

BCC Sermon – September 14, 2025

## Faith & Relationship

### **Introduction**

Good morning, and welcome to Broadlands Community Church. For those of you joining us online, my name is Rich Lewis. I'm a member here, and for the third time, Pastor Wallace has given me the privilege of delivering a message to this congregation. It usually starts with Pastor Wallace asking if I would be willing to speak on a particular Sunday, to which I enthusiastically say yes. However, later on, when I realize what I've signed up for, I find myself asking...**WHAT HAVE I DONE?!!!**

It is a daunting responsibility, and it always makes me appreciate the blessing that Pastor Wallace is to our congregation.

When asked to speak, it is my habit to share what the Lord has been doing in my life. First, because it usually involves a spiritual truth, principle, or fruit, as in (**faith, God's faithfulness, appropriating God's power, etc....**) that the Lord has been teaching me by orchestrating a set of circumstances that transfers the spiritual truth or principle into an actual experience with God. And secondly, as Paul says in Romans 1:12 "...that you and I may be encouraged by each other's faith.

### **The title of today's sermon is Faith & Relationship**

I've titled it as such, because I have come to realize that as God has stretched my faith, my relationship with Him has deepened, and my ability to trust Him has grown. There is a connection between the growth in our faith and our relationship with the living God, and it is God Who orchestrates the situations and circumstances that challenge and grow our faith. As we see God working in our lives, our relationship with Him deepens.

### **More on that later...**

As always, when God is working in our lives, it is very personal, and difficult to translate the palpable response we have as we experience God, to the ones with whom we are sharing the experience. I always feel a burden to share my experience with God in a way that translates, the reality of that experience to the listener. I trust that the Holy Spirit will use my experience as He sees fit, based upon the Lord's very personal knowledge of each person that hears this message. To be clear, this has nothing to do with me, or my spirituality, I am simply sharing what God is doing, and how it has impacted my life.

As I prepared for this sermon, I realized, as Greg did two weeks ago, that I was continuing a series that you didn't know I was teaching, and neither did I. You may recall that as Greg

opened his sermon, “My Wayward Heart” two weeks ago, he made the comment: This is the series you didn’t know I was teaching.

As I started working on this sermon, there was a familiar feeling that I had taught on the topic before. I decided to review my previous sermons and I began to understand why.

**Let me take you back for a moment.**

The title of my **September 19, 2021**, sermon was: Appropriating God’s Power Through His Promises.

- The key verse was 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12: 9&10
  - Paul’s thorn in the flesh – My power is made perfect in your weakness
    - Unconditional Promise
    - Don’t ask for what I’ve already given you
    - Simply receive my promise, name the weakness and watch what I do
      - Numbers 23: 19 – God is not a man that He should lie

As I began to pray to receive His power in whatever weakness I was confronted with, I began to experience God acting on my behalf in situation after situation... His power being made perfect in my weaknesses.

I began to experience God’s power in a tangible way in my life.

As I read this sermon, I discovered that I had written the following:

- **The Question is: Do we believe God’s power is available today, and if so, how do we appropriate it**

The next sermon in the series, which I didn’t realize was the next sermon in the series because I didn’t realize that I was delivering a series... 😊

The title of **my September 22, 2024**, sermon was: **Do we really believe God**

- When I prepared this sermon, I had absolutely no memory of the question that I lead with in the September 2021 sermon
- The key verse was the same: 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12: 9&10
  - Proverbs 3: 5&6: Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge/submit to Him, and He will direct your path

My stated purpose was to share with you how God had used my professional struggles to teach me how **to appropriate his power** in some challenging situation.

The 2021 sermon highlighted how the Lord changed my understanding of **2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12** and how it applied to my life on a daily basis.

The 2024 sermon provided examples of how God begin to work in my life as I continued to apply the truth of God's word, and experiencing His power at work in my life.

