themselves about all the other baggage that might have been in their lives at that time. There might be many things that you don't know of and they don't even admit to themselves because they were looking for a justification to blame God out of emotional pain or whatever the circumstance, disappointment, whatever it might be. They'll never admit that to you.

So, I've had experiences where people have been honest about it with themselves and their testimony is more damaging because they're honest but they're still deceived. When someone is honest about what they're feeling and about the way they went but they're still deceived they are extremely honest but they're still wrong. But they speak so honestly that you believe their honesty but they're still wrong. That's extremely dangerous to your faith.

I want to have an experience of the Word of God and I don't even want to take my past experiences of where faith worked or it didn't work as a measure of whether I have faith. Now where I have got faith and it has worked, the Word of God says I can use that testimony for my going forward. But I don't want to use my disappointments that I haven't had faith, come in the time that I needed it to come and say, "That's God," or I can dwell on my own wrongs that I did, "Well, maybe I didn't confess the Word enough. Maybe I didn't fill my mind with enough of what God wanted me to fill my mind with. Maybe my mind was full of doubt and maybe it was full of logic and maybe it was full of my realities." And so if I start blaming myself that my faith didn't work then I'm looking for a formula. I'm looking for a whole bunch of references that I can refer to to say, "I must do better and those things I didn't do right I must do better." That's not going to help me at all because that circumstance, in that time,

where I was at in that time with my world, with my faith, wherever I was, I can never duplicate that. So, why must I try and take something from my past and bring it into my present? I deceive myself into thinking that there is something I can learn from that past, lack of faith, to make it work in this current position of faith. I'm really teaching good today. What I'd rather do, is say, hey, I've got to do what the Word says, today. I've got to live it today. Today I've got to do what it takes. Amen.

Faith receives and accepts reward from God. So, we have both acceptance from God for faith and we have reward from faith. Amen. So when you decided to become born again, God gave you faith so that you can receive Him. That same faith makes you accepted by Him. You never have to doubt again whether you are accepted by God or not. Never. The fact that you are a Christian, a believer, you have been accepted by God. Your faith that He gave you to receive Him makes you accepted. The only question that remains now is whether you want the rewards of faith. Acceptance you have. The inheritance you still have to get. It's the reward, the inheritance.

Cain and Abel gave offerings to the Lord. Abel's sacrifice was accepted, Cain's was not. Because Abel gave his sacrifice to the Lord with a pure heart - it's all about the heart - because he gave with a pure heart, it was granted to him as righteousness. That was his reward. What was the reward of Cain? A mark of lack of faith. Did not God Himself speak to Cain and say, "Cain, sin is crouching at the door of your heart. You must master it?" It wasn't up to God to speak to Cain and say, "Cain, hey, I'll take away the sin that's at your heart." No. You and I both have to actually take responsibility for what's going on in our heart. That's why I always say you can't live in faith if you're not honest because if I don't look at myself and say wait a minute, you know, hey, there's something here that's crept into my heart here, it's judgement or it's condemnation or it's some kind of opinion or it's something that's crept into my heart. If I don't judge that in my heart then it's a sin that is beginning to creep there. It's waiting, it's waiting, it's growing and it's waiting for a situation to develop where it can reveal itself. And so God said to Cain, "Sin is crouching at the door of your heart and you must master it." So right there, right in the beginning there is Cain and Abel, two people born from the same mother and father. One of them had a heart towards God, one of them didn't. One of them had the reward of no faith and the other one had the reward of faith. The one reward was righteousness and an inheritance. The other one was unrighteousness.

