

Sermon Summary: Some hard things are part of growing. Others come from staying stuck in patterns God is trying to lead us out of. You may not be able to skip every difficult season, but you can stop letting fear, doubt, or disobedience keep you there longer than you need to be. When you can't skip what you're going through, praise can help you keep moving forward.

Sermon Highlights

- We need to do away with this idea that faith in God means you never have to go through anything hard.
- A summary is not a story. Stop judging your story by other peoples' summary.
- When you get through this test, all that's going to be left is a testimony.
- What you're going through is not bigger than the God who is bringing you through it.
- **Watching isn't working. You cannot skip a stage of development, but you can skip disobedience. If you skip the uncomfortable thing, you'll still be dealing with the dysfunctional thing. God can do in a moment of favor what a lifetime of labor could never accomplish. You may not be able to skip the difficulty, but you can skip the unbelief.**
- With God, what should take years takes days. Without God, what should take days takes years.
- Are you going to murmur or march?
- Your tongue is getting you in trouble, but your trumpet (praise) can get you out.
- The reason I don't have to stay in my wilderness is because Jesus went to His.
- One of the greatest ways that I have found to deal with my wilderness is through worship.

Scriptures

Hebrews 11 - Faith in Action

- **11 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for.**
- **3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.**
- **4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.**
- **5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.**
- **7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.**
- **8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she[b] considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.**

- 13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.
- 17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” 19 Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.
- 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.
- 21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.
- 22 By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.
- 23 By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.
- 24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. 26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.
- 29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.
- 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.
- 31 By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.
- 32 And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. 35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were put to death by stoning;[e] they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated — 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.
- 39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, 40 since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Numbers 14:2: 14 That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. 2 All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! 3 Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be

taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" 4 And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

Joshua 6:9-10: 10 But Joshua had commanded the army, "Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!" 11 So he had the ark of the Lord carried around the city, circling it once. Then the army returned to camp and spent the night there.

Matthew 4:1-11: Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted[a] by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Sermon Discussion

- "The summary is not the story. Stop judging your story by other people's summary." How have you let someone else's story hinder your faith?
- "Watching isn't working. You cannot skip a stage of development, but you can skip disobedience." Share a time that God used something you would've skipped to develop you.
- "You're figuring without your Father. With God, what should take years takes days." Share about a season where it felt like God suddenly accelerated something that you had been waiting on.
- "If you skip the uncomfortable thing, you'll still be dealing with the dysfunctional thing." Where might God be asking you to face something uncomfortable so He can grow you through it?
- "Your tongue is getting you in trouble, but your trumpet (praise) can get you out." Where have your words been reinforcing fear or frustration lately, and what truth about God could you start speaking over your situation instead?
- "One of the greatest ways that I have found to deal with my wilderness is through worship." Share a time when worship helped change your perspective in the middle of something difficult.

Prayer Prompt: Lord, You see everything we're going through. The uncomfortable things we want to avoid, the steps we want to skip, the wilderness we want to complain about. Today, we declare that You're bigger than all of it, and You can do in a moment what we can't do in a lifetime. Please make Your presence known to us, especially in the situations we'd rather avoid, and give us the faith to believe that You're turning these tests into testimonies, even when we can't see it yet. We love You and we trust You. In Jesus' name, amen.

AI enabled sermon recap:

Skiping the wilderness through faith and obedience

Sep 14, 2026 • 6:05 AM • 1 hour

Overview: The sermon centers on the theme “You can skip this,” contrasting summaries with full stories to show how faith and obedience can prevent prolonged seasons of wandering. Drawing from Hebrews 11:29–31, Joshua 5–6, Numbers 14:2, Deuteronomy (Kadesh Barnea), and Matthew 4:1–11, the message explains what is required to endure (the Red Sea and Jericho’s walls) versus what is avoidable (the 40-year wilderness caused by unbelief and murmuring). The call is to replace complaint with praise, practice over passivity, and obedience over fear, trusting that with God what should take years can take days.

Scripture readings and key references

- Hebrews 11:29–31: “By faith the people passed through the Red Sea... By faith the walls of Jericho fell... By faith the prostitute Rahab...”
- Joshua 5–6: National circumcision precedes Jericho; silent marching and trumpet blasts; shout on day seven.
- Numbers 14:2 (KJV): Israel “murmured” and wished to have died in Egypt or the wilderness.
- Deuteronomy: Kadesh Barnea; 11-day route to Canaan that became 40 years.
- Matthew 4:1–11: Jesus’ 40-day wilderness temptation; three temptations answered with “It is written...;” devil leaves; angels attend him.

Summary vs. story: stop judging your life by others’ highlights

- Short testimonies can inspire but compress complexity. A man’s “church saved my life and marriage” is a summary, not the whole story; applying others’ summaries to your situation can mislead and discourage.
- Hebrews 11 summarizes victories (“passed through,” “walls fell”) but omits the panic, doubt, delays, and pain that preceded them. The sentence is not the story.
- Social media “photo dumps” are curated summaries, not reality; resist comparing your life to others’ highlights.
- Hall of Faith: inclusions, omissions, and purpose
- Purpose of Hebrews: encourage perseverance by magnifying the treasure in Jesus and urging believers not to turn back.
- Not everyone great is famous, and not everyone famous is great: Hebrews 11 includes flawed figures like Samson, spotlights Rahab “the prostitute,” and omits others like Elijah, Daniel, and Jonah.
- Point: God redeems unlikely people; do not label those whom God has delivered.
- Red Sea: the sentence skips the struggle
- Hebrews 11:29 says they passed through “as on dry land,” but Exodus shows they first panicked, wanted to return to Egypt, and doubted despite God’s mighty deliverance.
- Lesson: When your trial ends, God’s testimony may emphasize passage, not panic. Your task now: “get through this” with faith, even amid fear and tears.
- Jericho: the summary skips the pain and process
- Hebrews 11:30 reports the wall fall, but Joshua 5 reveals a national circumcision beforehand—making the march physically harder.
- Jericho’s scale: approximately 2,000 feet in circumference; a lap could take about 5–7 minutes. March once daily for six days; seven times on day seven; then blow trumpets and shout.
- Lesson: God’s summaries highlight outcomes; the hidden obedience and pain are still real and necessary.

What about the wilderness? Why it was skipped

- Between the Red Sea (one night) and Jericho's fall (seven days) there were 40 years in the wilderness. Hebrews 11, in this flow, omits it. The insight: they could have skipped the wilderness—and so can we—when we refuse unbelief and disobedience.
- Waters and walls were required; the wilderness resulted from choices. They sent spies, feared giants more than they prized grapes, and murmured, turning an 11-day journey into 40 years.
- God is in the gap—yet the enemy also targets the gap between slave identity and sonship. Faithful obedience bridges it.
- Generational gap: Moses to Joshua
- Hebrews 11:29 aligns with Moses' generation; verse 30 aligns with Joshua's. Men over 20 who disbelieved did not enter the land, except Joshua and Caleb.
- With God, what should take years takes days: seven days to topple Jericho; creation completed in six days with rest on the seventh; one night to drown Egypt's army.
- Without God, what should take days takes years: unbelief turns short routes into lifelong detours.

What you cannot skip vs. what you can:

- **Cannot skip: Red Seas: hard passages essential for freedom; skipping them leaves enemies intact for your next season. Jericho walks: daily, disciplined obedience before breakthroughs; watching isn't working—practice is required. Growth processes: in life, leadership, and holiness; seeds need dirt; stages can't be rushed.**
- **Can skip: Unbelief, murmuring, and disobedience: these prolong wilderness seasons. Self-sabotaging words and arguments: bite your tongue; don't start drama you'll spend weeks cleaning up. Shame spirals and worst-case ruminations: don't give your imagination to the enemy. Addictive cycles you know lead to wilderness: hear "you can skip this" at the point of decision.**

Murmur or march: silence, trumpet, and praise

- Numbers 14:2: first generation murmured and died in the wilderness.
- Joshua 6: Joshua instructed silence during the march—"do not say a word" until the shout—to prevent complaint from derailing faith.
- Mantra: more trumpet, less tongue. Praise (the trumpet) lifts faith; complaint (the tongue) creates wilderness.
- Illustrations grounding the exhortations
- Brief testimonies compress pain; don't judge your story by others' summaries.
- Charleston ice cream encounter: deep stories emerge in moments—handle them with care; life is more than a snapshot.
- US Open and tennis: watching isn't working—practice is required.
- Video-game "cut scene": like pressing "X," you can "skip" unbelief, complaint, and self-sabotage.
- Family dinner: mid-sentence restraint can skip hours of relational cleanup; control the tongue (cf. James).
- Christ in the wilderness and the cross
- Matthew 4:1–11: Jesus, led by the Spirit, fasted 40 days; answered three temptations with Scripture ("It is written..."); the devil left; angels attended him.
- Because Jesus did not skip the wilderness, scourging, or cross, believers don't have to remain in theirs: fear and shame can be "skipped" by taking accusations straight to the cross and resurrection.

