

*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things not seen."*

Hebrews 11:1

LESSON ONE

It's Only Crazy Until It Happens

*The beautiful thing about faith is that
it's never too late to build it.*

MICHAEL TODD

Hebrews 11:1-16, 33-35
Genesis 17:1-8, 12:1-3, 21:1-7

Ignaz Semmelweis was a Hungarian doctor who started practicing around 1846 in the maternity ward at General Hospital in Geneva, Switzerland. Soon Dr. Semmelweis noticed something strange happening: many mothers were dying of a mysterious disease called “childbed fever.”

After digging into the problem, Ignaz discovered that women giving birth in one specific ward were dying at a rate five times higher than women in a second ward. At first, he could not figure out the cause. The wards used nearly the same techniques, the climate was the same, and “overcrowding” was not the issue, as the second ward was always more crowded than the first ward. The only discrepancy that Ignaz could find was that the first ward was staffed by male doctors and medical students while the second ward was staffed only by female midwives.

Eventually, Ignaz had a breakthrough when one of his fellow doctors became ill and died after performing an autopsy. It was a tragedy, but Ignaz noticed the pathologist had died from the same illness as the patient he was examining. (Ironically, that illness was childbed fever.) Ignaz also realized the male doctors and students on the first ward regularly handled corpses and then went to deliver babies without washing their hands or anything in between—while the midwives on the second ward never performed autopsies or touched cadavers.

Ignaz suddenly had a revelation. *Maybe the sickness was somehow transferred from the patient to the doctor. Maybe the pathologist “caught” something while he was examining the body of the women who had died. Could that really be the cause?*

Of course, this is an obvious connection for you and me. We know today this is how disease is transmitted. But a couple hundred years ago, even doctors still believed that illnesses were caused by “bad air” or “bad blood.” Without realizing it, Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis had discovered *germs*. He started having all the male doctors and students on the first ward wash their hands and instruments with a chlorine solution before delivering babies.

Mothers stopped dying. Lives were saved. It should have been good news.

However, as it turns out, the doctors of Ignaz’s day didn’t like being told that they needed to wash their hands before practicing medicine. They felt that Ignaz was accusing *them*—the doctors—of giving diseases to their patients. So, out of pride, the medical establishment rejected Dr. Ignaz Summerweis. They refused to hear him or adopt any of his recommendations. They cancelled him before cancelling was a thing.¹

CRAZY FAITH WORKBOOK

A few decades later, Louis Pasteur would publish his work on germ theory, which revolutionized the medical practice and proved Summerweis correct. By then, Ignaz had suffered a nervous breakdown and been consigned to an asylum. He died at the age of forty-seven from sepsis—the same bacterial infection that he had spent his life trying to fight.

It's a depressing story, but it illustrates an important principle: crazy is often a matter of perspective. What people consider crazy right now can be customary tomorrow. And much of what we consider normal in this moment was crazy in the past. The same idea applies to your life—including your spiritual life. Those goals or dreams or plans that seem impossible to you right now may feel different once you grasp the power of this thing we call faith. Why? Because things are only crazy until they happen.

Prayer: *Jesus, I affirm what I read in your Word: faith is the reality of everything I am hoping for and the evidence of things I cannot see. Faith is understanding that you created everything and that you are in control. Faith is believing what you say, and faith is living my life in a way that bets on you. Fill me with that kind of faith not just in the weeks to come, but right now.*

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LESSON TWO

Baby Faith

Restoration of hope is the beginning of baby faith.

MICHAEL TODD

Matthew 18:1-10, 17:14-20; 21:22
Exodus 4:1-4

Baby steps. “Baby steps out of the office. Baby steps to the hall. Baby steps to the elevator . . .”

These memorable lines are from the classic film *What About Bob*, which released in theaters back in 1991. In the film, Bill Murray plays a loveable goof named Bob Wiley, who is crippled by a host of phobias. His fears keep him from performing even the simplest tasks. He is joined by Richard Dreyfus, who plays an arrogant psychiatrist named Leo Marvin. He has just written a book called *Baby Steps* that he believes will make him a household name.