Let's talk about Enoch for a minute. Enoch reflected the kind of life that pleases God and his faith allowed him to walk with God by faith. Remember Enoch, how did Enoch as a human man walk with God? He walked with God in faith, the same way that you and I have to walk with God, with faith. Anytime we walk with God we have to do it in faith not because our human senses tell us, but because we do it in faith. I mean, you know, if you had to experience the unfiltered glory of God in your life, the unfiltered presence of God in your life you probably wouldn't be able to stand. You may not live just because the glory of God is so powerful. I mean, we see that from many incidents in the New Testament, not the least of which was Paul on the road to Damascus. He had a blinding light, fell on his face, Moses fell on his face. Anytime the glory of God shows up in a big, unfiltered way, the human being really struggles to contain the life because our bodies have sin in it born to a sin nature. But Enoch did it because he walked, he did it by faith. Now the interesting thing about Enoch is

that he didn't see death. He walked with God and God just took him. How did that happen? He walked with God, walked with God, in faith, always walking with God. In faith God just said, "You know what? Just come walk with Me outside of the human planet and keep walking with Me in eternity." That takes some faith. Well, that is a type of how you and I walk with God, we will never see death. Our faith in God, right now, the same faith that you live with today, for everything that you need today, everything that you're going to need is the same faith that will translate you just into glory, into eternity. It's that same faith in God. I'm persuaded, I am persuaded that when my eyes close and my heart stops and this body is no more because age will eventually take its course in my life. I'm convinced that I will not actually experience death. I will not experience the separation from God. I will just close my eyes and the presence of God will take me into His presence, absent from the body, present with the Lord. In a twinkling of an eye before my eyes can close my spirit man is leaving my body and I'm in the presence of the Lord. Enoch did it so we can do it. Hallelujah.

It's something to celebrate, don't you think? That's why we can live life in faith fearless. It's one of those things that actually if you think about death, if you think about death, you think about something that is fearful because we're designed to hold on to life. God designed us to hold on to life. So when you feel like I'm losing control to hold on to life faith must be present. Come on. If you feel like you have to hold onto money because money is your life, fear is present. Because if money is the way that you live life and you can't let it go out of your hands to the purposes of God then you are not having that same faith in God because you want to hold on to it. The minute you say, in the same way that my life and my eternal future is in God, I can trust God with everything else; my relationships, my money, my health, everything that is in my world I can trust God in the same way, the same faith. The same faith that we are listening to and that brought you to church today, you are persuaded that coming to church is important. You are persuaded that being part of an Ecclesia is an important thing. You are persuaded. That same persuasion is what is going to take you into a higher life of celebration. It's the same persuasion that is going to take you into a higher life of the maximum, the highest life attainable. Stepping up to it, stepping into it. So we've got to just keep celebrating this faith. Keep celebrating it, every day just keep celebrating; I'm a person of faith. I'm living in faith. I'm living with faith and my faith is rewarded because I keep living it with God. Hallelujah. It's a major, major difference between having joy in life and having an expectation of more to come rather than shrinking away because of circumstances. Hallelujah. It's the same faith. It's the same faith.

By the way, it's that faith that Jesus was activating in the rich young ruler. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus and he said to Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life, see the Kingdom of God? What must I do?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? Only God is good." He was telling him, "You're talking to God. Now do what I say. Swap your faith in your works, for faith in the Person. Don't keep focusing on your works, focus on the relationship. In fact, your faith has brought you to this present moment encounter with the living God, rich young ruler. Your faith brought you here. Now celebrate your faith to the next level." But he turned away and he was sorrowful and he was sad because when he had the biggest confrontation of his faith, he realised that his faith was a works- and a formula program. He didn't yet have the engagement of a relationship. And so, Jesus said He loved him but he walked away grieved because he had to give up all of his status to

get something that he had... If he lost his life now, he was going to gain his life eternally. He probably would have been one of those apostles of the Lamb. What an eternity. But his money was more important. I'm trying to say to you that he was holding on to natural things rather than saying, "I'm celebrating faith and pressing for the maximum, pressing for the higher life attainable, stepping up to it, stepping into it, I've got to go more." Jesus was offering him more. He wasn't diminishing what he had done. Do you see that? Jesus wasn't putting him down. In fact, Jesus loved him because of his commitment to the covenant. He wasn't putting him down, he was celebrating what he had done, and saying, "Come, come, come, come with Me. Here's your moment. This is it, come with Me." The more you celebrate your faith, the more likely you are of stepping into the next moments that God has for you. Because if you celebrate your faith and you celebrate your intentional relationship with God in faith, you are likely to say, "I'm ready for the next thing, I'm ready for the next thing." This is good teaching. Hey?

