

Sermon—May 22-23, 1999  
Powerful Encounters in  
The Book of Acts  
Acts 9: 32-43

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## Power Evangelism

Some of you know that I've been doing a series from the book of Acts. I wanted to cover some of the highlights from the book of Acts as I'd like to expose many of you to what may be some new teaching regarding the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Some of you never had the opportunity to meet or hear John Wimber. John was the founder of the Vineyard movement of which we're a part. There are about 850-900 Vineyard churches around the world now in something like 45 different countries. Our little association started in 1982 and so it's a very rapidly growing association of churches and it's exciting to be a part of the Vineyard.

John passed away last year and I considered him to be a dear friend and also, to me, a father figure. He was a great encouragement to me and very kind and very generous regarding his time and his counsel, which proved over the years to be very helpful to me and helpful to this church. In any case, in the mid-1980's John wrote a book that was titled "Power Evangelism," and in the book he tells a story that is very much like the scripture portion that we're going to be looking at today. I would by the way highly recommend, especially to the several thousand who are newer to the Vineyard in the last few years, that at some point in the next year or two years you read my book called "Empowered Evangelicals"—it's in the bookstore and you pick

up one or two of John Wimber's books and read them. I think you would get a very good feel for our church. Some of the insights in the book will be encouragements to you and to your walk with God.

Well, in the book, John tells a story of a time when he was traveling from doing a conference in Chicago, he was tired and on a plane and he was flying on his way to another speaking engagement in New York. And so he's sitting in his seat exhausted, just putting his head back, planning to take a nap and his eyes just sort of wandered around the cabin. Across the aisle there was a middle-aged man, not particularly noteworthy, in a suit; he looked like a businessman. But, in the split second that John's eyes wandered across this man's face, John saw in his mind's eye the word "adultery" written across the man's forehead. He blinked and rubbed his eyes but it was still there and he felt like the Holy Spirit was telling him very plainly that this man was in an adulterous relationship and God gave him the name of the woman that he was committing adultery with.

Well, John didn't mean to, but he was sort of staring at this businessman when the guy looked over and saw him staring and snapped at him, saying "What do you want?" And so, sort of nervously, John leaned across the aisle and said, "Does the name 'Belinda' mean anything to you?" All the blood in his businessman's face just sort of drained away, you know, he became sort of ashen. He said, "We need to talk." And so back in those days the old 747's use to have a lounge and so they walked up to the lounge and the man said, "Who told you that name?" and John just sort of

blurted out, "God told me." The guy goes "God told you!!" He shouts the question and John said, "Yes, God told me and God said that if you don't break off this adulterous affair, you're going to be judged." Well, this guy just broke and he said to John, "What should I do?" John said, "Let me explain to you the way that you can have a relationship with God through his son, Jesus and have this sin forgiven."

So, John told the man about how God sent his son Jesus into the world to teach us the way to live and also to die in our place as the penalty for all the ways that we're disobedient to him, including the way that this man had been disobedient to God through his adultery. Then John went on to tell the man that if he wanted a relationship with God, the way to have one is to repent, to stop this particular sin and turn to God, and to believe in his son Jesus, receiving from him the forgiveness of sins. The man said he wanted to have a relationship with God so John invited him to pray with him and John began to pray and apparently the dam of guilt had so built up inside of this man. At the moment John said "Oh God," the man just burst into tears. He said, "Oh God, I'm so sorry." He launched into this heart wrenching repentance in which he was just weeping before God and begging God to forgive him for his many sins.

The cocktail lounge was very cramped quarters and everybody in this little intimate setting could hear him and so the details of this man's life was just being announced by the fellow and by the end of the prayer there were several other people who were in tears. Well, when he got done praying, John and he talked about what had

happened to him. The man said the reason he was so upset when John leaned over and shared Belinda's name was because the woman sitting next to him was his wife and I didn't want her to hear what you were saying. John said, "Well then you're not going to like what I have to say to you now." The guy said, "What's that?" and he said "I think the Lord wants you to tell your wife what you've been doing."

Now, of course, the prospect of telling your spouse what you've been doing is extremely intimidating but the man deeply felt that that was the right thing to do and so he walked downstairs and John walked down and sat back in his seat. He could see the guy telling his wife what happened, and she looked at her husband and then looked at John, and looked back at her husband, looked at John. She began to cry and the man had an opportunity to lead his wife to Christ.