The two characters meet when Bob’s therapist becomes completely overwhelmed with his antics and lack of personal boundaries and refers him to egotistical Dr. Marvin. During their first session, Dr. Marvin introduces the idea of baby steps to Bob. In his words, “It means setting small, reasonable goals for yourself one day at a time, one tiny step at a time.” Of course, Bob and Dr. Marvin soon wind up in a number of different crazy situations. But the theme of “baby steps” keeps coming back again and again throughout the movie.

The idea of *baby steps* made for a great movie. But Dr. Marvin was right about one thing: the concept of baby steps is also a great way for achieving goals and making changes in ways that are reasonable and realistic. This includes the area of *Crazy Faith*.

Now, there are some people who jump into *Crazy Faith* with both feet. No counting to ten. No life jacket. No restrictions. They just go for it and don’t look back—and it’s a beautiful thing. But most of the time, people tend to crawl a little bit before they try to sprint. And that is one hundred percent okay. It’s like weight training. You don’t start by heaving up those heavy dumbbells or slapping a bunch of 45s on the bar. You take smaller steps through smaller reps. You improve gradually as you are able to handle more and more weight.

This is the idea we will explore in this lesson—taking baby steps to start with baby faith.

Prayer: *Jesus, you are the source of all my hope. You are the source of all that is good in my life and the lives of everyone around me. I understand that at the core, faith isn’t about me and my dreams and my desires. Instead, faith is about pleasing you and accomplishing the work that you have set for me. So, Lord, I proclaim right now that I will take baby steps of baby faith this week so that I can know you better, hear you more clearly, and serve you more faithfully.*

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LESSON THREE

Maybe Faith

*Maybe does not have to kill your momentum.
It may be the start of a miracle.*

MICHAEL TODD

Genesis 12:1-9, 22:1-14
John 14:12

There are few topics today as divisive as politics, but allow me a few moments as we open this lesson to speak about a branch of the US government known as the Senate. The Senate was established by the Founding Fathers way back in 1789. As the name suggests, it is composed of *senators*, each of whom represents a single state in its entirety. Each state is represented by *two* senators, who serve for a term of six years. It is there where the problem often lies.

I say this because there are many times when the US Senate tries to function in the face of a 50/50 split between the two main parties that represent the country—the Republicans and the Democrats. The fifty Republican senators tend to vote Republican on bills. The fifty Democratic senators tend to vote Democrat on those same bills. So, basically, any law the government tries to pass receives a 50/50 vote in the Senate.

The problem is that most laws require *sixty* votes in the Senate before they can move out of Congress and on to the President's desk. So, most laws get bogged down in the Senate.

However, there are times when the vote in the Senate only requires what is known as a “simple majority”—meaning fifty-one votes instead of sixty. In such cases, a 50/50 tie means that the Vice President gets to step in and cast the deciding vote. The Vice President's *single vote* has great power in this country to move the bill from debate to action.

Just imagine what life would be like if governments required *100* percent agreement in order to function—if we needed unanimous approval to pass a bill, create a budget, or certify elections. We would be going nowhere fast. Why? Because these days, it's hard to get unanimous support for *anything*. If you were to go on social media and say the sky is blue or that ocean water is salty, I'm sure there would be people arguing that you're wrong.

One-hundred percent agreement rarely exists. It's a myth. We all know this. Yet how often do we try to be “100 percent certain” when we're making decisions? How often do we say, “I'm not going to move until I am 100 percent sure about God's will?”

In this lesson, I want to walk you through an important principle that I call “maybe faith”—which is basically being ready to move when your faith is at fifty-one percent.