**The primary themes/questions were:**

- Responding to life's circumstances in the natural verses in the Power of the Holy Spirit
- Do we all too often default to Human Wisdom
  - What if God asks us to do something that challenges our human wisdom
- During this period, I had begun to sense God the Holy Spirit beginning to prompt me by directing me to do or not do very specific things, and as I began to obey, I began to see Him working in my life

**Back to the present: Faith & Relationship --- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sermon in the series and I finally know it's a series**

The connection between responding to God in faith, as He invites us to join Him in what He is doing, and a deepening relationship with Him became clear to me.

**My conversation with God...**

Lord, I believe you have been teaching me how to hear from you and to trust that what I am hearing is actually from you. Over the past 4 years, you have been teaching me how to hear from you, obey you, and watch what you do. I have been imperfect in this regard, but I have watched as you have shown yourself to be sufficient and powerful in my life. The result has been a deepening faith and trust, resulting from actually experiencing You in my life. The bible teaches that we have the privilege of coming to you and asking you for what we need, and, if we ask according to you will, we have what we ask for.

Over the past few years, I have experienced that You also work, more often than we know, in and through our lives by speaking directly to us through scripture and your holy spirit. As you teach us to hear the still small voice of the holy spirit, we begin to act upon what we hear, and you do what you are going to do based upon our obedience and your predetermined purpose. As we obey you, and step into what you have invited us into, you invariably produce an outcome that can only be explained from the perspective that the God of heaven and earth has just done something.

When we respond to you on these occasions, you are responsible for the outcome. We simply hear what you have said, do what you have said, and you will produce the outcome based upon your providential plan and purposes.

**Sermon to congregation**

As Pastor Wallace, and of late Greg, have said, as well-meaning children of God, we, with the best of intentions, in our flesh, try very hard to be good people to please God. We have a list of things that we believe Christians should do, (you know what they are for you or have been...). We work hard to do the things we ought to do, and refrain from things that we know are sin. We do this in part, or at least I do; to remain in good standing and a right relationship with God, and to please Him. **THAT'S ANOTHER SERMON**

Greg, in his “Love Brings Freedom” sermon last week, did a great job highlighting how we unwittingly put ourselves under the yoke of bondage as we work to please God and be good Christians.

- Galatians 3: 1 – 3 You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Have you experienced so much in vain – if it really was in vain? So again, I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? So also, Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”
- Galatians 5: 1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.

We cannot reach up to God by following rules, practicing religion, or keeping the law, yet, quiet often, we find ourselves in that very place.

Greg shared several thoughts last week that I think are relevant here. I will highlight them but direct you to Greg’s sermon for perspective and context.

### **Some Highlights - Greg talked about...**

- The burden of obligation
  - Feeling like you have to do something
- The burden of responsibility
  - Who is God in your life
- The burden of trying
  - Trying to live right
    - “Righteous observance will never move us any closer to God”

### **What God says...**

- God says to us: Hear and do...
  - We don’t bring anything to the table
  - God wants to live His life through us
  - My Spirit will guide you
  - The Lord invites us into relationship

Over the past 4 years, God has been teaching me to trust Him, or rather, confirming that I can trust Him, by directing me to do things, and causing an outcome that could only be explained by the fact that God had just done something.

I know Woods is going to talk about the things the men in our book study have been learning from the readings and audio lessons of Ian Thomas, but my discussion will parallel some of his teaching, because much of what I read in his book, *The Saving Life of Christ*, described what God had been showing me over the past 4 years or so. It seemed to confirm that what I was experiencing was genuinely how God works in our lives. What I had come to believe is that He invites us into specific situations with Him that deepen our faith and our relationship with the living God.

I have titled this message “Faith & Relationship. I intended to speak on faith alone, but as I prayed and sought God’s purposes for this message and based on what I believe God has been teaching me, it made sense to change the title. What I realized is that the steps He asked me to take, however insignificant, required faith, and when I obeyed and did what He said, the outcome was such that it was clear that God had done something. In my previous message, I called them ‘mini” miracles, in that the only explanation was that God had determined the outcome.

