

Series: Barrier Breaking Faith	Reference: Hebrews 11:1-3	Title: Defining Barrier Breaking Faith	Date: 05.12.2019
Website Writeup:			
<i>How can we get to the next level of faith at Six:Eight, which breaks barriers to others hearing the Gospel & truly grows us into being the church God longs for us to be? Radical trust in God to create something out of nothing, defining what a new level of faith looks like for our church, which crushes barriers & defies expectations. Going beyond what we see now, bringing hopeful expectation of what God will do!</i>			

Color changes in text indicate slide changes

For the next four weeks we are going to be talking about Barrier Breaking Faith. Hebrews 11:1-3 defines this, *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for & 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.*

Jesus didn't just come to save us. He came to usher in the kingdom of God. We don't just get saved & sit around living on the defensive. We're called to go on the offensive (Mt 28:18-20). Willing participants in kingdom building here & beyond. **Think about our statements. Purpose:** To live in obedience to Jesus' teaching & commands - to *follow Jesus. Vision:* To live as Jesus did, in word & deed. Awakening others to their own spiritual journey with him - *to live as Jesus did. Mission:* To be the hands, feet, & voice of Jesus' in the Eastern Mainline & beyond - *to manifest Jesus.*

All of these exude the two things we want to see happen in Six:Eight; Spiritual formation leading to evangelism. How can we get to the next level of faith at Six:Eight, which breaks barriers to others hearing the Gospel & truly grows us into being the church God longs for us to be? Radical trust in God to create something out of nothing, defining what a new level of faith looks like for our church, which crushes barriers & defies expectations. Going beyond what we see now, bringing hopeful expectation of what God will do.

All pastors want their churches to grow, but not for the reasons other organizational leaders want growth, which is usually fiscal. We want more people to know Jesus, not just to grow in number, but also in depth of faith.

Trees don't grow just straight upwards. If they did, they'd be spindly little sticks which blow over easily in the wind. They grow up, out & down. Roots go farther down soaking up water & nutrients, adding yearly rings to their girth to accommodate height, growing up & out, with more branches & fruit. That's the image we want for our church. Rooted in Christ, going deeper in order that Jesus may grow our church for the sake of His glory among people! More people assimilated into God's kingdom of peace, experiencing God's freedom & peaceful reign, assimilated into the healthy community of faith.

I'm messy. I have to search to find stuff which should just be in their place, but aren't. It's a waste of time & hinders what I'm doing. Instead of just finding something in a file, I shift through piles of paper wasting much needed time. But miraculously, I've learned, if I just let it go & go away for a day or two without Kim, it all gets cleaned up! Everything in order! I've asked if she's seen papers just shifting themselves around on my desk, or shirts being folded & put in the drawers by themselves, but she hasn't. It's amazing.

That mess stands in the way of growth & progress in my life, it needs to be put in order. I've had to learn to readjust how I do things as my responsibilities grow. To be more organized. Sometimes, what used to work for me, doesn't any longer & I have to adjust.

The same is true with church, we address underlying issues as we grow. Learning to do things differently which fosters growth, which brings **a faith factor**. My leadership has transitioned, and will continue to do so as we grow. People struggle through growth barriers - transition isn't easy & we must walk in faith through it. Ministry is by nature transitional, always tenuous, in flux. It's organic. It deals with people.

In that transitional nature of ministry we know, faith is constantly being challenged to grow stronger - believing in & hoping for something we've not yet seen. As we grow, we must remember Psalm 127:1, *Unless the Lord Builds the house, those who build it labor in vain*. Growth & transition demand a new level of faith, which begins with leadership.

We walk in faith, transitioning to new stages of church-life, believing God that our church can grow through barriers. Even internal personal barriers. Believing He can take us further for the sake of His glory! He's building this & we need to follow.

The Disciples were always challenged in this way. Jesus often warned, *Oh you of little faith!* Or we might say, "Oh you who need to grow in your faith!"

Matthew 6:30 talks about our faith in trusting God to take care of our physical needs.

In 8:26 in the midst of the storm on the boat, Jesus said, *"You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up & rebuked the winds & the waves, and it was completely calm.*

In 14:31, when Peter began to sink after walking on the water it says, *Immediately Jesus reached out his hand & caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"*

In 16:8, Jesus reminds the Disciples of how he fed thousands with very little & said, *"You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?"*

And in 17:20 He claimed, *"Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

These teach & urge towards a life of faith & trust in what God can accomplish in the world through us. There's something clearly going on in the Bible concerning faith & believing God can do great things.