Prayer: *Jesus, I believe you are the creator of all things, and I know in my head that you sustain all things. The only reason I am living and breathing and hoping and dreaming right now is because you have stepped into history to grant me this chance. For those reasons and more, I am choosing to trust you. I am choosing to step out in faith and not just think something but also do something. I pray today that you will bless these simple steps of faith.*

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LESSON FOUR

Waiting Faith

*The only thing harder than waiting on God
is wishing you had waited on him.*

MICHAEL TODD

Genesis 16:1-6, 17:1-2

2 Corinthians 1:6-10

Galatians 6:9



n April 15, 2019, the world was shocked to learn the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris, France, had caught fire. The flames quickly swept through the structure, sending its iconic spire crumbling to the ground, caving in its ceiling, and setting alight its interior. Thankfully, the local authorities successfully fought the blaze and saved much of the beloved church, though it will be years before everything in the cathedral is fully repaired or rebuilt.

Notre Dame wasn't just one of the most famous churches in France or even in Europe. No, it was one of the most prized, studied, and celebrated structures in the *world*. It was truly unique. But perhaps one of the most unique things about the cathedral is how long it took workers to construct it in the first place—182 years in total. Construction began in Paris in 1163 at the direction of King Louis VII, and it wasn't finished until 1345.

Notice that I didn't say 182 days or 182 months. It took 182 *years* of planning, building, evaluating, adding, planning again, and building some more. That's almost two full centuries!¹⁴

Try to wrap your mind around that amount of time. The people who started construction on the cathedral knew that they would get nowhere close to seeing it completed. There were craftsmen and artisans who literally spent their entire lives working on a glorious expression of worship to God, knowing that they would never be able to fully appreciate it. They hoped their grandchildren or great-grandchildren would be able to admire their work.

Notre Dame is a study on the value of *patience*. Now, I know that word is not fun for most of us. Patience doesn't have a lot of value in our culture of fast food, same-day shipping, and same-second streaming. But hear me on this: patience has tremendous value in God's kingdom. This is exactly why you and I need to develop what I call "waiting faith."

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, I confess that I am often impatient. When I read in your Word that Abraham waited twenty-five years for your promise of a son, I feel amazed . . . but also scared. I don't know if I could wait that long and still hold on to faith. So, Father, please lift me up as I wait. Please be close to me so that I can feel your presence. I commit to your timing and your plans for the dreams that you have placed in my heart.*

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LESSON FIVE

Wavy Faith

*Good, bad, or ugly, every circumstance in your life
is either God-used or God-sent.*

MICHAEL TODD

Mark 4:35-41
Matthew 14:22-26

There are storms, and then there are *storms*. You know what I mean? Storms in and of themselves usually aren't a big deal. They happen all the time. But every once in a while, a storm comes along that is unlike any other. I'm talking about huge storms—the kinds of storms that dominate news headlines for weeks and change regions and landscapes for decades.

For people of my generation, Hurricane Katrina is that kind of storm. There hasn't been anything else like it in recent years, and we should all hope there *won't* be anything like it in the decades to come. The storm plowed its way across the Gulf of Mexico during the last week of August 2005. As entire cities were evacuated, the nation watched in horror as Katrina gained strength, becoming a Category 5 nightmare with 160-mile-per-hour winds.

Katrina struck the Gulf Coast on August 29. Besides the storm's size and sheer power, the other aspect that made it so dangerous was its speed—or, more accurately, its lack of speed. Katrina advanced at a snail-like 12 mph, which meant the winds kept battering and the rains kept raining. In a matter of hours, half of New Orleans' 350-mile-long system of levees and floodwalls were overwhelmed. Later estimates put the city at eighty percent underwater—with many sections covered up to fifteen feet deep. The entire lower Ninth Ward was flooded.

Because Katrina advanced so slowly, millions of people were able to evacuate in time. But there were more than 100,000 people still left in the city when the levees were breached. Many took refuge in places like the SuperDome. Others tried to ride out the storm in their own homes—often on top of roofs. Many chose to stay for their own reasons. But many more simply didn't have a choice. They had nowhere to go and no way to get there.