The Word of God says ⁵ **By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and he was not found, because God had taken him," for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God (Hebrews 11:5 NKJV).** Hey, don't you want to be just taken by God? While you're here on the earth, not physically taken, just taken consumed by Him, taken up by all of the Who He is. Just taken by Him. Hallelujah.

Noah became an air of righteousness by faith himself and his personal faith saved his family and caused his family to share in his fruitfulness forever. I want to show you how your personal faith can do something greater than just for you. ⁷ **By faith,** verse 7, ⁷ **By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, can you see that? He moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became an air of righteousness which is according to faith (Hebrews 11:7 NKJV).** So, God judged the world but he and his household was saved. So his household's fruitfulness and their inheritance was ensured by Noah's faith. Yeah. So we need to be sure that we are living in faith and celebrating our faith because it will not only save us, but it will also save our household. It will save our families. It will save our future and the generations to come. Don't you agree? Don't you see that? Amen.

I mean, it's a wonderful thing for me, it's really a blessed thing for me that I look at many of you that are in this church and I see choices that you have made to live in faith. I see in many circumstances, if not most, maybe not all, but in most circumstances, I see choices in faith that have started to be reflected in generations, the next generation and you can be sure that if there's a next generation to come that generation will also experience the life of God. It's no question to me that the enemy is after our seed.

Noah was the single person that stood between human annihilation and his family's annihilation, and his faith to obey God when everything seemed like it was - why on earth do you want to do that Noah? What's a flood? The earth had never seen that much water on it, ever. They didn't know what an excessive amount of water was because God had been filling the earth with just the right amount of water for all of humanity and all of the beings that were living on the earth. He had filled it with all the necessary water from the dew and from the water that God precipitated on the

earth. They didn't know what drought was and they didn't know what a flood was. So why would Noah want to build an ark? To save them from what? Noah himself didn't know what a flood was unless God gave him a revelation of what he was building the ark for. There's every indication that he did not know, he just obeyed God. That's what makes faith so amazing, is that you can't see necessarily what the end result is, but I've got to obey God to do what He told me to do. And so when you obey God now, it saves not just you, but those that are going to be part of you. Hallelujah. Don't lose hope about that. If some of who is part of you doesn't yet see God the way you see it, keep believing it, keep praying it, keep speaking to God about it, keep doing it. It's not over yet. Don't let temporary circumstances in what you see persuade you that it won't change. This takes faith to live by. Amen.

Abraham, he was the father of our faith - he's often known as the patriarch - lived like a stranger in a land that he would later receive as his inheritance. He did it how? By faith because God gave him a covenant. ⁸ **By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance.** That's verse 8, **And he went out not knowing where he was going (Hebrews 11:8 NKJV).** Hey, come on guys, let's just put this practical. All of you, God's going to tell you to leave your house, and you don't know which is the next house He's going to ask you to get. "Where am I going?" I'll tell you, when the Lord told me to change my place of abode, my place of residence where my primary residence had to be from Johannesburg to Witbank, I didn't know where I was going to go. I went from staying in a very large house to staying in a very, very small, very small, a small townhouse that was the size of one of the cottages on our property. Ja. You know we built a cottage on our property in Boskruin. We built a cottage for my niece, my eldest niece. She came and lived with us for a year and a half. She needed to be in Johannesburg and her parents lived in Natal, and she came to live in our house for 18 months. We built a cottage for her on our property. That cottage - nearly two years she stayed there - was bigger than the one we moved into in Witbank. The Lord, at that time specifically spoke to me, and He said to me, "Don't buy a house in Witbank now, wait for another time. I will provide you a home." Hallelujah.