Now John coined a term for that sort of experience. He called it "power evangelism." Power evangelism is the presentation of the gospel message that is preceded by and under-girded with a supernatural demonstration of God's power and presence. The demonstration may be the result of a prophetic word of the kind that John got regarding this particular man. The demonstration of God's presence could be the result of a healing or a deliverance. But, in power evangelism, God breaks down some initial resistance to the reception of the gospel. God breaks down people's defensiveness and shows then unmistakably that he is alive and is to be taken seriously and that the gospel message that accompanied this demonstration of power needs to be received.

Power evangelism is the idea that the gifts of the Spirit are not just to be used inside the 4 walls of a church building or a small group meeting, the gifts of the Spirit are to be taken to the streets – used out there. I’ve called today’s talk, “Power Evangelism.” Let’s pray.

If you have a Bible, why don’t you turn with me to Acts Chapter 9, verse 32,

“As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years. ‘Aeneas,’ Peter said to him, ‘Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat.’ Immediately Aeneas got up. All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas) who was always doing good and helping the poor. About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, ‘Please come at once!’ Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, ‘Tabitha,

get up.’ He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.”

So what we have here are two amazing stories of miracles performed through the hands of the apostle Peter. We have the story of the healing of a paralytic man named, Aeneas, who had been paralyzed for 8 years and we have a story of the raising of the dead, of a woman named Tabitha. A demonstration of God’s power over illness and a demonstration of God’s power over death. Now, both of these incidents occurred northwest of Jerusalem near the coast. Israel, you may know, is a very small country; it’s a very narrow long country. Jerusalem is inland about 35-40 miles from the Mediterranean Sea. So, Jerusalem is about the distance from here to Newark, Ohio or Marion, Ohio, from the Mediterranean Sea, not very far. We’re talking about a very little country and if you traveled northwest from Jerusalem for about 25 miles, you’d come to the city of Lydda where we read in Acts chapter 9, verse 32, “As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda.”

When Acts is speaking about the “saints” here, it’s not referring to people who were, you know, special, or who had been nominated by the Roman Catholic Church to go through some process of sainthood. The word “saint” in the Bible is used for any Christian believer, however ordinary they are. It comes from a root word meaning

“holy” and it refers to people who are “holy ones.” Actually the word holy means “separated ones.” To be a Christian is to be separated by God out from the rest of humanity for his own purpose and use. Every Christian is a saint because every Christian has been selected out by God, separated out for God’s special purpose and use.

Apparently, these particular saints were Jews who had come to faith in Jesus somehow. Maybe they were visiting Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and received Christ then. Maybe they became Christian believers, these Jews, through the scattering of the church as a result of the persecution that we read about last week in Acts chapter 8. But, Peter was going up and visiting the saints, meaning visiting the Christians who lived in the city of Lydda, probably for the purpose of teaching them and encouraging them to, you know, keep on keeping on in the faith.

And then we read that “...he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years. ‘Aeneas,’ Peter said to him ‘Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat.’ Immediately Aeneas got up.” Now, what is striking about this incident is that the words that Peter uses are the exact same words that his Lord, Jesus, used in healing a paralyzed man in Luke 5, verse 24. Jesus had demonstrated a pattern and then Peter, when he was put in the same situation, thought back and said “Okay, I remember when we were in that house in the city of Capernaum, and some men lowered their paralytic friend down from the roof into the middle of the crowd.

Jesus didn't take a lot of time to pray a lengthy prayer; Jesus didn't beat around the bush thanking God for the man's illness, praying that the man would come to accept his condition with a spirit of equanimity and serenity. Jesus gave a prayer of command, "Get up, take up your mat and walk," and that man walked. Here I am in the same situation, what should I do, Peter says. "Well, let's see, I watched Jesus heal a man this way and now Jesus has given authority to Christians to act in his name. Why don't I try to pray the way that Jesus did." And, motivated by the Holy Spirit, he issues a command, the same command that Jesus did only he prays in Jesus' name, the same words, "Get up, take up your mat and walk." And this man walked. He imitates Jesus' model of ministry.

And then we read in verse 36: "In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which when translated, is Dorcas) who was always doing good and helping the poor."

Peter traveled further toward the coast, up a little north to a city called Joppa, it's modern Jaffa in Israel, and this city has historically served as the port for goods moving into Jerusalem. It has a harbor there. Well Tabitha, which means gazelle in Greek, is translated Dorcas, same name. Tabitha was apparently famous for her kindness to the poor and, according to Jewish custom, when she died her body was cleansed, placed in a room where it was awaiting burial. Jews generally bury the next day. Peter gets to the room and all the widows are weeping and crying; what does Peter do? Well, as in the story of Aeneas, Peter follows Jesus' model when praying for the dead. Peter says to himself, "Have I ever seen this before—how to

pray for a dead person? Why, yes, I remember there was a very similar situation that I watched Jesus encounter involving a dead little girl.” And we read about that story in Mark chapter 5. “And I remember that there were all these women wailing and weeping.”