All in all, almost 2,000 people were killed by the storm. But perhaps the worst thing about Hurricane Katrina was the way it kept destroying the region even after the winds and rain went away. With the city's defenses breached, the floods kept flooding. Financially, the storm caused more than \$125 billion in damages—making it the costliest storm in US history. More than 1.2 million people were displaced from their homes. Many never made it back.¹⁹

Why am I reminding us about that terrible moment from the past? Because, like I said earlier, storms are common. They happen all the time. Which is exactly why you and I need a better understanding of “wavy faith” as part of our efforts to live out *Crazy Faith*.

Prayer: *Jesus, I know you are walking with me right now. Even when I'm in a storm, I know you are out there on the waves. Even more, I know it's safer to be with you than to stay huddled up in my comfortable little boat. So, please call me, Lord. Like Peter said, please invite me out with you. Call me through your Spirit and show me where to stand. I am ready to take that first step.*

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LESSON SIX

Lazy Faith

*God is looking for believers who aren't lazy
but are about action.*

MICHAEL TODD

Matthew 26:36-46

Mark 2:1-12

1 Peter 5:7

James 1:2-3

I am sure that you've heard of an "open and shut" case. Well, the story I am about to tell you is more of an "open and shut-eye" case. A few years back, police in Sarasota County, Florida, received a call about an attempted robbery that was still in progress. Well . . . sort of. A cleaning lady had entered the home of one of her clients and encountered a burglar there. Undoubtedly, it was a scary situation. The only catch? The thief was asleep.

The would-be jewelry thief was apparently pretty tuckered out after breaking into the house in Nokomis. He had enough energy to rifle through the homeowners' possessions and stuff a lot of jewelry into a plastic bag, but then he decided to lay down for a rest.

A catnap for a cat burglar.

The trouble is that the thief kept on sleeping. He stayed asleep when the cleaning lady came in and saw him on the bed. He dozed while she called the police. And he snoozed his way through the deputies' arrival. They found him still snoring, with the bag of jewelry tucked next to him on the bed. He didn't even wake up when the cops started taking pictures!²⁴

Obviously, laziness is a bad look for a thief. But it's become common in our modern culture to take a pretty tolerant approach to laziness in other areas of our lives.

Go above and beyond at work to catch the boss's attention and grab that promotion? Maybe. Or we could just figure out the minimum effort necessary to avoid getting fired and keep things a little less intense. Put in the time and effort necessary to develop a healthy long-term relationship? Well, that is certainly an option. Or we could just keep bouncing around dating apps. Figure out what it takes to buy the right groceries and cook healthy meals so our bodies are in optimal shape? Nah. Fast food is a lot faster.

Of course, we all struggle with laziness at some level. But there are forces at work in our culture that push us toward taking a lazier approach to life. Yes, *it's very important for you to stay up-to-date on the latest Netflix series. No, you don't have to miss out on something you want just because you don't have enough money to buy it—put it on your credit card and pay for it later. Yeah, it's been a stressful week. Time for a "Treat Yourself Day"!*

These forces are generally unhelpful, but they are especially harmful when it comes to our spiritual lives. Why? Because they push us toward a lazy approach to faith.

Prayer: *Jesus, I know there are times in my life when I allow myself to be lazy—times when I settle for good enough rather than striving for great. Those times are sinful because I am walking away from your will. So, Jesus, I confess my laziness to you. I confess my desire for comfort and my preference for my own preferences. Today, I commit to actively pushing to accomplish everything you have set in front of me.*

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LESSON SEVEN

Trading Faith

*Somebody else's faith might have brought you here,
but it's time to trade it in for your own.*

MICHAEL TODD

Zechariah 3:1-10

Luke 5:17-26

Growing up, most kids get pretty good at bartering—though we just call it “trading.” Baseball cards, toys, or even trading your chocolate milk for somebody else’s tater tots in the school cafeteria. But apparently, nobody is better at trading than a guy named Kyle MacDonald.

Back in 2005, Kyle decided that he wanted to live in a house. The only problem was that he didn’t have any money. Or a job. But he did have an idea based on a relatively new thing called “the Internet.” Kyle decided he would use the world wide web to connect with people who might be willing to trade something with a little value for something with a little more value. If he could keep “trading up” in that way, he might eventually make a trade for something big.