I can say like Abraham, I did not know where I was going, but I was trusting that God would provide and supply whatever He needed to supply. It didn't happen immediately, it took some time but who cares how long it takes? If God spoke it, it's time for us to obey it. Come on now. I'm being practical about this. I'm sharing my practical faith, you have got your own stories to celebrate. Yes. Celebration is in order. You got to look at some of the testimonies and say, your own natural thinking might say, "But was that really faith or is it really worth celebrating because maybe I made some of it happen?" No, celebrate it anyway. At least it changes your whole mindset about what you are going to say, what God did and what you did. Think more about what God does rather than what you do. Why don't you rather give glory to God? Then at least you're putting yourself in the right expectation, the right frame of mind. You are changing your mind. Hallelujah. Your spirit man's already recreated, born again, perfect. You can't change it, you can only feed it. But you must change your mind, so change it. Hallelujah. Glory to Jesus. Come on, who wants to live an ordinary life when you can live a faith life? Who wants to live a life where you just trundle along, "I'll do this, I'll do that, I'll do..." When you can say, "Come on, God, let's do something exciting. Let's have an adventure. Let's go someplace, let's buy

some stuff, let's do some stuff. Let's go preach somewhere. Let's go and do something." Hallelujah.

I've got a big job, me and the Lord. He favoured me and now I've got to trust Him all the way to the end result of what He's given me. I've got to do it by faith - you'll still see - I've got to do it by faith. Hallelujah. Glory to Jesus.

Abraham, he had to wait ¹⁰ **for the city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10 NKJV)**. Well, whatever God chooses us to do, buy houses here, buy properties over there, whoever God wants to lead us in this world, we have to trust Him that the same city that He has built for us and a foundation whose city, the foundation God is making, we have to trust that God's got that same thing sorted for us. Amen.

Here is something that I really believe is amazing. It's amazing. It's amazing because when I started meditating on this, the Lord began to show me something here. So even Sarah, who's faith, who was past age, everybody just say this, past age. *[Congregations replies: Past age]* Remember, I preached a whole set of messages, *I'm not five minutes late*. You can be past age and God can still redeem empty hours. In fact, God specialises in redeeming empty hours, past age. God enabled her through faith to bear children. So, you know, she had an experience with God where God is talking to Abraham and He says, "Abraham, I am going to make you the father of many nations and Sarah is going to be the woman." She laughed in disbelief. God still called Abraham, "Why is Sarah laughing in disbelief?" Just bear in mind she's going to do it. She's like, "Yeah right. I was young and I couldn't have children. Now I'm old and I can't have children. What's changed? How is this past age thing going to happen for me? Even when I was in the right time, I couldn't have kids." I don't know if you know what I'm preaching here. Even if you're in the right time and there's something that is not quite right and you don't have the right results, don't stop because God is about to do something that is maximum, the highest level attainable that we can step up to and into, and God's the only One who can do it because it's past age. So, He's got to go back and redeem what could have been possible to make it possible. Only God can do it. That should tell us that there is nothing impossible for God. If He can make life come to a dead womb that was dead even in the right age - so even if you weren't productive in the right age, God can redeem your productivity past age. Hallelujah. That should give all of us hope because even if the devil has stolen many hours and years and all kinds of stuff from us, You're not late, I will redeem it. Trust Me, use faith, same faith that you're born again, same faith. Let's go." Hallelujah. Glory to Jesus.

Here's the thing that I want to see. She's the first woman that Hebrews 11 talks about as a woman of faith. Why is it so important that the Bible talks to her when she was like, "Oh God, I don't know if You can do this." Because how you start out is not the way that it ends. You can even laugh at God and say, "How can this thing be? How does this thing work? How can it possibly be for me to actually make it up?" Well, change your mind because she had to have changed her mind at some point. Do you understand that she offered her servant to Abraham. Just bear with me for a moment because this is really outstanding. She gave her servant to Abraham, "Sleep with her so that she can bear you a child." God says, "No, no, no, it's the wrong DNA here. My covenant is with you and Sarah, it's not with you and another body. It's with

you and Sarah. This covenant relationship between you and Sarah was preordained by Me. That covenant relationship is going to make it work. It doesn't matter what you do with your body." Just why am I saying this about his body? Abraham's body was still alive to reproduce. Abraham's body was still up for multiplication because God had promised him a multitude."Look at the stars, look at the sand, a multitude will come from you but at first it has to start with a single multiplication." She didn't see how one multiplication was going to happen, never mind stars and sand; multitudes.