Next steps / actions

- Attend and invite: Elevation Nights: for those near Kansas City, Memphis, Birmingham, San Antonio, Lubbock, Dallas, Oklahoma City, or Houston—“grab your tickets” and “come and worship with us.”
- Replace murmuring with marching: practice daily obedience, even in small laps; don’t talk yourself out of your miracle.
- Bite your tongue; blow your trumpet: consciously praise more and complain less this week.
- Work the word you have: don’t just watch or listen—practice forgiveness, patience, and faith in concrete actions.
- At the point of temptation or escalation, hear “You can skip this”: skip unbelief, self-destructive choices, arguments, and shame spirals.
- Worship in the wilderness: lift hands, speak gratitude and trust; expect the enemy to leave as you submit to God’s word.

AI generated sermon transcript:

- Elevation Nights: I have an exciting announcement through the 18th of Oct. 2028 - we might be coming to a city near you. So if you are in Kansas City, Memphis, Birmingham, San Antonio, Lubbock, Dallas, Oklahoma City, or Houston, we want to invite you to come and worship with us. I am telling you, there is nothing like being in an arena full of other Jesus lovers. to bring a powerful word that's going to speak straight to your heart. So if you're near any of those cities, grab your tickets, invite your friends, and we will see you there.
- I want you to remain standing for just a moment as I read this scripture in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 29 and 30. Just a very short, simple scripture today. Hebrews chapter 11, verse 29 and 30.
- Hebrews chapter 11, verse 29 and 30. The Bible says, “By faith, the people pass through the Red Sea as on dry land. But when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned. By faith, the walls of Jericho fell after the army had marched around them for seven days.”
- I want you to give my title to your neighbor. Announce it to him. And this is good news. You're going to love to tell him this, okay? Matter of fact, it's so good they're not even going to believe it when you tell them. But the title of my message today, give it to your neighbor. Look at him and say, “You Can Skip This.”
- Opening prayer: Father, I know how you gave it to me. Enable me now to give it to them. In Jesus' name, amen.
- Tell your other neighbor on your way to your seat, you can skip this. Put it in the comments, put it in the chat. You can skip this. Skip this. Don't start fast-forwarding the video, though. Skip it, like literally. You know what I'm saying?
- One of the coolest things about my life, other than being Holly's husband and Graham and Elijah and Abby's dad, is getting to meet people who share things with me that are so deep and so tender and so touching. And usually they do it in such a short amount of time. So when I meet somebody and they go to the church or they've been blessed by the ministry of this church, I get the privilege of hearing from them. Hey, I wasn't doing so good. I don't want to go into all the details right now, but I just want to say to your entire congregation, thank you.
- The song Jaira got me through a season of terrible loss. I actually lost my child and people would just say this and it's so intense and it's so quick. One day me and Holly were walking through the streets of Charleston and it was the month of July. So it was very hot outside and she had an ice cream cone. And somebody walked up and said, I know you. And Holly was like mid-lick. And the person went from excited to crying just like that. And now Holly has a dilemma on her hands. This person is crying and sobbing because obviously they're about to share something very deep and meaningful. And the question is, to lick? Or not to lick because the ice cream is running down her hand. But I think she just slowly put the thing behind her back.
- And it's a privilege. I always love to hear these things. And you get positive stuff out there. Not very much negative in real life. That's internet courage. People in real life are kind. When they look you in the eyes, it's really nice, and I really enjoy it. I had it happen to me this week, as a matter of fact. It was so short what the man said. I went to the movies and this happens a lot too. It was in the bathroom and he was very respectful though. He was very respectful.

He kept it very eyes forward. And he just, you know, he said to me, it's like, and it was kind of weird. I was like, this is a little bit kind of like a weird thing to say. Cause I didn't know who he was.

- And he goes, what a, what a story of forgiveness, huh? And it was a music documentary, so I wasn't really expecting him to say something that deep. And I'm thinking, I think he goes to the church. Like, that just sounds like something you would say if you knew I was a pastor, right? What a story of forgiveness, huh? At the bathroom, you know, standing there. So, wash our hands, walk out. And he goes, hey, didn't want to bother you in there. But it's quite possible that your church saved my life many years ago. And he said, and I know it saved my marriage because I wasn't a Christian. My wife was. She got me to come to your church and it turned our marriage around. So thanks, man. Thank you. And this guy, and he's got this big old grown man standing next to him. This guy points at him and he goes, I've been coming to your church since I was five years old. And immediately I'm like, how can this be? You're like 5'11", and you listen to me preach when I'm 5 years old. I'm only 26, so how does this work? I said, man, you look so handsome, keep serving God. And we walked out, but think about what he said. I was a Christian or I wasn't a Christian. My wife was, she brought me to church. It saved my life, saved my marriage. And just that, just a little snippet like that. And it made my day. I mean, man, I was just, I was just skipping out of the theater. Like, oh, that's amazing, right? But the danger in that is that it's just a summary.
- The danger in that is even in sharing it with you, I debated about whether to share it to open this message, because let's say you're out there and your husband doesn't know God. And your husband is deep in an addiction or your husband is maybe not even in the picture right now. And you brought your husband to church. And he didn't raise his hand or sign up to wear one of those shirts and get baptized or join one of those groups. But instead, he looked at you after the sermon and said, that's the dumbest thing I've ever heard in my life. I don't like it. He yells too much. And I don't, you know, understand what he was talking about with all these names that I don't get. And I'm never going back. So now you go back to your situation. And you heard a summary of someone else's situation. And you could mistakenly believe that there's something wrong with your faith that made it work for the man in the movie theater, but not your husband.
- We need to do away with this idea that faith in God means you never have to go through anything hard. And we need to do away with this idea that faith in God And trusting him and believing him and obeying him and doing what he says means that you will always get the same result that somebody else shared with you. Because, because a summary is not a story. I read you two verses today from Hebrews chapter 11. Both of those verses were written thousands of years after the events they occurred to. Perhaps a background overview of the book of Hebrews would help us to put it in context. Yeah, yeah. Because the author of Hebrews is unknown. He's anonymous. We don't know who wrote the book of Hebrews. But his purpose in writing the book of Hebrews to the early church was to encourage them to persevere, to stick it out, to say you can make it, to remind them of what a treasure that they have in Jesus so that they don't fall into the trap of going back to their life before him.
- 11 chapters into this dissertation of all of the warnings and all of the wonderful rewards and all of the contrasts of what happens if you stick it out and what happens if you quit, he goes into an expose that we call the hall of faith, not the hall of fame, the hall of faith. It's not the hall of fame because not everybody that's mentioned in it is famous. Write this down in your notes. Not everybody great is famous and not everybody famous is great. a free seminar for Sunday morning for you to pontificate on the fact that as you read about all of these heroes of the faith, why you've got people like Samson, who was a real dummy, right?
- And then there are people that are omitted from the list. He goes through so many and doesn't mention Elijah. How are you going to write a whole list called the hall of faith and not put Elijah in it? You remember, I preached about him two weeks ago. He prayed that it wouldn't rain, didn't rain. Prayed that it would rain, and it did rain. Prayed God would kill him. God said, no, get up and eat. I got more for you to do. How did he not make the hall of faith, right?

He's leaving a lot out. Doesn't mention Daniel. Can you believe that? You're writing about faith. And you're going, who can I talk about? Let's see. I can talk about, uh, I can talk about.