Our first step then is **prayer** that God will do great things through our church & believe it. Because it's His call & promise, we know that from Scripture (Mt 28:18-20). It's taking Him at His word. In faith we can pray & believe God is doing something great & that we can participate in it.

For the last two weeks we talked about one aspect of faith where we may need to grow, our finances as they relate to God. We said God owns all of us - slaves of righteousness. Stewards of His resources. God has every right to expect us to be generous with the resources He's entrusted to our care. He's called His people to tithe at least 10% to the local church. God's people have always needed to evaluate if they're doing that. It's a spiritual endeavor which deepens, widens & roots our faith in Christ.

We'd never allow our own children to go hungry while feeding someone else, but that's often the practice when it comes to church giving. If we tithe to pet favorite projects disconnected from our local sphere of ministry, our own local body gets only the leftover. Or we *don't* simply give to the general budget, but only to things to which we want to give. All the while leadership sits in a meeting saying, "I wish we could, but we don't have the money." Instead of out of abundance saying, "What else can we do!?" Some, have never given tithe out of never being taught the necessity of it, or out of preconceived notions born of some negative experience, or opinion of someone else they've believed. Some only give a meager amount, a first step which needs to go further. John Wimber, Martin Luther, Billy Graham, and other church leaders claim our spiritual growth is hindered if we don't conform ourselves to God's call in this area. And Jesus said, you can't serve both God & money.

To not give to our local church communicates distrust of others, leadership & the vision. It reveals we don't see the spiritual nature of money, given, to only support things disconnected from local context, is to misunderstand our resources are intimately tied to boots on the ground work here. It could reveal our greater trust in money & disobedience in answering our call to do the ministry here - only willing to support ministry there, but abdicating our role here where we're called. We might think writing a check is good enough (and in some cases it's all we can do & we should), but God commands so much more of us. Everything, as a matter of fact - that as we're going about life we make disciples right where we are, which takes our time, talent & treasure.

We may've adopted a negative attitude when the issue is addressed in church saying, "Churches are always asking for money!" But we may not have considered that maybe they've had to ask, since people are disobedient to the Lord in this issue. If all Christians were walking in obedient faith in this matter, we'd never have to ask! So we blame church for asking, when the problem lies with us, when we could be overflowing the

blessing of Christ so much more freely. The church is often hamstrung in its ability, given these very well crafted satanic lies woven into the fabric of our psyche.

Someone might say, “Well, God can do great things through small things. Remember Judges 7 & how He diminished Gideons army smaller & smaller to defeat the Midianites?” Of course, but that wasn’t prescriptive of the church. It was to teach a certain lesson. That God wants true followers, and can do great things through a few. But to adopt the attitude, “It’s more godly to stay small,” wasn’t the goal of the story. In essence, the Gospel teaches differently, and not contradictory to Gideons story (Mt 28:18-20). That story is an encouragement to a small church that God wants & can do great things through them! But it in no way teaches He doesn’t want us to grow. **The great things He does are always to the end goal of growing the depth, girth & height of His church for the sake of His glory in physical, spiritual & emotional ways.**

So we strive for faithfulness & fruitfulness which go hand-in-hand. We don’t want to be fruitful without being faithful. And, we can’t be faithful to God’s calling without being fruitful. One can’t happen without the other. We want to live in faithful expectation & practice, towards that which we may not be able to see as of yet. For instance, in things like budgeting we need to take risk, not irresponsible risk, but manageable faith stretching risk.

In that faithful endeavor we need to acknowledge spiritual warfare. Opposition or disagreement within the church aren’t necessarily spiritual warfare, but they can lead to it. We have to guard against carnal opposition remembering Ephesians 6:12 that our battle isn’t against people, but rather the spiritual forces of evil. It’s essential to acknowledge spiritual warfare evident in a world which is in rebellion towards God, but we’re the rebellion against the rebellion which brings warfare upon us at times.

So we need to take faithful steps, personally & as a congregation. **Personally:** we’re moving into a new stage of church-life...growth is unnerving. Churches are typically below 100 people & growth brings transition which is difficult for some. So pray about your own heart (our prayer foci)! Realize you may have feelings arise, but feelings aren’t facts. We conform our will to God’s which means our feelings come under the reign of Christ’s Truth & call. In all practicality, we apply Romans 12:1-2 in transition, knowing God is transforming us as we grow deeper, broader & higher in Christ. We never stop welcoming others, or sharing our faith, given it’s the call & essence of Jesus in life to do so. Ministry never stops & is always morphing before us.