But at some point, watch this now, watch this, intimacy between Abraham and Sarah at a 100 years old, who knows? Who knows? Come on. I know their bodies were not as old at their 100 as our bodies are old at a 100 now but let's say they were still old. They certainly were not young anymore. The Bible says she was past the age. That means she'd gone through the transition of life as a woman. She was no longer having the normal cycles of a woman. She was past age. So God had to start restoring her body. In other words, oestrogen and other stuff had to start coming back alive in her body. Suddenly she's saying, "Wait. What's going on here? One day I wake up and things are happening that I thought were gone." After the first cycle she probably went into Abraham's room and said, "Come here boy, God's working." How else did it happen? Come on, bear with me now. You know, this is how it must have happened. God had to come upon her body and reverse age. If God can do that, then He can take your words and He can reverse the course of action that previous words have taken in your life. He can reverse the course of action that your previous decisions have made in your life but you've got to take it by faith. You've got to live in faith. You've got to celebrate God. Celebrate the faith that He's given you for salvation, for eternity. Celebrate it. You must do it intentionally because if you say, "Oh well, this is what Pastor John's preaching, you know, I'll do it, maybe I won't do it." Well, I can tell you that you are more likely to not have the productivity that you would like to have. Amen.

So, the time came when Abraham and Sarah started with multiplication. Just one and then one became a multitude. It only starts with one event of faith in your life. Just one and then you can have multiple, a multitude of faith events, faith productivity.

I've already spoken about that faith constitutes a Christian's true worldview. There are many Christians that are having a worldview that is no different to what any other person in the world has. Their worldview is through the eyes and the lens of politics. Their worldview is through the eyes and the lens of economics. Their worldview is through the eyes of relationships. They have a worldview that is no different to anybody else's worldview. They are completely absorbed in the worldview that is the current view of the world. God didn't call us to just walk on this earth in the same way that everybody else lives. He called us to live in faith. That means our actions have got to be different to the way that the actions of the world are.

I mean, Abraham, he waited all this time to have Isaac. Talk about a worldview change. He waited all this time to have Isaac and then God said to him, "Abraham, give Me your son. Come kill him for Me." "What? But this is the one that You reverse the cycles of age. You actually caused me to be productive and Sarah to be productive and we have this child and we've raised this child. We've nurtured this

child, we've taught him the covenant, we've circumcised him. We've done everything that You said that we must do. This is the child of promise. Now you want me to kill the child of promise?" "Yes, kill it. Kill him." Do you recognise that maybe this took more than the first faith? Hey? Don't you think? I mean, if I don't have a son then what do I have to lose if I don't love a son? But now that I have raised a son, loved a son, I know what I am losing. But you see, Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit, They were not looking at one natural son. They were looking at an eternal inheritance of multitudes. One death was to multiply for the multitudes. But Abraham had to have faith in God that giving his only son, God would give him back. He went to take him with the idea that he would get him back. He had to have faith that God would give him back, even as he was giving up, he would get him back. And so, we, you and I are faced with that choice every day; what I am giving up, God is going to give back. If whatever you are giving up you think is too little, I promise you, God has got so much more in store for you.

How is it possible, how is it possible that God is going to multiply one seed? "Give him to me. When you give Me Isaac because you have done this for Me, I can give My only Son." Through Jesus, Isaac was the representation of what Jesus was going to be. And by faith, Abraham received him back from the dead. By faith God the Father received Jesus back from the dead. The one faith brought a multitude of faith and you and I are alive in faith because of what Abraham did so that Jesus could come. You think that whatever you can give up God can't give it back?