- Daniel, who spent the night with a lion, but never saw his feet. When it comes to Daniel, who would not bow and could not burn. When it came to Daniel, who was so distinguished among all of his colleagues that he was given a position of prominence because he had the discipline to follow God daily. So he had the courage to obey God dramatically. When it comes to Daniel, you say nothing about Daniel. Doesn't mention Jonah. I understand that one. Jonah kind of sucks as a preacher, honestly. Got a bad attitude. And then when he does preach his sermon is 40 more days and then it will be destroyed. Yeah. Leave them out. Leave them out. But it's not just the people that he leaves out. Let's read it again. He says in verse 29, whoops, I had to show you this by faith. The people pass through the red sea as on dry land. But when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.
- By faith, the walls of Jericho fell after the army had marched around them for seven days. So by faith, they passed through the Red Sea. That's all he says. As if they did it with a good attitude. As if they came to the Red Sea and said, O God of earth, wind, and fire. O God of waters and floods. O God, our help in ages. turned around to Moses and said, you should have let us die in Egypt. But this is a summary. It's a sentence. The sentence is not the story. Because if I double clicked on the movie theater conversation and I said, let's go back in the bathroom and finish this conversation, you know, away from people, that'd be weird. But if I said, Hey, let's just talk about this a little bit more. Are y'all still doing amazing? Uh, well actually, right. Has this 22-year-old kid that you just pointed to, has he followed God? The Bible says, train the child in the way that you should go. And he's all not depart from it. Has he departed from the way? I'm sure there was one or two times where he broke the speed limit. He's 22 years old. The summary is not the story. I'm going somewhere.
- **Stop judging your story by other people's summary. Because to read, by faith they passed through the Red Sea, would make you think on the surface that they just did it perfectly. When we know good and well that when they heard Pharaoh's chariots behind them, they said, take us back. When we know good and well, not only what the author of Hebrews says, that they passed through the Red Sea, but before they passed through, they panicked. But he doesn't talk about the panic. He talks about the passing. See, it is possible that when you get through this trial in your life, God is not going to even talk about the stuff that you are so stressed about right now. Because when you get through this test, all that's going to be left is a testimony.**
- That is so awesome. I came to find somebody today who is going through, and I'm going through this Red Sea. I'm going through this difficulty. I am going through this situation. I am going through a medical diagnosis. I am going through this scheduled treatment. I am going through it and I'm scared and I'm nervous. And I don't know if the treatment's going to work. The first round didn't. And my dad had this, so I might have it too. And I don't know if I'm going to be able to show up for this the way that I need to. And all the scripture says, watch this, it's profound.
- By faith, the people pass. Doesn't talk about how they doubted just that the land was dry. Doesn't talk about how they were disappointed just that they did it. Doesn't talk about the fact that they thought that the Egyptians were stronger than them. Doesn't talk about the fact that God just brought you out with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.
- And instead of lifting your hands in worship, you worry. It simply says they passed through. Touch three people say get through this. Get through this. Get through this any way you have to get through it. Get through this even if you have to get through it and ugly cry some nights.
- **Get through it even if you have to get through it and turn your phone off for a little while. Get through it even if you have to move back in with your parents for six months. Get through it even if you have to pray some things at night that you can't share it, Ebru. Get through it. Get through it. What you're going through is not bigger than the God who is bringing you through it.**

- So if the summary is not the story, what's the story? The story is I panic. The story is I almost fell apart. The story is we have up days, down days. The story is sometimes I don't want to go home at night. The story is we had a family vacation. Watch this. A photo dump is not a family vacation.
- Photo dump is a carefully curated representation of all the things that you want to appear aesthetically are open about your summer. But a photo dump about your summer is not your summer. It's a summary. It's a summary that you want others to see. And now here you are sitting at home looking at somebody else's photo dump of their summer. And they went to Paris. And you didn't even make it outside of Pineville. You went to Pineville and they went to Paris. And now you're judging your summer over their summary.
- The devil is a liar. I had a good summer. I know how I know because I'm still here. I had a good day. I know how I know because I'm breathing. Let everything. All right. So he summarizes and the summary is difficult because it's just a snippet. It's just a sentence. And that man said something in a sentence that was a summary. But we understand there's a story within the summary.
- And we understand that. We understand when it says that Abraham by faith believed God and all that. We understand that his wife also laughed at God because her womb was so old. But they still had Isaac. So Isaac remains, but their doubt isn't mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11. Get through this. Get through this. That's what I'm saying. Get through this. Even if it's painful. Talk about painful. Look at verse 30. By faith. The walls. Of Jericho. fell you're like that doesn't sound painful unless you were in you're from Jericho sound pretty good for the Israelites right do y'all know this Bible story they marched around the walls I'm going to tell it to you in a minute today because I'm gonna show you something I'm sure something's gonna help you for your life but the walls falling was not painful but they they walked around them for seven days which also isn't very painful because Jericho isn't very big Jericho is about 2,000 feet in circumference. So if you walked at a normal pace, just a normal pace, it would only take you about five to seven minutes to get around the city. And all they did was walk around the city once on the first day, once on the second day. This is what God told them to do. Once on the third day, once on the fourth day, once on the fifth day, once on the sixth day, seven times on the seven days, blow a trumpet and shout. Not very painful. But what the summary doesn't tell you is that in chapter 5, the Lord looked at the people and said, we've got a problem. There is an entire generation of you that have not been circumcised. So every grown man that has not been circumcised, we need to do a little surgery before you circle Jericho. Now that you know that, read verse 30 again. My faith, the walls of Jericho fell after the army had marched around them for six days. I'm trying to say, and I don't want to break this down too much, their march was a little bit more difficult. Maybe it took a little longer than 10 minutes because of the conditions.
- But this is not a time to talk about circumcision, right? So just get to it. They circled the walls. The wall fell down. They passed through the sea and it became a street. They walked around the walls and God made it like Tetris. That's amazing about Tetris, but that's the testimony. That's the summary. That's the sentence. That's the, we're celebrating 31 years, wonderful years of marriage. Nobody had 31 wonderful years. To get 31 wonderful years, you've got to be married 51. Am I right about it? To get the 31 wonderful years. Now that I've set this idea up for you, I want to suggest. that the author of Hebrews, whoever he or she was, I don't know who it was. Could have been a man, could have been a woman, could have been Paul, could have been Apollos, could have been somebody we don't know. But whoever wrote it was probably a man.
- Preach this, skip this stuff. Get to the main part of the message. He includes the wrong people and he skips Elijah, skips Daniel. I got to show you something. You won't believe this. I skipped this verse, but I want to show it to you now. Verse 31. By faith, the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. So I would expect to see Ruth in the hall of faith, not Rahab. Ruth was sweet to her mother-in-law. Ruth was loyal. Rahab, the prostitute, she was running the kind of house where when the men were looking for somewhere to hide, they said, let's go to Rahab's house. And she made it in the book.

