

# How To Follow Jesus Into The Impossible

## Part 1

**Intro:** To say we are followers of Jesus is to follow Jesus into the impossible. Jesus Himself said: *“I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it would move. Nothing would be impossible.”* Matt. 17:20. Followers of Jesus were never called to live out their faith inside the safety of church walls. We have been called to change our world. We are called to the impossible.

- I spent some time looking up quotes about the impossible – share – BUT, my favorite is this one. (Put on screen)

“Never tell a young person that anything cannot be done. God may have been waiting centuries for someone ignorant enough of the *impossible* to do that very thing.” – **G M**

**Trevelyan**

**“Never tell a young church that anything cannot be done. God may have been waiting decades for a church ignorant enough of the impossible to do that very thing.”**

- I believe God wants us to stay ignorant of what is impossible. That a rural church in a tiny insignificant town can change 1000s of lives. I believe God has been waiting decades for this very thing. I believe God has raised us up for this very purpose. This has been our story and it must continue to be our story.
- How can we as a church keep following Jesus into the impossible? What is needed for this impossible journey?

### 1. Conviction of our calling

*Eph. 4:1 “Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.” (NLT)*

- I realize many people struggle with this issue of “calling”. The reality is without a strong conviction of your calling you cannot follow Jesus into the impossible. WHY? Because where Jesus wants to take us will be too difficult without this kind of strength of conviction. We will quit when it gets hard and confusing and feels...impossible.
- Foothills is a church birthed out of a conviction that God wants to do something impossible in this area. Back in 1996, I was a young pastor ready to leave Molalla. As I sought after God in the hills above Molalla, God showed me what He wanted to do and asked me to join Him. (Explain)
- I have been running in the strength of that conviction ever since. BUT, it’s not about only me having this conviction and calling, we are all called to this. We are all called to be a part of what God wants to do. We’ve all been asked to join Him.
  - This is why you’re here. Yes, God brought you here so He could change your life...BUT He also brought you here to be part of something bigger than simply your own needs.
  - We all must have this conviction of calling. Every one of us must realize it is not an accident, mistake or coincidence we are here at Foothills at this

moment in history. You are here for a reason. You are here for such a time as this. You are called to this Jesus narrative.

- Foothills is not just a church going through the motions of religious activities. We are a church uniquely called by God to partner with Him in the transformation of cities and other geographic areas. We are a church of destiny because we are called by Jesus to this.
- Foothills was never our idea. It has always been God's idea. We are simply following Him as He writes this story. This conviction we have about our calling sustains us in this journey.
- A lackadaisical attitude does not get the job done. A half-hearted commitment to what God is doing will not sustain you. We have been asked to lead a life worthy of our calling. Let's be that kind of a church!
- **ILLUSTRATE:** I am going to reference the nation of Israel to illustrate everything we are going to talk about today. Their journey leaving Egypt under the leadership of Moses to entering the Promised land under Joshua shows the power of conviction.
  - Time and time again God would remind the Israelites of their calling. He would constantly remind them He wanted to give them their own land. When they lost this conviction they failed miserably. When they believed it, they did the impossible. This conviction is foundational to following Jesus into the impossible.
  - Numbers 13-14 – Explain. Without the conviction of our calling the circumstances will become the defining quality of our church rather than the power of God.
  - To understand this conviction more take our 101 Class on January 27<sup>th</sup>.

## 2. Reckless obedience

I know some of you do not like the word reckless. Reckless is a negative word in your understanding. BUT, following Jesus into the impossible will always appear reckless from a human perspective. The key to the impossible is obedience.

*Josh. 1:8-9 "Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.*

*<sup>9</sup>This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (NLT)* The impossible is overcome only through a radical commitment to obedience that will appear reckless.

- Reckless obedience doesn't look at the odds of success
  - God was going to give the nation of Israel the Promised Land. They were asked to follow God into a land that was occupied by 31 different Kings and kingdoms. It was 31 against 1. From a human perspective it was a suicide mission. From God's perspective, it wasn't ever a close fight.
  - When your conviction is obedience as the foundation for success it is going to appear reckless at times.
  - Foothills is a church that doesn't make sense when you look at the odds. 80% of church plants fail. Large churches in small towns just don't happen.

(Only 1300 churches in America over 2000 people). The history of churches in Molalla is not a positive one.

- God is blessing Foothills because of obedience not because the odds were ever in our favor. Obedience unleashes the power of God to overcome circumstances.

- Reckless obedience doesn't need to understand in order to follow

- There are times what God asks us to do will not always make human sense. God does not command us to understand everything He does. He does command us to follow.
- The story of Jericho. God's strategy didn't make a lot of sense. Obedience brought an overwhelming victory. - Explain
- Our journey as a church has always been like this. Moving into this building 15 years ago didn't make good financial sense. Purchasing this building didn't make good investment sense. Taking over the Adult Center didn't make good liability sense. Following Jesus to Beaver Creek to establish another campus, creates a host of what if's...what about? YET, Jesus said GO.
- Rocks on the platform. Explain

- Reckless obedience has more faith in God than the circumstances

Israel learned this lesson 40 years earlier when they refused to trust God and enter the promised land. God takes it personal when we have more faith in the obstacles in front of us than our All-Powerful God we say we serve.

- Do we truly believe these truths, or do we just have fun quoting them?