Back in those days, along with the sort of natural grief that would occur upon the death of a loved one, there were actually professional mourners who would go to the funerals and wail on behalf of the dead, increasing the commotion. “And then I remember that Jesus sent everyone out of the room except for the little girl’s parents who were exhorted ahead of time to believe, and me and James and John. So perhaps I should send everyone out of the room,” Peter says. Why did Jesus do that? Well, I don’t know if you’ve ever been in a situation where there’s a lot of commotion and hubbub, but particularly a situation where a sick person is surrounded by a group of people who do not believe in God, where the atmosphere is filled with unbelief.

For example, you might go to a hospital to visit a sick friend or a sick relative and you wish to pray but there is a nurse busy playing with the tubes that are running into your friend’s arms. As she’s going from side to side of the bed checking the monitors, and other people are coming in talking with the nurse and discussing different treatments--in that kind of environment, it’s very difficult to pray a prayer of faith.

Even more common is my experience of praying for a couple, husband and wife. They both ask for prayer but the husband is sort of draped over his wife's shoulders and kind of clinging to her and laying on her, almost like an enormous blanket of unbelief wrapped around this woman. My typical approach is such a setting would be to say to the husband, "I wonder if it would be all right if you stood to your wife's side and opened your hands as a sign of expectation." It is the case that in an atmosphere of severe unbelief we see very little power and very few miracles. If you want to check that in your Bible, examine the ministry of Jesus in his hometown of Nazareth in Mark chapter 6. So, the first thing that Peter does is he follows Jesus' model and sends everyone out of the room.

The second thing that Peter does is he kneels down and prays and I think his prayer was not so much as prayer for the dead woman. I think his prayer was a prayer asking God the Father to reveal to him what it is that God wanted to do in the situation. It is not generally the case that in our day, before the day of resurrection, that God wishes to raise most people from the dead. The resurrection of the dead is something that awaits us in the future, at Jesus' Second Coming. The resurrection of the dead is not something that is generally available in our time, in our day, before the Second Coming of Christ. And so we don't just "willy nilly," run around to funeral homes praying for people to be raised from the dead. Our assumption is that this person has been taken by the Lord and we come before God releasing the person to his tender care.

But it is appropriate to ask, “Father, is this one of those rare occurrences where you wish to do a miracle and raise someone from the dead.” Now this is one of those “once in a lifetime” kind of things. We don’t read about Peter raising anyone else from the dead. We read about it happening in the ministry of Paul, but it truly is a “once in a lifetime” type of thing even for the apostles and Peter got the green light. It says “Turning toward the dead woman,” literally turning toward the body, he said “Tabitha, get up.” Now again he follows Jesus’ pattern exactly. In fact his words, except for one letter, are the words that Jesus spoke to the dead little girl I talked about before in Mark, chapter 5. In Mark 5, Jesus said to the little girl, “Talitha,” which means ‘little girl, “qumi,” in Aramaic means “get up.” Peter would have said not “Talitha,” but “Tabitha, qumi.” And then we read that “He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive.” And the exact same sequence of events happened with the little girl. She was ordered up and taken by the hand and presented to her mother and to all of those around as now being alive.

Do you see what’s going on here? Peter is doing miracles by following the patter of his master, Jesus. And I must note not in some mechanical way, not in some rote fashion but rather as led by the Spirit to imitate, he imitates. One of the great questions that is constantly posed through the ages is “What does it mean in our time, in our day, to live like a Christian?” “What does it mean on the eve of this new millenium, with all of our technology and our education and our cultural and societal problems and the violence in the schools, and historic patterns of racism in

the country—what does it mean to live like a Christian?” The Bible has one simple answer. To live like a Christian means to imitate Jesus who set an example for us that we should follow in his steps. To be a Christian, to be a disciple, means that we do what Jesus would do if he were in our skin. Real Christianity is not simply mouthing a set of beliefs and then living any way you feel like living. Real Christianity involves the imitation of Christ, our model and example.