You know, when I left the corporate world to go into the ministry I thought, "How is God going to take care of me?" All this income that I was earning, how was God going to take care of me? And then at some point in time God said to me, "Now John, I want you to take all your money that you had made in the corporate world, I want you to take it out of properties and renewable income and I want you to trust Me for all of it." At that time there was a great shift and a movement amongst pastors and ministers in the world that it was ok to go into business rather than stay out of business. So many, many pastors were having investments in business so that they could have this alternative income. I am just telling you facts. I am not making any statement about it. I am just telling you facts of what was happening. At that time the Lord said to me, "I don't want you to do that, John. I want you to stop doing that." I was so perfectly primed to be one of those examples to the body of Christ, of how you can be a pastor and have investments and get wealthy from those investments, while you're a pastor. I was so perfectly positioned for that, and God said, "I don't want you to do that, I want you to trust Me." And the Lord said this to me at that time, He said, "John, I need you to do this because I need you to know that you've got to trust Me, not your investments." He said, "I need you to do this because you're going to teach My people how to live in faith in their future with their tithes and their offerings because they need to live in faith the same way you live, not by your investments but by your faith." I didn't have any idea of what that would mean for me going forward. So, I sold my commercial properties. I sold everything else that I invested in and the Lord had me do stuff with that money. Praise the Lord. He said, "I want you to trust Me, I want you to walk with Me because you are going to need to live in faith."

If I stood in front of you and I said, "I don't live by your tithes, I live by my faith and by the giving that I do." But if I had a whole investment portfolio that was backing my

income, then you could say, "Well, Pastor John, what kind of faith do you have?" Come on now. God had me give up my investment portfolio so that I can live by faith. I'm not telling you that God is telling you to do that, I'm telling you what God told me to do. He said, "While all the ministers are investing into business at this time, don't look at what they are doing, obey Me. Don't take your example from them, you obey Me. I got something for you." So when I stand up here and I say to you, "If you don't have faith to tithe, don't do it. You are going to need the money more than I do." "How can you say that, Pastor John? Isn't your income based on the tithes of people?" No, my income has never been based on the tithes of people. My income has been based on my trust in God. The fact that He uses the tithes of people is for your blessing as well as mine. It's for your growth spiritually as well as mine because God wants us as a body to trust Him, not each other. Abraham had no one to turn to when God said, "Give me your son." "What other child can I give up? Do you want all my wealth? You gave it to me anyway, God." Right? Isn't that what happened with Sodom and Gomorrah and Melchizedek? He said, "I don't want any man to say they gave me wealth because God gave me this wealth." God gave him the wealth, God gave him a son. What was he going to ask for to give up other than his son? "Give me the best you've got. Don't just give me anything, give me the best you've got and I'll show you what I do for you." God gave him Isaac, Isaac got Jacob and Esau and Jacob got 12 children through Joseph, he added, got 12.

I'm going to finish with this. Isaac had faith for the future. Jacob had faith for the future and he blessed Joseph's sons as part of his future. I'll tell you that God has got a future for us because we trust Him. Finally, I want to say that by faith Moses' parents hid him because the Bible says in verse 23, ²³ **By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command (HHebrews 11:23 NKJV)**. Hello. The king commanded every male born child in Israel to be killed. They hid him. Some translations say that he was a precious gift, a son that was precious to them. Well, of course, whether he was beautiful or precious he was a gift. And so they hid him. I want to tell you that everything that we do for our children now, by faith, God is hiding them because they have a mission. God has separated them for a purpose. Do not be surprised if they end up leading multitudes of people into a promise of God because they are the promise, because they are the promise. Don't be surprised at what God's going to use them to do in the future. You look at your life and you say but Pharaoh's system is powerful and we have to go against Pharaoh's system - hide them. Hide them, just hide them and let God be God in how He takes care of them. Pharaoh's system took care of him for a while but in the end Pharaoh's system caused him to get angry. Pharaoh's system caused him to have to go to the wilderness for 40 years. Does it sound like most modern-day children? They go into the wilderness until they re-encounter God. Sometimes it takes an intervention like a burning bush before they can re-encounter God but it's coming because God has a plan. God has a plan.