Like a house.

Kyle started his journey with a red paperclip. (Talk about crazy, right?) He traded that paperclip for a fish pen. Then he traded the pen for a handmade doorknob. He traded the knob for a busted up camp stove. He traded the stove for a 100-watt generator.

By this time, Kyle was starting to get some press. People were paying attention to what he was doing, and his vision—trading a red paperclip for a house—resonated with individuals all across the world. So he kept going. He traded the generator for an “instant party” kit, which was an empty keg and a beer sign. He traded the kit for a used snowmobile. He kept trading until he had secured a paid role in an upcoming movie called *Donna on Demand*.

Then, after just under a year, Kyle traded that movie role to the town of Kipling, Saskatchewan, for a three bedroom, two story farmhouse. (The town had a contest to see who got the movie role.) The story of Kyle’s successful trade inspired millions to take a new look at their dreams. As he noted, “There’s people all over the world that are saying that they have paper-clips clipped to the top of their computer, or on their desk or on their shirt, and it proves that anything is possible. And I think to a certain degree it’s true.”³⁰

When it comes to our spiritual lives and our faith, we are constantly tempted to settle for what we’ve already experienced and already achieved. Most of us have pretty good lives when we look at things through the lens of history. Why not be satisfied with what we have?

The answer is because God very likely wants something better for us. God very likely is poised and ready to help us “trade up” from what we currently

Prayer: Lord God, though you have the power to say no to my desires because you are sovereign and because there is sin present in my life, I also know that you still honored the crazy faith of Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, and Paul despite their sins. Yes, I acknowledge that I am weak in many areas, but that only serves to show how strong you are. So I declare this truth in the name of Jesus, my Savior: “Lord God, because you are able, I am the exception!”

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LESSON EIGHT

Fugazi Faith

*Crazy faith starts with a real and personal
relationship with God. It cannot be borrowed.*

MICHAEL TODD

Matthew 7:15-27

Luke 10:17

Matthew 16:19

James 2:26

1 Corinthians 13:2

John 16:13

Acts 19:8-20

John 16:13-15

John 10:10

Galatians 5:6

John 3:16

It was either an act of treason or a prank pulled on the Nazis. At the center of it all was a veteran painter and internationally known art dealer named Han van Meegeren. The story I'm about to tell you took place in the Netherlands around 1945. As World War II was coming to a close, the Allied countries began to prosecute notable groups or individuals who had conspired with the Nazis or aided Hitler's agenda in any way.

One of those individuals was Han van Meegeren. Dutch authorities accused Meegeren of selling Dutch cultural property (in the form of valuable paintings) to Nazi leaders. Notably, he had sold a masterpiece by the famous Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer to Hermann Göring. This was a big deal. In the charged atmosphere of that day, any person convicted of aiding the Nazi party in any way was guilty of treason—a crime punishable by a firing squad.

With his life on the line, Meegeren made a shocking claim: he hadn't sold ancient Dutch masterpieces to the Nazis. Instead, he had forged those masterpieces himself and tricked the Nazis into paying huge sums of money for junk! Meegeren made this claim during his trial, and obviously, people were skeptical. It seemed like the kind of thing someone might say to save his or her own neck. After all, the paintings Meegeren sold to the Nazis had been confirmed as authentic by some of the leading art critics of the day.

Nobody could make a forgery good enough to fool real experts, right?

Wrong. To prove his case, Meegeren offered to make a new forged painting, with the court and the press watching the entire time. As he worked, he explained all the tricks of his trade. For example, he mixed his own paints, using only the ingredients the ancient masters had available in their day. He also made his own brushes out of badger hair, just like Johannes Vermeer, and Meegeren had invented his own special technique of baking a resin into the canvas before he painted so that the finished work looked old and worn by the centuries.