*Phil. 4:13 "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." (NLT)*

*Eph. 3:20 "Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think." (NLT)*

*Matt. 19:26 "Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible." (NLT)*

- How do you think we come to truly understand these scriptures? Only when we are faced with the impossible. If we run from the impossible every time, these truths will never become our reality.

### **3. Personal responsibility**

Let me return to Israel again as an example of this. Explain that two and one half tribes were given land on the east side of the Jordan. Instead of them staying and enjoying their piece of the pie, they embraced their responsibility for the success of the entire nation.

*Josh. 1:14-15 "But your strong warriors, fully armed, must lead the other tribes across the Jordan to help them conquer their territory. Stay with them <sup>15</sup> until the LORD gives them rest, as he has given you rest, and until they, too, possess the land the LORD your God is giving them. Only then may you return and settle here on the east side of the Jordan River in the land that Moses, the servant of the LORD, assigned to you." (NLT)*

- We must reject spiritual individualism

Modern day Christianity has evolved into this self-centered, individualized spiritual experience where it's only about Jesus and me. It is self-focused, self-exalting, self-promoting and entirely wrong.

- Of course Jesus came for the individual, but if we limit Jesus' work to this we corrupt the Gospel. Life is NOT just about Jesus and you. It is not OK to grab your little piece of the promise land and ignore your responsibility to the rest of what God is doing.
  - For you to come to this church and not care about what God is doing on a greater scale for His Kingdom is a very immature, selfish perspective. If all you care about is being a consumer and getting what you need while you ignore God's greater narrative, you are hindering the impossible.
  - It's time for some of you to be willing to cross over the river with the rest of us and fight for what God is accomplishing for His Kingdom. It's time to embrace an US mentality not a ME mentality.
- We must embrace our collective responsibility  
Our collective responsibility shows up when we are willing to get involved. Next week we'll be spelling this out in more detail but let me give you a few practical ways this is seen. We move from being an observer, a consumer to a participant in God's Kingdom narrative. HOW?
    - **I take praying for my church, the mission, the needs that are represented personally.** When we talk about the need for prayer you go to battle not go to sleep. The impossible requires a church to be tenacious in prayer.
    - **I serve according to my gifts and abilities.** This means you see your gifts and abilities given to you by God to serve a greater Kingdom narrative. We are going to need an army of new people serving in 2018-19.
    - **I give financially to this so the mission can continue and keep expanding.** Jesus was the one who said where your treasure is there will your heart also be. If we do not financially give to the mission, we have no heart for it. Our commitment to generosity must grow in order to see the impossible happen.
    - **Here is a tough truth.** If we do not pray about the mission / personally serve the mission / give sacrificially to the mission / we have not embraced our collective responsibility. We are spectators – we are consumers. Without a collective responsibility, the impossible does not happen. It's not enough for some to feel this way. We all must embrace our responsibility.

How is God wanting to grow your responsibility to what He is doing right here...right now?

#### 4. Group tenacity

What do I mean by this? We do not quit!

- God's promises are fulfilled as we stay the course
  - Just because God promises you something, doesn't mean there are no battles to fight. We have a responsibility to walk towards the impossible trusting God with what He promised.

- The nation of Israel was promised a specific land. The dilemma was the land was already occupied by other nations. They had to walk into the impossible in order to experience the promise. Faith requires us to take hold of what God promises.
- In fact, the conquest of the Promised Land took approximately 7 years. In seven years they conquered 31 Kings and kingdoms. Before they could fully enjoy the promise, they had to be tenacious as a nation and finish the job.
- At any point they could have said, “This is enough.” “Let’s stop here.” Yet God told them what the borders of the land were. Basically the Euphrates river in the north to the border of Egypt in the south.

*Heb. 10:35-36 “So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! <sup>36</sup> Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God’s will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.” (NLT)*

- The greatest threat to any church accomplishing the impossible is success. Why be tenacious working hard and sacrificing when we have already accomplished so much?
  - Complacency begins to grow... apathy begins to take root in our hearts and minds. Why continue fighting yet another battle? WHY? Because the promises of God require it. God’s promises are fulfilled as we stay the course.
- God’s blessings are multiplied through faithfulness over time  
 Matt. 25 there is a tremendous example of this Jesus taught. Explain context  
*Matt. 25:21 “The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’” (NLT)*
    - If we want to continue seeing God multiply His blessings to Foothills we must remain faithful to what He has given us. As we are faithful with these responsibilities, He will continue to give us more.
    - Beaver Creek is an example of this principal. As we have demonstrated faithfulness with the responsibilities here, He is saying; “Well done”. Here is some more responsibilities.
    - This is why finishing our building is still important. WHY? It is a responsibility He gave us. It is a faith journey. We can’t just get the kids areas done and then stop. That’s burying our money in the ground. We must trust Him with the rest. It’s irrelevant if the other parts of the project don’t ring your bell. It’s about being faithful.
    - It’s why Beaver Creek is so important whether or not you’re excited out it. It’s about our faithfulness to the responsibility He gave to us. As we are faithful He will give us more. This is how His Kingdom works.

God is calling us into the impossible. It will require strength of conviction / reckless obedience / personal responsibility / group tenacity. May we always be ignorant enough of the impossible to follow Jesus into that very thing!