- Don't tell me God can't use you. Don't tell me your life can't be redeemed. Don't tell me somebody you're sitting next to needs to be labeled according to somebody that God has delivered them from. Not only does he leave out certain people and not only does he leave out certain processes, but I'm going to make this class interactive now. All of that was set up for what I want to show you here.
- Because if you read the two verses that I read you together back to back, there's something that he skips. There's something that he skips. Verse 29, by faith, were drowned. Verse 30. By faith, the walls of Jericho fell after the army had marched around them for seven days. I feel like he's skipping something. I know he's putting together a list. I'm not suggesting that there should be a Hebrews chapter 11 verse 29 beat. But y'all, can we talk about this? Passed through the Red Sea. They marched around the walls. They went through. They marched around. They went through. They marched around. So let me get this straight. So they're in Egyptian slavery for 400 years. They're delivered out of Egyptian slavery in one night through the Red Sea after 10 plagues. They go through the water of the Red Sea. God delivers them.
- They march around the walls of Jericho for seven days and they fall down. So that's eight days, right? He's skipping something. Because after reading the text over and over again in my study this week, and I looked at it, and I looked at it, and I looked at it, and felt like he was leaving something out. And I came to the question, what about the wilderness? There was that night that God brought them through the Red Sea. And there was that seven-day period, that one week where they walked around the walls and they fell. But in between the waters that parted and the walls that fell. was 40 years of wilderness.
- What about the wilderness? Why is he not telling me about the wilderness? I know he's not hiding anything because this is the word of God. But the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit. So when the author of Hebrews, whoever he was, was carefully taking the dictates of the divine. There was something inside of him as he wrote this letter to the struggling believers who were tempted to go back. When he wrote about the Red Sea and he wrote about the walls and the waters that parted and the walls that fell. And perhaps as he moved his pen across the page to talk about the 40 years of wilderness, the Holy Spirit said, you can skip this. Don't put the wilderness. By faith, they went through the Red Sea. By faith, the walls fell.
- What about the wilderness? Skip it. Don't put it in. Now, it's not that he is concealing the wilderness. He talks about it in chapter 3. But at this particular moment, for what he wants to say in this moment, by faith, by faith. By faith, Abraham. By faith, Jacob. By faith, Joseph. By faith, Samson. By faith, Barak.
- By faith, He says, put it in about the waters that parted. And put it in about the walls that fell. But skip the wilderness. And I wonder, is the reason that the Holy Spirit had the author of Hebrews in his sovereignty skip the wilderness? because they could have skipped the wilderness too. And so can you.
- Some stuff you can't skip. Some stuff is unskippable. I am so sorry, ladies, but no matter how much AI we invent, you cannot have a baby and not get bigger. Not yet. Not yet. You can't skip that part. There is some stuff you cannot skip. You can't take a seed between your three anointed holy fingers. And pray for it and say, oh seed, I don't want you to experience dirt. Dirt is very uncertain. And dirt is very unsanitary.
- And so instead, seed, I am going to love you to life, seed. you can't even do this with your kids you can't love them into growth you've got to let them go into growth because some stuff they have got to go through they can't skip it feel it holy ghost some stuff you can't skip holly and abby went to the u.s open this week i skipped it She said, it'll be fun. I said, it'll be crowded. I'm skipping it. I'll finance it, but I want no part in it. So they went to the tennis match and they watched tennis all day. Now Holly plays a little tennis, not professionally. But she was leaving for her match Saturday and she said jokingly to me before she left, you think I'll play better today?
- But you didn't practice this week. She said, yeah, but I watched so much tennis. Listen, she said, surely I learned something. I got the text three hours later. She said, I have never played worse in my life. I had never been beat so

bad. Because watching isn't working. So if you come to church and you're like, oh, that's very inspiring. You think I'll be more patient this week because I watched that guy talk for an hour?

- No, you're going to get beat. You're going to get killed. That's why you can't just read about Moses, read about Joshua, read about Samson, read about David, read about Samuel, read about the prophets. You got to work this thing. You've got to work this thing. You've got to take one word from God that God gives you and work it and forgive one person. Can you forgive one person? Can you forgive one person? Can we get a two? Can we get three? Can I get four? Can I get five? Can I get 70 times seven?
- Whatever it takes, you've got to work this and you can't skip that. There are some things you've got to go through. You cannot skip a stage of development. But you can skip disobedience. I'm going to work on this. I'm going to work on this. I'm going to break it down. When they went through the Red Sea, listen to me, it was required. God didn't ask, do you want to go through the Red Sea? He said, either go through the Red Sea or stay here crying about it and die. So I guess they didn't have to go through the Red Sea.
- But it was their only option if they wanted to survive. You've got to go through this. Hey, hey, that's what keeps me preaching. Because somebody's got to be up here talking. So I don't really get to pray about, you know how you get to pray about, like, Lord, speak to me. And then if he doesn't, you can come. I can't do that. I'll be making bargains with God like, God, I'll sell it all. I'll give it all away. Give me a word. Why? Because I've got to go through the process to do this. So it is for you. There are some parts of your process that you cannot skip. If you skip the Red Sea, the Egyptians will follow you to your next assignment. If you skip the uncomfortable thing, you're going to still be dealing with the dysfunctional thing when you get to the place where God has taken you.
- You've got to go through this. The Red Sea is required. You can't skip that. You can't skip the practice of coming into the presence of God and saying, Lord, I need your strength today. And I really don't want to get out of this bed, but I've got to go forward. You can't skip that and not expect it to catch up with you. Even at this stage of my life, there's stuff I used to skip. I can't skip now. Stretching. Stretching. Stretching to me used to be a nice idea. Now it is a necessary life-saving practice. Huh? I'd rather not wear my seatbelt in my car than not stretch before I do my squats. Because I'd rather take a chance. God will protect me on the road. But I know he's not going to protect these hamstrings. I've got to stretch. I didn't used to have to stretch. I got to stretch. Now, they didn't have to go through the Red Sea when they were slaves. They had to go through it when they were free. There are some things in your life in this season that God is leading you through because he's calling you to be a leader. And you can't skip this. That's why you had to come to church and one of your friends is just washing their car and getting a head start on the wings. No, I can't eat wings with you before church. I can eat wings after, but I got to get in the house of God because Satan's weight on the Lord will mount up on wings like eagle.
- So you eat your wings, but I got to get mine. I can't skip this. The Red Sea was required. The Red Sea was necessary. The Red Sea is where God drowned their enemies. Who am I preaching to? The waters were necessary and so were the walls. So were the walls. When the walls of Jericho fell, God had to do something supernatural so that they would have the faith to fight the rest of the battles. Jericho was the first city they had to take. They had many more battles to fight. The walls wouldn't have fallen unless they walked around them. And the sea would not have split if they didn't walk through it. The water was necessary. The walls were not optional. But the wilderness was. The waters were God's tool to set them free. The wilderness was what they chose because they were not willing to fight. Let me explain this to you. In Hebrews chapter 11 verse 29. You want me to share all this or you want me to skip it? Okay. You said don't skip it. That was so polite. He said, I'd like to hear it.
- I mean, I can't speak for the entire congregation. It's a very diverse group and body. And I know everyone else might know this part. But fill me in if you'd like. This is the greatest church in the world, man. This is the greatest church in the world. Thank you. Okay. Well. Write this down. God is in the gap. That gap where they wandered 40 years, God is in the gap. And the enemy wants to take that gap too. Now, for the Israelites, the gap was between their identity as

slaves and their identity as sons and daughters of God. And on their way out, I should probably just break this down generationally. Verse 29 is Moses's generation. Verse 30 is Joshua's. It's a generation gap. 40 years in the Bible represents a generation. That's how they counted generations.

- So it's a generation gap and the generation that saw the walls fall is not the same generation that saw the waters part. All of the men who were above the age of 20 didn't get to go in to the promised land. And even though Joshua isn't named, he is the exception. Joshua and Caleb, they're the ones who, when they went out to spy out the land, they come through the Red Sea. They do a little recon. They say, hey, go see what's going on in there. Is it walled? Is it fortified? What's the grapes like? Bring us back some grapes. Well, they brought back grapes, but they were talking about giants. And they talked about the giants more than they talked about the grapes. So they got stuck in something that God wanted to bring them through. That's the wilderness.
- The wilderness they lived in for 40 years. And they died in the desert that God could have delivered them right through. We know from Deuteronomy that the trip through the wilderness to the promised land, the edge of Canaan, Kadesh Barnea, where they sent out the spies. And Tim came back with a bad report and two with a good one, Joshua and Caleb. We know from Deuteronomy that it was an 11-day journey. How do you turn 11 days into 40 years? How do you get stuck in something that God wanted to take you through in a week and a half? I mean, look at the scripture again in verse 30. Put it up there. It says in seven days, the wall fell. Seven days was all it took. Ten minutes a day. Seven days. Okay.
- Hour and a half on the seventh day because they marched seven times that day. And the walls fell. Just that quick. So something that one generation couldn't do in 40 years, another generation did in a week. With God, what should take years takes days. With God. So in case you feel like it's too late for you, with God, what should take years you've wasted some seasons and you're feeling kind of bad because you've been in a wilderness of your own decisions oh i tried to blame others but it's really not them to blame you know how i found out because even after they left my life i kept struggling with the same thing I'm here in this wilderness and I wish I had not disobeyed God.
- I mean, I wish I hadn't gotten in that relationship. I wish I hadn't invested in that business. I wish I hadn't dropped out. I wish I hadn't tried it at that party. I wish I wouldn't have gone where everybody else was going. I wish I would have said I'm too drunk to drive. I wish I would have been nicer. I wish I would have been around. I wish I would have traveled so much for work. I wish I would have put more aside. In case you are wishing in a wilderness today, you need to know with God. By faith, what should take years takes days. How do you know? In seven days, the walls fell. In seven days, what stood against them came crumbling down. In seven days, they made it into the land. In seven days, everybody shout seven. I can do better than that.
- In seven days, God took darkness and made it into light. In seven days, God separated the waters in the firmament above from the waters in the firmament beneath. In seven days, God made vegetation and plants and every seed-bearing thing. In seven days, God filled the sky with birds. Amen. And the water with fish. In seven days, God reached into the dust and breathed in it to the breath of life. In seven days. And you tell me what God can't do. I got a seven day God who only needs six. Because on the seventh day, he put his feet up and said, I'm done. And I'm resting in it. Five, seven people say God can do it quick. See, if you were making the world, you'd have to get the raw materials to do it. But God doesn't have to get the raw materials.
- He can speak a word and his word is the raw material. And the Word was with God. And the Word was God. So when God said, let there be light, he didn't have to build a power plant. He said, I'm going to skip all that and speak what I want to speak. And I believe there are some people in this room today who need to know that God can do in one moment a favor what a lifetime of labor can never accomplish. High five seven people again. Quick, come on, we've got to do it, quick. Seven days. Solid, too. One night wiped out the entire Egyptian army. So you're sitting there figuring out what you're going to have to do about this situation. You're figuring without your father. Woo! Woo! Woo! Woo! Woo! Woo! And without God, what should take days takes years.