After he finished, the court had more experts review Meegeren's painting along with genuine masterpieces. Once more, the experts were fooled. They labeled Meegeren's forgery as authentic.³⁴ In other words, Han van Meegeren was a master at the art of forging art!

Or, as I would have said it growing up, Han van Meegeren was *fugazi*. He was a fake. A shyster. A fraud. Unfortunately, there are way too many people in the world today "faking it" in the same way when it comes to their faith. They are living with fugazi faith.

Prayer: *Holy Spirit, I invite you right now to intercede between myself and the Father. I invite you to lead me and guide me in this prayer—I ask you to speak to me in a way that I can hear you clearly and discern exactly what you intend to say. I also ask for your conviction. Please reveal any areas of my heart or my life that are holding me back from the abundance you desire to bring about in my life. I surrender to you. Lead, guide, and redirect me.*

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LESSON NINE

Stating Faith

*God already knows what you need before you say a word,
but he still wants to hear from you.*

MICHAEL TODD

Genesis 1:1-10, 20:26, 2:23, 3:1-7

Mark 10:46-52

2 Samuel 7:5-16

It's a powerful video. The star of the show is three-year-old Grayson Clamp. He is sitting in what looks like a doctor's office with his dad behind him. Grayson is wearing a little polo shirt, and he has a wire wrapping around his head from the back and tucked into his ear.

In the video, Grayson's dad taps the little boy on his shoulder and says, "Daddy loves you." The boy's eyes suddenly pop open in an expression of unmistakable surprise. His mouth gapes. He looks around at his dad's face and then breaks into a huge smile.

Why all the fuss? This is the first time that young Grayson has ever heard his father's voice. Actually, it was the first time that he heard *anything* at all. You see, Grayson was born deaf. When his body developed in the womb, one nerve never grew the way it should—the one connecting the cochlea of his inner ear with the parts of the brainstem that process sound. For the first three years of his life, Grayson did not hear a thing. Not a dog barking. Not a truck blaring down the highway. Not even the soothing voice of his mom when he scraped a knee.

But in that moment, everything changed. The three years before that doctor's appointment were part of Grayson's old life. This was the start of something completely new.

Children who are born without the ability to hear almost never develop the ability to talk. That was true of Grayson. Notice I said it *was* true. Just a few weeks after the initial surgery, Grayson's doctor noticed a change in the little boy. "He responds to music and voice," he said. "I also noticed he's starting to use his voice a bit."

Someone else who noticed the change was Grayson's mom. "It melts my heart to hear his voice," she said. "Any mother longs to hear her child's voice."³⁷

I know from experience the same is true for fathers—including your heavenly Father. He wants to hear your voice! He wants to connect with you and listen as you pour out everything on your heart and mind and soul. Yes, the Bible says that God knows our thoughts, but he designed us with vocal cords for a reason. He wants us to speak with him.

This is exactly why you will never reach the level of *Crazy Faith* that God wants you to have in your life until you learn the importance of what I call "stating faith."

Prayer: *Jesus, you have given me a voice, and I intend to use it. I intend to speak with you daily about what I need and what you want. More than that, Jesus, I intend to use my voice to declare your promises and your will to those around me. In faith, I will speak with others about who you are and everything you have done.*

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LESSON TEN

Fading Faith

*We don't live on a mountaintop all the time.
Valleys are part of our landscape as well.*

MICHAEL TODD

Hebrews 12:2
2 Kings 4:18-28
John 20:19-29
Psalm 23

As a pastor, I'm doing only part of my job if I focus solely on people who are in a hopeful season of their lives—those who feel ready, inspired, and compelled to take their next step(s) into deeper, more radical *Crazy Faith*. Don't get me wrong. I love that part of my job. By nature, I'm loud and rambunctious and enthusiastic and wild, and it's pure joy to let God use the person he created me to be to love and grow and cheer on his people.

But that's not the whole job. The word *pastor* in Greek means "shepherd," and an important part of a shepherd's job is to care for lost, injured, scared, or trapped sheep. In fact, Jesus tells his disciples that good shepherds prioritize lost lambs over sheep that are doing just fine (see Matthew 18:12–14).