**When I spoke on September 22, 2024, the topic was:** *Do we really believe God. In part, it focused on the fact that I, and maybe you, all too often default to human wisdom which puts us at risk of missing what God has planned for us, and that God might direct us to do things that challenge our human reasoning.*

**One of the themes was also based upon 2 Corinthians 12: 2-9:** *where Jesus tells Paul: My grace is sufficient for you and my power is made perfect in your weakness...*

*When I started praying to receive Jesus’ power in whatever weakness I felt related to the situation or circumstance at hand, I begin to experience what I can only call “mini” miracles! I went on to say: They were daily occurrences, because He used multiple situations during the workday to present opportunities to show Himself faithful.*

In every case, I was responding to a circumstance that triggered a weakness in me, and I sensed the Holy Spirit directing me to take a specific approach to the situation, and as I begin to listen and obey, I experienced God orchestrate an outcome that could only be explained by concluding that God did something.

*I couldn’t have been more aware of His Power being made perfect in my weakness if He had raised someone from the dead.*

This happened repeatedly, and I begin to realize that my faith and trust in God was changing, and the reality of God actually operating in my life, in relationship with me, was very real. As I said earlier, God gives us the ability to come to Him in prayer, asking Him for

the things that are on our hearts. It has been said in Christian circles that when we ask God for things in prayer, the answer may be: Yes, No or Wait. I have often felt that we put God in a box when we limit Him in any way, but I believe that, minimally, those are three of the options available to our omnipotent Father. 😊 If you are like me, when God delays, we are often impatient, and over a period of time, if you're like me, we begin to make statements like: Why is He not answering our prayers, and our enemy the Devil attempts to convince us that we can't trust God, and if we're not careful, we will allow him to do so. **THAT'S ANOTHER SERMON**

The Lord is always speaking through the Holy Spirit and is inviting us into a vibrant/experiential living relationship with Himself. In this modern world, with all its distractions, and responsibilities, we seldom have, or take time, to quiet our hearts and minds long enough to hear what God may be saying to us. To be sure, this is not unique to our generation.

This statement is not meant as a criticism of any person or of Christians collectively. As Greg said last week, it is with the best of intentions, that we try to act and behave the way we think we should as the people of God. We bring our unique personalities, talents, and giftings to our daily walks (That is... God given talents and abilities...) and genuinely seek to please him and do His will.

The bible teaches that God has a genuine desire to be in an intimate relationship with us, and that we would know He can be trusted with our lives, and the lives of the people we love. He calls us His children, and tells us to call him, Abba, Father. ***Romans 8:15 says: The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again, rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.***

In the bible, "Abba Father" refers to a profound relationship of intimacy, dependency, and trust with God, combining the intimate, Aramaic term "Abba" (meaning "my Father") with the Greek "Father" to express a deeply personal, yet reverent, address to God.

What a touching example of how the Lord feels about us! He loved us enough to send His son to die in our place. He loves with a sacrificial love.

As I said earlier, I believe the Lord is always speaking through the Holy Spirit. He wants us to experience a vibrant, intimate, and experiential relationship with Himself. The intimacy that God desires comes from knowing Him and experiencing Him in our lives. As we allow the Lord to teach us how to be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's voice, we are better able to know what the Spirit is saying to us, and as we respond obediently to the Spirit's guidance, we will begin to experience the Lord working in and through us in a real and tangible way. This is not a situation where we are asking God for something in prayer. These are situations where you sense the Spirit of God is directing you to do something, the outcome of which is determined by God. We are simply being invited to join God, and as

we accept His invitation, regardless of how insignificant the outcome may appear to be, it will happen in a way that only God could have orchestrated, and our faith and relationship will deepen because we will be experiencing God in our lives, which is exactly what God wants.

### **A word of caution: Some of you may be asking...**

How can I know if I am hearing God, hearing Satan, or convincing myself that it is God, to pursue my own agenda.

I will start by saying, from a personal perspective, that in almost every case that I've sensed God the Holy Spirit prompting me in a particular direction, He almost always confirms it with Scripture.

While it is not my intent to teach on hearing from God, or how to hear from God, I will share some thoughts on what I believe are some best practices to consider.