- They could have been out in 11 days, they turned it into 40 years. Because instead of coming to God, their source, they sent their spies. And they went by what they saw instead of what God said. The second generation. They said 40 years is long enough. You know what I think is amazing about Jesus? He bridges the gap. He bridges the gap. He makes possible, by faith, what they can only experience through works. They could have skipped the wilderness if they had obeyed God. You can skip the wilderness if you believe. What are you saying? You saying I don't have to go through hard things? No, I'm not saying you don't have to go through.
- I am saying... the hard stuff you go through. I need to use a stupid example right now. Forgive me. Video games have changed a lot since my generation of video games. So really, they've improved so much. I wish, I mean, I don't ask God for much, but why couldn't I be 14 right now with the state of video games? It would have been so much more enjoyable, right?
- Because I woke up the other day, Elijah was playing Donkey Kong, the new Donkey Kong, but he was Donkey Kong. That was so trippy for me. In my generation, we were running from Donkey Kong. Donkey Kong slinging barrels at you. Running up on ladders. He was Donkey Kong. Donkey, he is now, he can control Donkey Kong. Generation. And they make fun of me. I was trying to play one of their games a couple summers ago. And I'm sitting there watching the screen because we didn't have this on my games. But it was like the game stopped and they played a little movie on the thing. And somebody was talking and I'm just sitting there. And Graham walks in and he goes, what are you doing? I said, I'm watching the thing. It stopped. I'm watching it. He goes, that's a cut scene. Why are you watching a cut scene? I said, it's a what? He said, it's a cut scene. Then he reached over and he pushed a button on my controller that said X and he said something. And when I say it, I want you to shout. He said, you can skip this. Wow. So I came here today like Joshua. To see if I can find an X button on your controller. Cause you're sitting through something.
- Suffering through something. Struggling through something. And you can skip it. You can skip it. They're not ready for that. Don't put that beat on them. Don't put that beat on them. You gotta skip that. Cause if you start playing those drums. We'll be here all day. When I start telling the people. That you don't have to die in this wilderness. That dry bones can live again. That you don't have to spend the next 40 years. Come on, just push your neighbor like it's an X button. Say, you can skip this. You can skip this. You can skip this. For real, for real. Let me teach. You can skip this. No, I can't skip the Red Sea. No, I can't skip the six days of walking. You got to walk around the walls, but watch this. You can skip it if you step. What do you mean? What do you mean? You mean that if I do the right thing and if I pray the right prayer today, and if I praise the right praise today, and if I worship the right worship today, that the thing in my life that I'm praying about is just going to fall down like that? No, I am saying to you that you may not be able to skip the difficulty, but you can skip the unbelief. That's what you can skip.
- No, no, you gotta go through the waters. You gotta face the wall, but you don't have to wander in the wilderness. Not one more day. You can skip this. You can skip this. I want you to hear my annoying voice in your mind all week long when you go to have that argument. And you know good and well that if you say what you're about to say, Huh? You're going to be cleaning this up for the next 20 minutes for the next two weeks. I was sitting at a family dinner this past week and I was just irritated. It was me. It wasn't the people at the table.
- They were delightful, but I found myself edgy. And you know, when you get edgy, you get petty and you know, cause you're stressed, you spiral, and now you're edgy and you're petty, but now you got an edge. So now you just cut something. And now you're cleaning up blood for the next hour because your kids are all bleeding because you didn't know how to come to the table. And skip what you wanted to say. So you could eat the food. In peace. I tell you it was like slow motion too. I went to say it. I was so proud of myself. Because I don't always skip it. Most of the time I just say it. I went to say it. I was like you know you are. It went out of my mouth. And I envision in the future a one hour overcompensation of me now trying to be so nice because I was so mean. Y'all don't ever do this at home. I'm going to go home and repent. And y'all can polish your halo.

- And we'll meet back here in a year when I get my life together. But I got it right and it was like the Holy Spirit said, you can go ahead and start this drama by just saying whatever you wanna say, or you can skip it. Mid-sentence. You know, I didn't even have the presence of mind to make something up like I was gonna say. I just let the batteries die on my stupid mouth. All right, I shouldn't say this. You can skip it if you'll shut your stupid mouth. Is that all right? I'm sorry. James says, if you will control your tongue. That's what I meant to say. See, I didn't need to say it like that, but I said it like that. After they marched. Verse 30. It's in the Bible.
- After they marched. After they marched for seven days, the walls fell down and they didn't have to live in the wilderness because they marched. You know what the generation before them did? Murmured. They went in and saw the giants. I got it ready for you in the King James Version. You see? Look at it in 14 to numbers 14 to they saw the giants came back and all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, would the God we had died in the land of Egypt or would God we had died in this wilderness? And they did. Because they murmured. Second generation, Kim Long said, we can skip this. If we murmur, we're going to stay here. If we march, God will make a way. I came to ask you a question.
- You gonna murmur or march? You gonna murmur or march? Last week I taught you that God can turn a mumble into a miracle when you pray. But the enemy can turn a murmur into misery. You gotta bite your tongue. One thing that impressed me about Joshua, he learned from the lessons of Moses. He said, we can skip this. Go over to Joshua 6. That's where they walk around the walls of Jericho. One day I'm going to preach a remix of my favorite sermon from my youth. It was called Don't Stop on 6. I might preach it next week. Oh, the memory of it is probably better than the sermon was. But in my head, it was awesome. Because Joshua did something so strategic. Now, God met with Joshua. He said, you got to take the people into the land.
- I want you to have the priest to go ahead. I want them to have the ram's horn, not the silver horns like the priest would blow. The ram's horn, which signified jubilee, which signified freedom. I want you to blow the horns every day you march. March 10 minutes a day. And then go back. Now, Joshua knows something's very intuitive. Well, it's 24 hours in a day. The march is going to take 10 minutes. I guess we got to polish our stuff and get ready. So that's an hour. What are we going to do with the other 23 hours?
- The last time the people of God started talking about their situation, they murmured themselves right out of their miracle. So God told Joshua, have a march. But he did not tell him to do this. This was just his instinct. God will tell you to do things by instinct that you don't even have a direct scripture for. I'll prove it to you. Verse number nine, the armed guard marched ahead of the priest who blew the trumpets and the rear guard followed the art. All this time the trumpets were sounding, but Joshua had commanded the army, do not give a war cry, listen to this. Do not raise your voices. Matter of fact, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout then shout and they marched instead of murmuring. And God is telling you today that you are going to have to bite your tongue and blow your trumpet so you can skip some of the stuff that you've been fighting with because you keep creating wilderness with your words. but your tongue is getting you in trouble, but your trumpet can get you out.
- Because the trumpet represents what? Praise. The trumpet represents what? Victory. So I'm making a mantra for my life this week. More trumpet, less tongue. I'm going to praise God more this week and complain less this week. Because I don't want to dig myself deeper into a disappointment that I'm already dealing with. I've been in this wilderness long enough. I've been depressed long enough. I've been anxious long enough. So yeah, I gotta go through the sickness, but I don't have to lay at home all day googling different symptoms about what the sickness could be. I've got to go to my treatment, but I don't have to give the enemy my imagination. I can skip this. I can skip this, because God is a healer, because God is Jehovah Rapha, because God is my banner, because God is my medicine. I can skip this. I wanted to let you know, not yet, I can skip this.
- I want you to hear it in your head all week. No, I can't skip the things that God has ordained me to go through. But I do not have to live in a state of prolonged pain. I can skip this. The next time you go to do the addictive behavior that

you know where it leads to, you know it's going to put you in a wilderness. You know it's going to put you in shame. I want you to hear the Holy Spirit saying to you, you can skip this. You can skip this. You don't have to go to work tomorrow with bloodshot eyes, hiding what you looked at all night. You don't have to go to work tomorrow with a headache that's so bad that you want to die. You don't have to go into your next situation, your next seat. You can skip this. This. You don't have to play out every worst case scenario.