Finally, I want to just talk, and I'm going to just read it because the Bible says that we can truly live by a victorious faith because there was a people that lived by faith that the Bible talks about them in such a way that they can't even mention all of the stuff that they did. Are you still with me? I'm nearly done. Verse 30, ³⁰ **By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.** ³¹ **By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe (Hebrews 11:30-31**

NKJV). I mean, she was a harlot but she had faith. You can't look at your performance and say my performance is undermining my faith. Your performance doesn't matter. Don't go and sin because you can. But live by faith. I'm quoting Galatians to you, don't sin because you can, live by your faith. ³¹ **By faith the harlot Rehab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.** ³² **And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me and it fails me today, to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets;** ³³ **who through faith subdued kingdoms (Hebrews 11: 31-33 NKJV).**

We are in the kingdom subduing business right now. We are the only people that can subdue the agenda of the enemy in the kingdom of men by bringing the Kingdom of God. Only those who believe God can do it. Not all the Christians, only those who trust God can do it. ³³... **subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,** ³⁴ **quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens (Hebrews 11:33-34 NKJV).** There's much talk about alien encounters in the earth right now, whatever aliens they are, I promise you they're subject to the church.

³⁵ **Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting,** delivering (Hebrews 11:35 NKJV). In other words, kill me for my faith. They didn't have a living Jesus even yet, they just had a promise. ³⁵... **not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.** ³⁶ **Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and of imprisonment.** ³⁷ **They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (Hebrews 11:36-37 (KJV).** "Pastor John, what are you talking about?" These people said, "We're going to believe the promise of God, no matter what our circumstances." And here we are in our modern world and if we just don't have electricity for a couple of hours, we freak out. Hey? These people walked around in sheepskins and goatskins, and they didn't have food and they had all kinds of stuff, and they were tortured for their faith. They were tormented and afflicted. ³⁸ ... **of whom the world** that we are living in is **not worthy** of them. **They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.** ³⁹ **And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise Hebrews 11:38-39 NKJV).** They did not see the outcome of the promise even though they believed it. And so we don't get our rent for a month, and now we stop quitting, and we don't believe the promise of God? Come on. We got to celebrate the faith that these people lived by, these people prepared the way for so that we can live here.

If we celebrate this faith, we are doing a good eternal thing because I am about to show you in my reading of the scripture. ⁴⁰ **God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us (Hebrews 11:40 NKJV).** They were already made perfect in their faith and He said, "I am going to make you a promise so that you can be perfect like they can be perfect, together." How? Through faith.

¹ **Therefore, chapter twelve verse one, we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1 NKJV).** If you think those people that

walked the earth are not alive right now, you are mistaken. All of those people that we are reading about in the Bible, they are alive right now. They are sitting in heaven. They are sitting on the grandstands of heaven and they are watching you and me. They are watching this service this morning. They are tuned in with their ears to hear what we are preaching this morning because we are preaching about them. The works that they did, we are giving glory to God for them. We are celebrating their faith. If I can celebrate Kenneth Hagin's faith and Oral Roberts' faith and John G. Lake's faith and Smith Wigglesworth's faith, I can celebrate their faith because they were the ones that did it first. If I celebrate their faith, I want to celebrate my faith. Why not? Can I put myself with them? In Jesus, I can. In fact, it brings honour of faith into the present age.

So, whilst we are celebrating with, ¹ ... **so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,** ² **looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.** He gave it to us, He'll finish it with us. Let's look to Him, **the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJV).** Come on, people. Let's, you and I celebrate our faith. Let's celebrate the great men and women of faith. Let us make it a point of our discussion, our discourse, our words that we celebrate faith, that we celebrate each other's faith. "Oh, you're trusting God for something? I'm with you." "Oh, I see God brought that for you, praise the Lord, I'm next in line. Glory to Jesus." "Oh, you haven't seen the end of it yet?" "No, no, not yet." "It's coming, it's coming, it's coming, it's coming, it's coming." The same faith of all those people is our faith that we have in Christ Jesus, right now.