It’s been very helpful that that couple came up with that WWJD bracelet that literally hundreds of thousands of teens and adults are wearing around their wrists. WWJD, “What Would Jesus Do?” That’s the question disciples always ask themselves. What would Jesus do if he were in my situation encountering my problems and my stresses? The point of all of God’s activity in you life is to make you more like Jesus. The Bible says in Romans 8:29 that where everything is going in your life if you’re a Christian is that you would be “...conformed to the likeness of the Son of God so that he might be the firstborn of many brothers.” Paul tells us that was his goal in his work as a pastor with the Galatian church. He says in Galatians 4:19 “My little children for whom I am in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you.” Paul’s goal was to see people live like Jesus. WWJD—What Would Jesus Do? That’s the questions that you ask yourself as a Christian disciple.

If Jesus were living in your skin, would he seek revenge against an ex-spouse. Would every unkind gesture of your ex-husband or ex-wife or current spouse require you to return the same? What would Jesus do with provocation from a co-

worker, or a boss, or a sister or a brother, or another church member? Would he return tit for tat? Would Jesus say, “well, an eye for an eye?” Might he simply bear the abuse and forgive? Might he simply, as he told us to, turn the other cheek? What did he do when he was slapped in the face? Jesus lived out the Sermon on the Mount that he calls us to live. When he was slapped, he turned the other cheek. What would Jesus do with suffering? Or with unfair discrimination?

Now listen to me; I’m not suggesting to anyone who is being abused here that you just be a dishrag. And, certainly if you’re a wife or if you have a child who is being physically or sexually abused, you need to get out of there and contact this church for protection and help. But, as we think about abuse that you might have suffered in the past, WWJD, What would Jesus do? Or, what did he do toward his abusers when he was hanging on a cross? He forgave. Christian discipleship. Would Jesus gossip about a co-worker?

Husbands, what would Jesus do if he came home to a sink filled with dishes. Would he pretend they’re self-cleaning dishes? If he were in your position and had a wife, would he wait for his wife to clean up everything or to do all the laundry? Jesus said that he came not to be served, but to serve. In your skin, Jesus would act like a servant and he would clean up somebody else’s dishes. If he were in your skin, he would vacuum somebody else’s mess and wash somebody else’s clothes.

Teenagers, would Jesus stand up for the truth in your classroom, among your friends, even if it were unpopular and even if it was out of sync with the crowd? Did Jesus go along with the crowd or resist the crowd, teens?

Business people, would Jesus lie to make a sale? Or to keep a client happy? Or to smooth things over with the boss? What would Jesus do? That's the questions. It's always the question.

You know, the toughest thing in discipleship, in following Jesus is what do you do when your desires conflict with God's will? It's no problem being a follower of Jesus when your desires and God's will are congruent. You're both traveling in the same direction, no problem. But, what happens when what you want and what God wants collide head-on? Has anyone of you ever been in that situation where you wanted something that God did not want you to have? Or when you didn't want something that God did want you to have? Anyone ever in a situation of a collision of wills between your will and Gods will? This is where the rubber meets the road of discipleship.

You're a follower of Jesus; you've declared that and you're dating someone who is not a strong follower of Christ, or planning to marry someone who is not a strong follower of Christ, and you begin to get the inkling that this is something that God doesn't want for you. Or you're living with someone outside of marriage, or you wish to take a job that you sense God does not want you to take, even though it's for

a lot of money. What would Jesus do? Or perhaps God is pressing you to confess a sin to someone, your wife, your husband, your best friend and you would rather crawl over broken glass than go and confess that sin. There's a collision of wills. Well, what did he do when he was in the garden of Gethsemane and looking forward to the cross the next morning. What Jesus did was he yielded his will to the will of God the Father. He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, "Not my will but your will be done." You cannot be a Christian disciple and continue to maintain your will in the face of the will of God. Whatever else you are, you are no follower of Jesus. There is no such thing as a self-willed follower of Christ.

A follower of Christ by definition is someone who yields to the will of God. How big of a sacrifice does God want you to make to him? WWJD, What would Jesus do? Jesus didn't offer up sacrifices to God; he didn't give up television for Lent or cigars. Jesus gave himself up to God. God doesn't want your little sacrifices on the altar. "Oh here you go, God, I threw a \$20 into the offering plate; I hope you're satisfied for the week." God wants you on the altar. He wants your will, he wants your total surrender, even as we see the model of our master Jesus who was totally surrendered and yielded to the will of God the Father.