- You say, Pastor Stephen, how can you say that? It's bigger than me. This sickness, this anxiety, this struggle, it's bigger than me. How can you tell me I can skip the wilderness because of Matthew chapter 4, verse 1? There is someone other than Joshua who went through the wilderness. Because the Bible says, help me, Holy Spirit. Help me help somebody today. Help me help somebody who's in a wilderness. Help me help somebody who feels like there's no way out. Help me help somebody who's just circling round and round the same wilderness. Help me help somebody today, God, who's just stuck in it. Help me help somebody who keeps hating themselves. Help me help somebody who keeps reaching out for things that are hurting them. The Bible says, then Jesus was led by the Spirit. into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, if you are the son of God, tell these stones to become bread. Jesus answered, it is written, men shall not live on bread alone, but every word that comes from the mouth of God.
- Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. If you are the son of God, he said, throw yourself down for it is written, he will command his angels concerning you and they will lift you up in their hands so that. You will not strike your foot against a stone. And Jesus answered him, it is also written, do not put the Lord your God to the test. Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. All this I will give you, he said, if you will bow down and worship me. And Jesus said to him, away from me, Satan. For it is written, worship the Lord your God and serve him only. Then the devil... left him and angels came and attended him. The reason I don't have to stay in my wilderness is because Jesus went to his. And what the generation could not do in 40 years, Jesus did in 40 days with God.
- **What should take years takes days. I need somebody to shout right now. If you are glad that you have a Savior who did not skip the wilderness. You have a Savior that did not skip the scourging. You have a Savior that did not skip the mocking. And because he did not skip the cross. I'm coming out of this. I'm coming out. I'm coming out of this. The last thing I do. I'm coming out because he's in me. I'm coming out because greater is he that lives in me than he that's in the world. You can skip this. You don't have to live in fear. You can skip this. You don't have to live in shame. Your shame is nailed to the rugged cross. You can skip this.**
- The next time the enemy comes up in your ear, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, you know what you did, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, don't even defend yourself. Skip it. Take him straight to the cross. Take him straight to the burial and borrowed tomb where the Savior was buried. Skip it. Skip it. Skip it. Skip it. Because you have a savior. Who lives inside of you. Everyone standing, no one moving. You can skip this. You can skip this. Christ did not die. For you to punish yourself. For sins. That he paid for. You can skip this 40 years in the wilderness and they could have made it in 11 days. A seven day March brought the walls down seven days of creation. God is trying to do something for you right now in your life, but you won't, you won't worship. You keep letting the enemy fill in the blanks, fill in the gaps. I'm trying to tell you that between verse 29 and verse 30, there was a wilderness. But when the writer of Hebrews went to write it down, he skipped it. Why? Because they didn't have to die in the wilderness and neither do you. I don't know what your wilderness is today. But the Holy Spirit instructed me when I got to this part in my message to pray for you about it. Bow your head and close your eyes. I saw it in my study in this moment that the enemy, like he tempted Jesus, has been tempting you. Turn the stones into bread. Throw yourself from the temple. Bow down in worship. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. I'm skipping this.
- I know where this takes me and I don't like it. And I have a savior, not Joshua, Jesus. Somebody say Jesus. Come on, call his name like you know him. Say Jesus. I need you to get me out of this wilderness. I need you. And that's how

you're going to do it when the pain is louder than the promise. I'm skipping this. I'm skipping this. I am not going to stay down in something that God raised me out of. So blow your trumpet. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

- **Closing Prayer: One of the greatest ways that I have found to deal with my wilderness is through worship. So that I lift my hands. Why don't you do it right now? Lift your hands. Especially if you have been in a wilderness. There are some things we have to go through. There are red seas. There are walls. Hey, I'm not saying problem free. I'm just saying you don't have to diet. I'm just saying - You don't have to repeat it over and over. You can skip this. And when you worship. What happened in Matthew chapter 4 verse 11 happens to you. The Bible says the devil left him. I command you, Satan, in the name of the Lord, to drop your weapons and flee. For the Lord God Almighty has given me authority in the name of Jesus. You need to say, thank you, Jesus. You need to say, I trust you, Lord. You need to say, thank you, Lord, for bringing me through. You need to say, I'm coming out of fear and I'm coming out of depression. If I'm still breathing, if I'm still living, I can come out of this. Let's work for the betterment of this wilderness. Yeah! we're the grateful people! I got it Now everybody who's been through a red sea and been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, stretch them up high and let the devil know I survived. Amen.**

Kev's bonus study:

1/21/2017 - Elevation Ballantyne Sermon notes by KH – 5PM Worship Experience

Pastor Steven Furtick

Sermon Title: "Work your Window Part 2 – the Power of Pre"

Scripture:

- **2nd Kings 13:14–20:** Jehoash King of Israel: "10 In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned sixteen years. 11 He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit; he continued in them. 12 As for the other events of the reign of Jehoash, all he did and his achievements, including his war against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? 13 Jehoash rested with his ancestors, and Jeroboam succeeded him on the throne. Jehoash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. 14 Now Elisha had been suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. "My father! My father!" he cried. "The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" **15 Elisha said, "Get a bow and some arrows," and he did so. 16 "Take the bow in your hands," he said to the king of Israel. When he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king's hands. 17 "Open the east window," he said, and he opened it. "Shoot!" Elisha said, and he shot. "The Lord's arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!" Elisha declared. "You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek." 18 Then he said, "Take the arrows," and the king took them. Elisha told him, "Strike the ground." He struck it three times and stopped. 19 The man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times."** 20 Elisha died and was buried. Now Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring. 21 Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet. 22 Hazael king of Aram oppressed Israel throughout the reign of Jehoahaz." 1 Kings 19: The Call of Elisha - 19 So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him

and threw his cloak around him. 20 Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. “Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye,” he said, “and then I will come with you.” “Go back,” Elijah replied. “What have I done to you?” 21 So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant. Hebrews 11: 1-3: Faith in Action: 11 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

- Romans 8:28: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
- Ephesians 1:9: he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ.
- Ephesians 1:11: In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

Pre-sermon comments:

- Elevation Worship: “To the stormy seas, I will raise above the sea and we will not fear. You are still God. We will not fear, you are still God. We lift our eyes – forever be exalted – forever be exalted. Your help will come from you most high. Forever be exalted. You are still God. Before the world was spoken yet, you are still God. And you are still God. And you are still God. Our help will come from you most high – forever be exalted.”
- See awesome video of “X marks the spot” – Elevation Worship team explains the rigors of writing and creating timeless worship songs. Songs created from the sermon “Don’t Stop At Six” and the comment “The Promise Still Stands” which formed the basis of the song “Only King Forever” and “Do It Again.”
- Elevation Worship: Only King Forever: *“Our God a firm foundation, Our rock, the only solid ground. As nations rise and fall, Kingdoms once strong now shaken. But we trust forever in Your Name, The Name of Jesus. We trust the Name of Jesus. You are the only King forever. Almighty God we lift You higher. You are the only King forever. Forevermore, You are victorious [x2]. Unmatched in all Your wisdom. In love and justice You will reign. And every knee will bow. We bring our expectations. Our hope is anchored in Your Name. The Name of Jesus. Oh, we trust the Name of Jesus. You are the only King forever. Almighty God we lift You higher. You are the only King forever. Forevermore, You are victorious [x2]. We lift our banner high. We lift the Name of Jesus. From age to age You reign, Your kingdom has no end [x2], You are the only King forever. Almighty God we lift You higher. You are the only King forever. Forevermore, You are victorious [x2]”*
- Elevation Worship: “Do It Again”: *“Walking around these walls, I thought by now they’d fall. But You have never failed me yet. Waiting for change to come. Knowing the battle’s won. For You have never failed me yet. Your promise still stands. Great is Your faithfulness, faithfulness. I’m still in Your hands. This is my confidence, You’ve never failed me yet. I know the night won’t last. Your Word will come to pass. My heart will sing Your praise again. Jesus You’re still enough. Keep me within Your love. **My heart will sing Your praise again. Your promise still stands. Great is Your faithfulness, faithfulness. I’m still in Your hands. This is my confidence, You never failed. Your promise still stands. Great is Your faithfulness, faithfulness. I’m still in Your hands. This is my confidence,***

You never failed me yet. I've seen You move, You move the mountains. And I believe, I'll see You do it again. You made a way, where there was no way. And I believe, I'll see You do it again. [x3], I'll see You do it again. Your promise still stands. Great is Your faithfulness, faithfulness. I'm still in Your hands This is my confidence, You never failed. Your promise still stands. Great is Your faithfulness, faithfulness. I'm still in Your hands. This is my confidence, You never failed me yet. And You never failed me yet. I never will forget You never failed me yet. I never will forget."

Sermon notes – Work Your Window Part 2– “The power of Pre” by Pastor Steven:

- Recap Work Your Window week 1 – The Power of Precision
 - View the victory – You have to see it before you can seize it.
 - Focus on the fight – where does God want you to win?
 - A lot of us aren't winning anywhere because we try to win everywhere.
 - I have determined the decision in advance.
 - It is the power of pre-cision – I have aimed in the direction of completion. I will not stop until it comes to pass.
 - Take aim and then take action.
 - Often the battle is decided by your attitude – before the battle starts.
 - This inspiration is from the deep tracks of the bible – 2 King 13.
 - Elijah does not give the King chicken soup for the kingly soul. But rather Elisha gives the King some marching orders.
- For most of us, if we do what we already know, would could victory in our life. We are not operating from a position that comes from a lack of knowledge. Often it is a lack of courage or a lack of conviction.
- In 2nd Kings 13, Elisha is trying to move his King away from apathy and to own the outcome and the fight for himself. Elisha's message to the King: “Stop crying, man up, and get a bow and some arrows.”
- See vs. 17: View the victory before the battle. Call this the pre-view.
- **We should all look into our future with expectation and anticipation – nor do we need any news network to define our future.**
- **Have a preview of Heaven's agenda for your life.**
- **Point your expectations in the direction of my destiny.**
- Believe that the best is ahead and you have not seen your best days.
- Open the window and view the future. Stop staring at the wall and stop thinking about what you lost. Open the east window and shoot.
- Take the shot.
- And Elisha proclaimed the arrow of victory over the next battle and key conquest.
- Everyone has a key-stone conquest – where if you win this one, it will set you up for sustained success.
- Not sure what your arrow missed this year – face it and aim your arrow over the situation or battle.
- Sort of like Peter walking on water – he could stay above the water provided that he kept his sights on Jesus. If you watch the arrow (and not the wind and the waves), you keep your eyes on the promises of God.
- What comes next is so important.

- See vs. 18: This is a powerful prediction of victory. Focus on the little things of preparation before you attend church and move the mountains.
- Elisha says take the arrows and strike the ground.
- **But the king only struck the ground only three times – where the king was in compliance by not fully committed.**
- Elisha never told the King to stop striking the ground.
- God says, I never told you to stop. See vs. 19.
- **Sometimes in life, we do just enough to survive but not enough to succeed.**
- **So we stay stuck.**
- **Are we really stuck or are we in this situation merely because we stopped?**
- After the King stopped, the window closes and Elisha dies. See vs. 20.
- It is over now and the opportunity is lost.
- There is power in Pre: Pre-marital counseling (a Pastor Steven Classic: where you can eliminate some of the problems with your spouse so that he/she can become manageable ☺), Pre-natal vitamins, we did not need a pre-nuptial agreement (because we had pre-nothing to own), pre-school so that they are pre-pared.
- Let's spend the rest of the sermon talking about the power of preparation.
- **Not only is the outcome of the battle decided before it begins (pre-decided or pre-cision), most of us are not performing to the level of our potential because we are only performing at our level of preparation.**
- Elisha says to the King: There was more that God had in store for you – however, you stopped at three.
- Are you living beneath your potential?
- **The key problem: We don't celebrate preparation like we should. We live in a "post" orientated world.**
- Recall Pastor Steve's story of gaining weight during the first 18 month of marriage – because of poor meal planning during our pre-children days. A Pastor Steven Classic: How many guys get better looking as they age - Praise from his wife.
- Not everything is meant to be posted.
- **Four Important points of this message: The Post, The Point, The Plow, and The Promotion**
- **We live in a world where everyone wants to post everything. We are more interested in posting than we are progress.**
- **Recall the game Guitar hero – where we can pre-tend to know how to play the guitar – where everyone wants to be a rock star but no one wants to learn the cords.**
- **Preparation is under rated and not celebrated in our culture – because we want instant validation and instant outrage. We tweet before we learn to think.**
- We post everything that we think – like everyone should know what we think.
- There is striking difference between a written journal and a face book page. Everything that you think does not deserve an audience.
- Some of you hope that aunt Suzanne in CO hears this message.
- Let's get back 2nd Kings 13
- How would you like it if I came up here to preach without any preparation?
- Why do you expect a pastor to prepare while you spend so little preparation to receive the message?

- **If is often the quality of the soil and not the seed that determines quality of the harvest.**
- Some say: Wow! That was the best sermon I ever heard. No, it is more like you just started listening and are now ready to receive it.
- **There is something about staying on your post. Recall that Elisha was quite for 40 years before the new king came to power. There is the lost art of being planted. You never going to fulfill purpose until you commit to your post.**
- **God has posted in you places that appear to be insignificant.**
- **The key message in 2nd Kings 13 is that God leaves a lot this up to you.**
- How far do want to go?
- God does not make all of the decisions of your life.
- God probably lets you decide under certain parameters or potential that you want to fulfill.
- God does not probably pre-decide most things in your life.
- Does each one of you have a purpose? Yes.
- **Yes, God is sovereign. But within in sovereignty, he has left space for you to take responsibility.**
- How do you preach the power of preparation in a “Post” orientated world?
- Answer: Perhaps we want to take recognition before we take responsibility.
- Do we need the pat on the back?
- For example, NASCAR: This is a highly complicated endeavor and involves lots of preparation.
- Recall the story of #22 – Joey Logano (see: <http://www.joeylogano.com/>) – where after a race the comment was made – that race was won in the garage – with 350 were working on the car.
- It is not what happen Sunday that determines the victory – where God is more interested in the garage than the track.
- **God is a god of preparation.**
- The multitudes were not fed until all sat down in the grass.
- Why: **Provision awaits preparation.**
- **You have been asking God to sift through your left while God has been waiting for you to form it because God cannot fill what you have not yet formed.**
- Elisha predicted the outcome based on the level of the Kings persistence and preparation.
- God says: If you will not do the ground work, when it does not seem to make sense – If all you want is the arrow and flight (8 pack abs, a great marriage, etc.), God says – it is all about the garage.
- God is the god of the garage –
- The Point: Proceed with empathy. Try to understand the other perspective. Arrows are supposed to fly with an arc. Yet, the King was told to strike the ground repeatedly. **It is hard to be persistent when you don't see the purpose.**
- **Recall Karate Kid 1: Wax on/Wax off – where Mr. Miyagi is not always going to explain to you the reason for something – while you are painting this fence.**
- You would paint the fence and wax the car if you knew the purpose. And you would stay a virgin if God gave you a wedding date.
- The King got a calling and Elisha took him to class. Important point: Don't expect the class to look like your calling. Don't expect your training and preparation to look like your promise.
- Because the place where God prepares you the most is the place that seems the most pointless.