- I believe God most commonly communicates through His Word, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit that indwells us
  - Follow the Holy Spirit's Leading –
    - Do the thoughts go against His Word
      - God will not contradict Himself
    - Will following these promptings lead to sin
      - Those who “keep in step with the Spirit” have crucified the flesh
  - Psalm 119: 105 – Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path
  - James 1:5 – If any of you lack wisdom, you should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.
    - By wisdom, James is talking not only about knowledge, but about the ability to make wise decision
- Talk to God in prayer and earnestly wait for His answer

So... What am I saying...

God calls us his children, and He wants an intimate relationship with us. Quite often, we find ourselves working to be good Christians, so that we please God and stay in relationship with Him, or stay in His “good graces”.

As Greg demonstrated last week, and as I know you all know, Jesus died for our sin's past, present, and future. “It is for freedom that Christ set us free.” But we should not use our freedom to indulge the flesh.

Ephesians 2:8-9 It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.

It is God who invited us into relationship to begin with, by giving us the free gift of faith to know Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Philippians 2:13 It is God who works within you to will and to do for His good pleasure.

### **Closing...**

It is God who continues to invite us, on a daily basis, to enjoy an ever-deepening relationship with Him. God gives us the desire to do a particular thing, and the grace/strength to do it.

As we continue to make ourselves available to God as the Spirit prompts us, we will experience God in our lives, and our faith will no longer be based on intellectual assent, but on experiencing God on a daily basis.

When we accept Christ as our Savior, a lifelong sanctification process begins, orchestrated by God, as He, based upon His providential plan for each of our lives, begins to transform us to look more like our Savior, Jesus.

In John 15: 5 – Jesus says: without me, you can do nothing

What does Jesus mean when He says this? WITHOUT HIM, WE CAN DO NOTHING...

Jesus uses the analogy of the vine and branches to explain that just as a branch cannot produce fruit on its own, but relies on the vine for life and nourishment, believers cannot accomplish anything spiritually significant without remaining connected to Him.

- Jesus is the vine, representing His life and power from which everything else draws its strength
  - My power is made perfect in your weakness
- Believers are the branches, dependent on the vine for their ability to live, grow, and bear fruit
  - Without me you can do nothing

### **Dependence on Christ**

- True spiritual productivity and meaningful accomplishments in God's service are not possible through human effort alone but require a living connection to Jesus
  - Philippians 2:13 - It is God who works within us to will and to do for his good purposes
    - Jesus invites us to join Him in His work
    - As He speaks to us and we make ourselves available to Him, our relationship with Him will change forever



- Anything done apart from this connection lacks eternal value, even if it seems good on the surface

As I said earlier, Woods will be sharing how the men in the book study have responded to what we have learned through reading Ian Thomas' book, *The Saving Life of Christ*. I believe each of us feels the Lord is inviting us into a deeper relationship with Him via the teaching He has brought through this book. While Ian's book is not the inspired word of God, I believe the Lord has given Ian unique insights based solidly on the inspired Word of God.

God invites us into what He is doing, and as we accept His invitation, we will have a personal experience with our Heavenly Father, based upon His providential plan for our lives.

When my children were young, and we were introducing them to God, We always made it clear that we were NOT introducing them to a religion, but, rather, a living relationship with the Living God and creator of Heaven & Earth... that God is alive and wants a be in an intimate relationship with them.

When I look back on what God has orchestrated in my life over the past few years, some of it quite challenging, I realize how He has changed my relationship with Him.

As I considered the connection between growing in our faith "Believing God" and doing what He says, and the impact it has on our relationship with God, it crystallized for me the importance of Hebrews 11:6 --- **The faith Hall of fame...**

- Without faith, it is impossible to please God...
- 11:7 – By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family
- 11:8 – 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
- 11: 11 – And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise
- 11:12 – 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

**Ephesians 3:20** – To Him who is able to do exceedingly and abundantly more than we can think of or ask, according to His power that is at work in us.

I will leave you with this. God wants to have an intimate relationship with us. He wants us to become more and more like His son, our Savior, Jesus, and He orchestrates situations and circumstances to grow our faith and deepen our relationship with Him. I believe He is always speaking to us by the Holy Spirit, and as we make ourselves available, we only need watch the outcome that He produces and be Amazed!!