We are made perfect like them, we are made perfect. We are together in perfection in Christ Jesus by faith, who finishes our faith. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Let us run with endurance, let us keep moving forward. Let us keep going in God. Let's not say, "Oh, I didn't see my faith work last month so what's going to happen next month?" Hallelujah. I got the most high God. I've got Jesus who's sitting at the right hand of the Father and He's watching over me. He's saying, "John, speak those words, speak those words, John. Speak them, speak them, John. Don't hold back, speak them. Frame your world, frame it, John. Keep making it, keep working it, keep making it. Make it happen, speak it, speak it. Come on, John, speak it." Hallelujah. Hallelujah. "Put it in your heart now. Meditate on it, birth it in your heart, birth on it. Meditate on it, John, and speak it and meditate on it, and speak it and meditate on it." Hallelujah.

I mean, we were having a chat with Matt and Kate the other day. I mean, Kate is so pregnant - she's like, "Can this baby come already, please?" At the right time. The perfect time of God. Hallelujah. I mean, I don't know if we've known this before but we spoke about it and so I just want to speak it out here today. Human science doesn't know what triggers labour pains. It's not a special hormone thing, it's not a special anything. They don't know what it is that triggers the labour pains in a woman. They don't know what it is. It's God - who speaks them into life. "It's time, it's now come on, it's your time," and then nature has to come. Here's what I'm trying to say, in the same way that a woman carries a child in her, you can say the incubation is the same as the meditation. I meditate on the Word, I meditate and it grows and it

grows and now I speak it out and it's born in faith. These properties will be, this future will be. MiXchange will be, this will be and this is going to happen and I see this and I walk in this and I follow God in this and my desire is God-given, God birth and I speak it now. That's how faith works. Hallelujah. Glory to Jesus. Glory to Jesus. Come on, stand with me, everybody.

I want to encourage you; speak out faith. Celebrate each other's faith. If you see someone that's not quite living with words of faith, don't run them down, pick them up. Say, "Hey, come on. What's happening to you? Your arms are droopy. Come on. Come on. Let's walk together. Speak better words. Speak better words. Speak God-words. Come on, speak it. I'm not going to let you run your life into the ground. Speak different words. Speak different words." Hallelujah. Praise Jesus. Praise Jesus. If you can't speak words about your circumstances, then just say, "Jesus." Just say, "Jesus." Say something that is at least good, not bad. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord.

Just raise your hand and say; I'm going to live for Jesus. I'm going to live with the words of Jesus in my heart and in my mouth. Put your hand here (on your chest); I'm a child of God. I love His Word, I love to speak His words and I see the result of all of His words in my life, in Jesus' name. Hallelujah. Now just praise Him for ten seconds.

Praise Jesus. Praise You, Lord. We celebrate faith. We celebrate Your life. We celebrate Your words that You've multiplied in us, Lord, and a multitude of productivity comes out of our mouths, in Jesus' name, is manifest in our life. We praise You, we celebrate it, we glorify You, in Jesus' name. Hallelujah. Glory to God. Glory to Jesus. Glory to Jesus. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

This is our time. This is our time. I'm intentional about it and so should you be. Glory to God. I pray that the words that you speak this week will be words filled with life, filled with joy, filled with all of the good things that God has for you. Do you agree? Amen. I pray that the peace of God comes upon you, takes charge of your mind, it guards what's happening in your mind and it comes with peace in your heart, in Jesus' name. I pray that no weapon formed against you prospers. You're blessed going out and you're blessed coming in.

I declare that He, God, gives His angels charge over you and no weapon formed against you shall prosper, but He will protect you in your ways that you walk and He will not even let your foot get caught in a hidden snare or that He will not let your foot go one side or the other side, but on clean paths, straight paths He will cause you to walk this week, in Jesus' name. Hallelujah. Blessings come upon you day and night. Dreams and visions and many good things that you can't even imagine start to float up through your spirit-man into your consciousness, in Jesus' name. Do you agree with that? Say, Amen. Praise the Lord. Before you go, tell somebody, "I'm glad you came to church today." Thank you for coming. God bless you.