Let me apply following the "Jesus model" to power evangelism. We have no right as followers of Jesus to arbitrarily say that we will walk in the steps of Jesus in the areas of our character or in the areas of our attitudes but we will not walk in Jesus' steps in supernatural ministry. Friends, in the Western church today, millions of

people have arbitrarily and without biblical warrant said they will confine their followership of Christ to things like “forgiving other people” and “not harboring bitterness.” “Trying to love others,” to “being kind and truthful”, to “not going along with the crowd,” to “keeping sexually pure”. All those things are a part of Christian followership but what gives anyone the right to say that following in the footsteps of Jesus doesn’t also involve doing the ministry of Jesus—healing the sick and casting out demons. It is pure and simple and anti-supernatural bias that has come over the western church so that we restrict our imitation of Christ merely to those things that do not seem supernatural to us.

Jesus wants all of us to follow him in all of his ways including his miraculous ways. Now, listen, discipleship is a balanced life. It involves balanced followings of Christ; not just proclaiming God’s word everywhere you go but demonstrating God’s spirit everywhere you go. The life of discipleship is a balance, not only of the fruit of the Spirit but also the gifts of the Spirit. Discipleship involves words and works, proclamation and demonstration, showing and telling. Miracles were part and parcel of the ministry of Jesus and of the ministry of the apostles and the ministry of the churches that the apostles planted. And the miracles were not just there to validate the preaching. I admit you can find some verses that seem to indicate that the reason why miracles were performed were to validate or stamp with God’s seal of approval the preaching of Jesus or the apostles or other followers of Christ.

But miracles were not simply a sign or a seal to authenticate the preaching. Miracles, most of the time, were simply signs that the kingdom of God had come in Jesus. They were signs of a new administration, if you will. Signs that salvation had broken in in the coming of Christ that something was different in the Old Testament period. Had Messiah come? That was the questions John the Baptist's followers asked Jesus—"Are you the Christ?" "Has the kingdom come?" Jesus answered very plainly, "Go and tell John what you've seen and heard; the blind received their sight, the lame walked, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." Miracles, he's saying, are not just to authenticate my preaching, miracles are a sign that Messiah King has entered the world and a new day has dawned in history because Jesus came.

And the ministry of Jesus is always a ministry not only of words, but of deeds. Not only preaching, but healing. Friends, these two things are always tied together. He sent the disciples to preach the Gospel but also to heal the sick. Balanced followership of Christ requires you to often pray for the sick and to cast out demons. And, I'll tell you something, if you choose to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and to start out trying to do some of the things that Jesus did, heal the sick, cast out demons. If you commit yourself to supernatural ministry, in other words, I've got to warn you that you are going to get on an emotional roller coaster with the Lord. It is much easier emotionally to adopt a position, as many people have, that God rarely heals, and then to be pleasantly surprised if a few times in your life you see something happen. Because, if you adopt a position that God rarely heals, God

rarely intervenes in any dramatic way, that this stuff we're reading in the book of Acts almost never occurs, it will free you of disappointments and wrestling and struggle in prayer. I frankly think that the reason why many people live even Christian lives emotionally is because they relate to God as if God were a sort of level 2 personality. Let me explain what I mean.

Perhaps you have a parent who never gives you what you want. You want to be treated with respect and they show you disrespect. You want them to acknowledge some accomplishment of yours; they never acknowledge it. You want them to bless your life, to speak words of affirmation over you and instead what you get is criticism, or aloofness, or neglect. You could keep relating to your parents in frustration and in disappointment, saying "Well, my dad or mother ought to be a level 10 person, giving me level 10 affirmation, and level 10 encouragement, level 10 blessing." But, at some point in your life you realize "I've got to get off this roller coaster. I'm going to treat my parent as a level 2 person. They simply will never give me love or blessing or encouragement that I want and then, if occasionally they say something nice, it comes as a bonus."

Well, friends, whereas it might be psychologically wise to lower the bar of expectation regarding other people including our own parents or even our own spouses, it is entirely unwarranted to relate to God as if He were somehow a level 2 person. There is something that is profoundly wrong even to suggest that God is anything other than a great provider and a great lover, a great healer, a strong and

great deliverer. There is something profoundly wrong when you are getting through life by just lowering the bar regarding God. The truth is whatever you have heard about the roller coaster, great Christians and great believers have always manifested somewhat of an emotional roller coaster with God. Listen to me—you can't pray the prayers of the psalms if in your eyes God is a level 2 person who rarely does anything really great and isn't expected to.