So, this lesson is for anyone who is living through a "down" season right now—or anyone who might encounter such a season in the future. In other words, this is a lesson for anyone whose faith is *fading*. Here's the truth: I've been part of that group on and off for the last several years. I know what it's like to live with fading faith.

One of the main reasons I walk through those spiritual valleys is that my son, MJ, was diagnosed with autism several years ago. He was two-and-a-half when we got the news. Anyone who has the pleasure of spending time with MJ can see that he's both brilliant and resilient, and we thank God for the miracle in progress in his life. My wife and I have taken a stand in *Crazy Faith*, trusting God for his total wholeness. Still, I've had some dark days since that initial diagnosis. Let me get even more H.O.T. (humble, open, and transparent): I still have some dark days.

Everybody experiences loss. No one is exempt. Yes, we are God's worthy, beloved children who are heirs with Christ—but we reside in a world that is broken. I'm so thankful Jesus came to be with us in this brokenness and make everything new through the power of his resurrection! But often he does the work of recreating *in* and *through* the difficult seasons, rather than pulling us *out of* them. He doesn't always take us out of pain and loss, but he always, always redeems and restores our pain and loss to his glory and ours.

I have to remind myself of those truths almost every time I drive MJ to therapy. Some days I have *Crazy Faith* for what God will do in and through MJ's life as well as our family when we witness the miracle that God does for our little hero. But other days my faith starts to fade. Staring aloud God's promises for MJ as we drive to speech therapy sometimes feels like the hardest thing I ever do. And

honestly, if MJ doesn't make significant progress in his appointment that day, then it feels even harder to speak God's truth over him next time.

Just like you, though, I go on. Because fading faith isn't an indication that something is wrong with me or with you or with anyone. Instead, fading faith is an indication that we need to reconnect with the author and perfecter of that faith (see Hebrews 12:2).⁴¹

Prayer: *Jesus, I thank you because even though I may feel doubt or despair, I am not a doubting disciple. I reject that title for myself. Instead, I am a faithful follower who will choose to live in hope. I understand that I will still feel grief and pain. I will go through seasons of fading faith. But I will respond to those seasons by throwing myself at your feet, because at the end of the day, what I need in every season is more of you.*

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LESSON ELEVEN

Saving Faith

*Saving faith means your eternity is secure
and you have access to God's very presence.*

MICHAEL TODD

John 3:1-21

Numbers 21:4-9

Romans 10:9

Matthew 1:18-25

Psalms 119:105

Philippians 4:6-7

Luke 2:7

Matthew 2:10-11

Do you have a favorite Christmas movie? Most people have a go-to flick that they just have to watch once the lights go up on trees and the carols start playing on the radio. And different generations have different ideas on which movie is “the one.”

For example, many people are into the classics like *Miracle on 34th Street* and *A Wonderful Life*, while others really like *A Christmas Story*. There’s nothing quite like *Home Alone* and *Home Alone 2*, and many younger people really seem to like the movie *Elf*.

But whether or not you back a particular film for the holiday season, I think there is something we all can agree on: the way our culture celebrates Christmas today is not what Christmas originally meant. Nobody knows exactly how or when it happened, but our collective view of Christmas has lost its way. In case nobody ever told you . . .

Christmas isn’t about the gifts.

It isn’t about spending more than you have on stuff you don’t need.

It isn’t about the lights, or the food, or the holiday songs.

It isn’t about comparing what you’ve got with what others have.

Instead, as we’ll discuss in this final lesson, what Christmas is all about can be boiled down to two simple words: *saving faith*.

Prayer: *Jesus, I believe that it is your will for me to live a life of Crazy Faith—not a life of normal faith or normal expectations or merely achievable goals. No, I choose to grab hold of a faith that surpasses all understanding. I choose to grab hold of everything that you desire to accomplish in me and through me. I commit to continuing this journey in the power of your Crazy Faith!*