- Elevation Church is not a marketing phenomenon. Sure this term “marketing phenomenon” might be correct – who lites a lamp and then puts in under a bowl? We did not start a church to keep the gospel to ourselves. We did not start a church for 120 people and bolt the doors and not permit access.
- You can’t understand someone’s priorities without knowing their process. Yes, Elisha was angry at the King and missing out on an opportunity.
- Pastor Steven got his start after Jamie Williams gave him an access code to a copier machine at a 1st Baptist Church to print out 300 fliers at Summer Impact “Run to Win” church events – where no one showed during the first day of camp.
- **Work your window of influence even if it is a peep hole right now.**
- If you work your copier code, perhaps one-day God will give you a billboard.
- If you are faithful in little things, God will make you faithful in much. Why would God reward you if you are not faithful in what you have right now?
- After handing out fliers, Pastor Steven raised attendance on the final day to 40 kids. What is the point: It is called ground game and preparation. Why would God allow me to become a pastor for thousands if I was not faithful by hitting the streets for 40 kids.
- **What has God got you doing right now that seems kinds of pointless?**
- **Yes, it makes no sense to strike the ground with something that is supposed to fly into the air.**
- **It also makes no sense to declare victory with an instrument of death called the cross.**
- It also makes no sense for the young David to be able to kill a giant with a sling shot (with the most inexperienced person on the battle field).
- It makes no sense for Moses to deliver an entire nation to freedom with a stick.
- **It makes no sense that God prepares you to trust the teacher by putting you in a class that does not look like the calling.**
- Lion and bears don’t look like Goliath, however, they make a perfect instrument of preparation.
- Learn to trust the teacher – everything is preparation – every car that you wax -every wall that you paint – every offense – every act of forgiveness.
- This thinking will probably not take your pain away. However, if you start seeing your pain as preparation – in His hands – whatever is hurting you can become preparation.
- God is preparing you. You are in the field. You are tending sheep.
- God is preparing you for what he has prepared for you.
- **It is not failure, it is preparation – yes it does not look like preparation and feels like failure.**
- **But the failure is preparation so you have the infrastructure and fortitude for the success.**
- **You need to be in the garage right now – where is does not look like a race track.**
- You did not hit Post yet where all things work for the glory of God according to His purpose.
- The point: The point is for you to trust the teacher.
- The importance of the Plow: Why would Elisha get so angry at the King’s disobedience? Yes, Elisha was about 105 and probably a bit old and cranky. Elisha could not believe that the King has the arrow of victory in his hands and still would not do what had to be done. Consider Elisha’s history and perspective.

- In Elisha's prior life, his people needed rain. His instructions to his people. Dig some ditches – to create reservoirs to collect the water – when the rain comes in the future. Where Elisha knew that the best thing to do to receive God's provision is preparation.
- See When Elijah handed the reins as profit to Elisha, Elisha was busy running a plow.
- See 1 Kings 19:19 – also expanded in Pastor Steven's book *Greater*.
- Although Elisha was to be the next profit, we find him Plowing – where the class room does not look like his purpose – where he was driving twelve oxen and digging up hard ground.
- A Pastor Steven: What you do think the view is like when you are driving 12 oxen?
- If God was preparing to take up someone to take over for Elijah, one would think God would pull someone from The school of profits. However, God wanted someone who knew how to plow.
- Because if you know how to plow, God says, I can teach you to preach.
- God says, I need someone that will not tire and turn back.
- **We have a generation that knows how to post and not know how plow. We have more open windows than work.**
- **Thank of all of the preparation that went into this worship experience and church. A Pastor Steven Classic: Someone plowed so you could plop into a chair. The pre-praise service to God by the hundreds of volunteers that make church happen. You are able to praise God today because someone else prepared.**
- Recall the wonderful story of Chelsea that works in the Video control room – how her high school dance training allowed her to be prepared to work in the Video production area. The underground work of the church – where she calls the shots out of her east window.
- When are you going to stop plopping and start plowing?
- God has been preparing you for your whole life.
- Promotion is the last point.
- **God says: If you keep plowing, God will promote and you can trust him.**
- **The Pre is more important for the post.**
- **The Preparation does not always look like the promise.**
- When it came time for Elisha to be promoted, he was doing what he had always been doing
- Persistence is the key.
- Even if you don't see the point, be persistent in the process.
- Elisha says learn how to plow hard hearts.
- Nothing you have been through has been without purpose.
- God is working in your life.
- Prepare to prevail.
- The Arrow is flying over the life of everyone if you are willing to do the ground work.
- Stay in the ground game.
- God is giving you a great window to view your life. However, how can God trust you if you are faithful where you are.
- God might have you in garage. God might have to take you a part so that you enjoy victory.
- Closing Song by Elevation Worship team: Your promise still stands. Great is Your faithfulness, faithfulness. I'm still in Your hands. This is my confidence, You never failed. Your promise still stands. Great is Your faithfulness, faithfulness. I'm still in Your hands. This is my confidence, You never failed

me yet. I've seen You move, You move the mountains. And I believe, I'll see You do it again. You made a way, where there was no way.

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Bonus Study: Sermon: "Don't Stop at Six" from twelve years ago.

See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B24VMvTN9fk>

sermon highlights

DON'T STOP ON SIX- PASTOR STEVEN FURTICK

Pastor Steven preached this weekend on the well-known passage from Joshua 6, where Joshua led the Israelites to walk around the city of Jericho for seven days. Pastor Steven used this story to challenge us to see some of the reasons people stop short of realizing God's promises in our lives.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Joshua 6:1-16

Hebrews 10:35-36

YOUR PERSPECTIVE GETS BLOCKED

-Our perspective often determines the degree to which we experience the fullness of God's promises. God's promises have already been given to us--and they never fail--but they aren't always easy to see in our lives.

-In Joshua 6, God points Joshua towards Jericho, telling him that He had given the city to Joshua.

However, when Joshua looked to Jericho, he did not see a city ready to be taken, but a city fortified by walls and guarded by the people inside.

-In our own lives, there are many dreams, hopes, and promises go unrealized because of the way the enemy minimizes our perspective. As Pastor Steven preached, "We often miss the city for the walls." So many people never take the first step of faith because their perspective of God's promises is blocked.

YOUR PROGRESS ISN'T ALWAYS OBVIOUS

-Still, Joshua commanded the Israelites to march around the city, just as the Lord commanded him.

-However, for six days, the army marched without seeing a single brick fall from the wall of Jericho.

-Undoubtedly, each day of walking to no avail would have tempted most people to quit walking. Figuratively speaking, many people today have stopped walking around the promises of God in their own lives. -Because the process of realizing God's promise is rarely spelled out for us, it can become difficult to persevere when progress seems to stall. Because the process of realizing God's promises is rarely immediate, many people give up hope altogether.

-Pastor Steven challenged everyone who relates to the frustration of delayed progress and unfulfilled promises to "take another lap," not based on anything they see, but on faith in the God who promises each of us.

THE PROCESS IS OPEN-ENDED

-As Pastor Steven pointed out, Joshua did not tell his army how long they would be marching. He simply told them to march without saying a sound. In the same way, God may tell us to do something, but He doesn't always tell us how long we have to do it.

-As Pastor Steven preached, "Outcome is God's responsibility. Obedience is yours." The Israelites didn't know when God would deliver, but had they stopped walking, they would have missed out on God's promises.

-Still, it can become difficult to persevere when the process of living by faith seems so vague and open-ended.

-Yet while we're walking, God is working. Sometimes, the efforts that seem fruitless to us are actually training us to obey God to the point where we no longer depend solely on our efforts to achieve His promises.

-Pastor Steven suggested that perhaps the point of walking around the walls of Jericho wasn't for the soldiers to knock the walls down, but to build their faith in the God who promised to deliver the city into their hands.

-However, Pastor Steven challenged us not to "stop on six." Our next lap may bring the moment when God delivers on His promises. But if we decide not to continue, we'll never develop the faith to see God's promises.

-No matter how badly we want to stop, if we persevere in our obedient pursuit of God, He will deliver us. Our faith will give birth to victory if we persevere in our trials and surrender every lap of faith to His purposes.