To pray with the emotion of the psalms requires that you believe that God is going to do something phenomenal and you make yourself vulnerable to that. Why did the psalmist pray prayers that breathe with great disappointment or great anger or great grief before God? How do you pray a prayer that says "God, why do you stand far off?" "Why do you close your eyes at the injustice of the wicked?" "Why do you allow these things to happen?" How do you pray great big prayers unless you believe in a great big God and allow yourself to suffer great big disappointments?

Let me state it as plainly as I can. It is infinitely easier to relate to someone who has cancer as if the only question is "What is the medical prognosis?" And yeah, we'll pray for you but we don't think that anything is going to happen with respect to our prayers. This cancer will almost certainly follow the line of descent that the doctors have pronounced. Oh, friend, it is much easier to not open yourself up to great heartache and great disappointment when a friend you've been praying for for months—you didn't just heap one up, visiting them in the hospital, but you went week after week after week and then they pass away. Just as a wonderful young

woman in our congregation, Sara Beaumier, passed away just a few weeks ago with cancer. It's easier to just pack it up and say "Hey, I can't do this anymore." But biblically we're not permitted to take that course. Biblically the Christian life is putting it on the line over and over again with God's help. The biblical position of the Christian is to be raw emotionally before God. It's life on the jagged edge friend. You know, that's what biblical faith is all about.

Biblical faith is not "I played it really safe, close to the vest, never took a big risk, never tried something glorious and failed huge." Biblical faith is "I laid it on the line, I sold my business and took off for missions and it didn't work out; I stood up in class and challenged a professor and, man, I got body slammed, I went back to the hospital over and over again and the person didn't get well." That's the experience of the biblical follower of Jesus. It's following him all the way to the vulnerability of the cross. You say, well where does faith come in? Faith is the divine "nevertheless." It's Job who believes in a just and loving God and who life has body slammed. Who doesn't lower his expectations regarding God; doesn't say "Well, what can you expect, he's only a level 2 God. I don't think he would relate to me very justly, very lovingly." Faith is after you have been body slammed, when you've been trying to follow Jesus, it's uttering with Job a defiant "nevertheless." "Tho he slay me, yet I will trust in him--Job 13:15—that's faith.

Though I prayed my heart out, a woman might say, and didn't get pregnant, I will still trust in him as a level 10 person. Though my life never worked out the way I

planned it, though I've never become a big success in business or ministry, or made the world stand up and take notice the way I wanted to, I will still trust in him. The defiant "nevertheless" of faith, the heart cry of the vulnerable. "Though I never get married, though my body remains unhealed, though I never see healing when I pray. Though the person I prayed for still remains sick or died, though my spouse dies before their time and I prayed it wouldn't happen. "Though he slay me I will trust in him."

You can't talk about following Jesus unless you put it on the line. You can't talk about being a follower of Jesus unless you've gotten on the roller coaster and allowed yourself to be taken on a little ride with God. You can't talk about being a true follower of Jesus while you play it safe all the time and always have to feel good and look good. You're a follower of Jesus when you're vulnerable to profound disappointment. You can call yourself a follower of Jesus when you've experienced profound pain and you still go on with God and you still pray for people, you still trust that God is good—level 10 good.

You know, it's people who put it on the line over and over again that see great things with God. Its people who are praying, "God give me a divine appointment, give me a word for a neighbor, a dream, a vision. Give me the power to heal the sick. Lord I will risk and ask my sister if I can pray for her. I will risk and ask a co-worker or a client if I can pray for their healing right there. I will risk and gently share a prophetic insight or picture with someone who I've been sharing with. Whole towns

were converted as a result of these miracles wrought by the hand of Peter who risked. I don't know how many other paralytics he prayed for that didn't stand up or how many dead people he prayed for again who didn't rise up. But the result of this power evangelism, evangelism that was preceded by and under girded by the supernatural power of God, in this instance, resulted in the conversion of whole communities. In verse 35, "All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord." In verse 42, "This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord."

Friends, it ought to be obvious to you that a great darkness has descended upon America. Something is profoundly wrong in our culture where day after day we have to brace ourselves regarding what's going to happen in a high school next. What's the newest bomb scare? What's the latest hit list to hit the school? How many more shootings are we going to hear about? A darkness has come over our country. We're not going to see profound breakthroughs in America, in Columbus, in our families, in our communities, in our high schools unless some people begin to walk in the footsteps of Jesus regarding both natural things and supernatural things—they put it on the line and they say, "What would Jesus do?" I'm going to go for that.

Let's pray.