Corporately: There are three faith factors which govern transition in revitalizing churches, which can be applied to a growing church. And we must remember Leadership has to lead spiritually first!

1. They experience a renewed belief in Jesus Christ & the Mission of the Church.
2. They experience a renewed attitude for servanthood with their time, talent & treasures.

3. And they develop a more strategic prayer effort. Instead of just being defensive in prayer, they go on the offensive, trusting God can do something they've not yet seen & pray to that end!

Leadership must be spiritually minded, sharing how the Word is governing & transforming them, and where they've been sharing their faith & with whom they're discipling. Modeling, with the hopes of transference is the goal.

This means some people will shift in roles either due to a need of rest, or because they find they fit better someplace else. Mt 16:18 Jesus says, *"I will build my church."* We want to be pliable in His hands to do so!

Barrier Breaking Faith is reality & proof. Verse 1 of Hebrews 11 shows us both the acts of faith & the effects of faith, how it operates & what it produces. Faith actively believes the testimony of God.

Remember we said two weeks ago, that wise people live by promise & not explanation. The person, not truly living in faith, demands God explain everything to them before they will move. That's not faith. John Wimber used to say faith is spelled RISK, and he was correct. True faith holds onto the promises of God & lives out of them.

Holding firmly to our beginning reality providing a firm ground on which to stand (Heb 3:14 *We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.*) Faith visualizes the unseen, giving substance & proof to the invisible promises of God. Faith is hearing God's truth, believing it's true & obeying it.

Barrier Breaking Faith is the vehicle of salvation. Verse 2 shows us, it isn't FOR their faith the ancestors of the Hebrews received approval from God, but it was BY faith. God uses faith as the necessary means, by which we're saved & it can't be by our works or personal merit, as seen in Eph 2:8-9, *⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.*

We see this in the life of Abraham as outlined by Paul in Ro 4:18-25, *¹⁸Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed & so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ¹⁹Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead - since he was about a hundred years old - and that Sarah's womb was also dead. ²⁰Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith & gave glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²²This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." ²³The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, ²⁴but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness - for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was delivered over to death for our sins & was raised to life for our justification.*

Abraham, the man God began to build his people through, believed God & acted on it, although he had no context whatsoever to see what that meant - we have millenniums of witnesses behind & around us now who can testify how God moves when we respond in faith. Our excuses dwindle with every story of a transformed life!

Barrier Breaking Faith is how God transforms something out of nothing.

Verse 3 addresses the greatest philosophical & scientific question, "Where did we come from?" In John 11:40, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He turned to those present & said, "*Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?*"

Colossians 1:16 reiterates Hebrews 11:3, *¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven & on earth, visible & invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him & for him.*

To understand the world was created out of nothing, formed from no pre-existent material, framed & structured ex nihilo, it requires faith to believe God can create something out of nothing. The issue is, will we live by promise, or by explanation?

So for our church to have barrier breaking faith, we must apply a few things both personally & corporately...

- We must remember, our faith is the means by which God works in the world.
- We must believe, God can make something out of nothing. If He can create the world, He can create an even greater new reality for us & our church.
- We must strive to actively believe the promises of God to see something come out of nothing.
 - **Personally** that may mean, you crucify your need for explanation, and begin to trust God with your life, simply following what He calls you to.
 - That may mean new ways you regard your finances, your sexuality & practices, your thought-life, or who you spend time with, or what you spend time doing. It may mean you reevaluate how you use your skills to glorify Jesus.
 - In short, it will mean a difference in what you do with your time, talent & treasure.
 - It will mean a revaluation of your role in your local church, its vision & how you can be an active part! (CG's, Kingdom Opportunities, Discipleship, Membership, Baptism, do you pray over people when they need it?, Do you serve in our children's ministry? Greet, do slides or sound, or whatever else is needed, etc.)
 - You'll find when you practice Romans 12:1-2, things will become clearer, or that it won't matter as much that you don't know the answers, since God does!
 - **Corporately**, we just celebrated 10 years, what does God want the next 10 to look like? How does He want us to get there? How do we pray that into reality? This is where imaginative prayer comes into play! Let's practice that now!
 - The Mic is open...let's spend a few moments in silence & I will open us up by asking God what he wants to do in & through our church.
 - Let us both listen, since the Holy Spirit may give us an image we need to share.

- Let us faithfully pray those things into being. If you feel God is giving you an imaginative vision for this church come up & share it & pray through it at the mic here.