

**Sermon Series - God Pleasers: 49 Days of Faith**  
**Part 4 - “How to Keep On Believing”**  
*Pastor Dale Campfield - July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011*

Intro:

**Matt 28:19** “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

**ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve**

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

**Current Sermon Series: “God Pleasers” – 49 Days of Faith**

**Theme Verses: Hebrews 11:6** “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.”

Sermon Topics

Expecting the Best, Taking Risks in Faith, Following God’s Directions  
How to Keep on Believing, Taking the Initiative. Stretching My Imagination  
Persisting in Faith

How do you get God's approval? By being more good than bad? No. By keeping the Ten Commandments? No. By promising to be perfect? No. By being religious and going to church? No. The Bible says there's only one way to get God's approval. There's only one way to get God's smile on your life. In Hebrews 11:6 it says, “*Without faith it is impossible to please God.*” The only way you can get God's approval is by faith in Jesus Christ, His Son. You may be a great person but without faith it's impossible to please God. You may do all kinds of great things in your life but without faith it's impossible to please God.

Would you say that faith is a pretty important issue? Yes, it is. It is vital that you learn how to live by faith. That you strengthen your faith. If you want to make an IMPACT in life; being a God pleaser – you've got to have faith!

For forty-nine days, between July 3 and August 14 2011, we'll be in a seven week or 49-day series called “God Pleasers – 49 Days of Faith.” In this series we're going to stretch your faith, we're going to challenge your faith, we're going to deepen your faith, we're going to strengthen your faith and you're going to see all kinds of amazing things happen in your life as your faith grows.

How do you get more faith? You say, “I'd like to get more faith. How do I get it?” The Bible tells us that faith comes by hearing the word of God. Faith comes from this book – this is faith-food – and the more you get into this book, God's word, the Bible – the more your faith will develop. So we've figured out a way in the next forty-nine days to deepen your faith and get you into the Word.

**Matthew 9:29**

“According to your faith it will be done to you.”

Jesus is talking. This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible because God says it's your choice. You get to choose. "According to your faith it will be done to you." You get to choose how much God blesses your life. You get to choose how many answers you have to prayer. You get to choose how much God gets to use you in His plan for the world to make an IMPACT. How? "According to your faith it will be done to you." God says, "If you've got a lot of faith, we'll get a lot done in your life. If you've got a little faith, we'll get a little done in your life. If you've got no faith, you get nothing done in your life. 'According to your faith it will be done.'" Faith is the key that unlocks the door to heaven. If you want to be a God Pleaser – You've got to have FAITH! It is very important that you grow, develop, you strengthen your faith.

### **Today's Sermon Title: "How to Keep On Believing"**

We've been living by faith. We've been seeing those things that are not as though they are. We're doing everything right. We've followed directions. We've done it all... and yet, we still don't see the results? We still don't see the answer to our prayers? What?

### **Question: Have you ever been in a hurry when God wasn't?**

One of the most difficult things in life is to sit in God's waiting room. God's waiting room is when there's something beyond your control that you can't speed up – an answer to prayer, a miracle, a change in a situation – you want it to change but it is totally out of your control and you have to wait on God.

### **Ecclesiastes 3:11**

"God does everything just right and on time but people can never completely understand what He's doing."

Boy, is that the truth! We don't know always what God is doing and we don't know when He's going to do it. So much of life we spend waiting on God's timetable.

### **Illus: Ohio State Motor Vehicle Place**

The place I least like to go in all the world is our state Motor Vehicle Administration. I absolutely dread those times when I am forced to make my way to their Beechmont or Batavia offices because experience has taught me that what I will do most when I get there is WAIT in line. In fact I know that the very FIRST thing I'll do when I walk in the door is stand in a line WAITING to find out which line to stand and WAIT in next. I've even stood in lines there WAITING for hours only to be told when it was finally my turn that I had not brought the right paper work with me and that I would have to return home to get it and then come back to WAIT in line once more. I hate any place like that where I have to waste my precious time WAITING!

### **Illus: Behind an accelerator-challenged driver.**

How about you? Don't you just enjoy a nice, long WAIT? Isn't it fun to be waiting at a stop light behind an accelerator-challenged driver when the light turns green and you have places to go and people to see and he just sits there? Or how about those times when you pull into a gas station and all the pumps are occupied and you have to WAIT for someone in front of you who has already filled his tank but before moving his car so that you could gas up, he decides that he simply must go inside and buy a pack of gum or something!?

### **Illus: Waiting in the doctor office.**

You've been sitting in the waiting room of your doctor's office for an hour now sharing the germs with dozens of sick people sitting around you. How do you respond? You're grateful for the chance to catch up on the 1993 Reader's Digest. You start a contest with the other patients to see who has the biggest surgery scar. You attempt to empty the waiting room by telling the rest of the people there that you have come to see the doctor because you think you were exposed to the EBOLA virus.

**But there are other more serious kinds of waiting.**

- There's the waiting of a single person to see if God has marriage in store for him or her.
- There's the waiting of a childless couple who desperately want to start a family but day after day, week after week, year after year....their prayers bear no obvious fruit.
- There's the waiting of someone who has a serious disease and the treatment is almost as bad as the illness. Its long and drawn out and they wonder if the cure will ever come.
- There's the waiting of the person suffering from depression who has to struggle every day to get out of bed and life seems dark and dreary most of the time. They wonder if they will ever win this mental battle and see the sun shine again in their life.

**Illus:** Engines out – late arrivals.

People on plane. Captain says, "We've lost one of our engines, no worry. We're going to be one hour late." Later, "We've lost the second engine, now two hours late." Later, "The third is gone, three hours late." With there only being 4 engines, a person says, "If this keeps up, we're never going to get there."

Did you know that if you lived on St. Paul Island in Alaska and got the urge for pizza it would take three days for the pizza to arrive?

God doesn't always answer our prayers with a resounding (military salute) 'yes sir! Right away sir!'

Sometimes He answers with an immediate 'yes', or an immediate 'no' based on His sovereign knowledge of what is best for us

But I find that more often He answers with His third response: 'wait'

And while we don't want to run out ahead of God, we also don't want to remain idle and grow stagnant either

Today's topic is 'what we can do while we are waiting on God' How do we Keep on Believing while we have to Wait?

**PHRASE: YOU WATCH... YOU WAIT... YOU'LL SEE!**

When I say the phrase... "You watch, you wait, you'll see." What does the "WAIT" part mean?

**Check out these verses in the King James Version...**

Psalms 40:1 - I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

Psalms 62:1 - Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.

Psalms 123:2 - Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

Psalms 130:5 - I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

Isaiah 40:31 - But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Micah 7:7 - Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

2 Thessalonians 3:5 - And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

### **Question: What does it mean to wait on God?**

**#1 – Activity Under Command.**

**#2 – Readiness for any New Command.**

**#3 – The Ability to do Nothing Until the Command is Given.**

Waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means first activity under command; second, readiness for any new command that may come; third, the ability to do nothing until the command is given.

The Hebrew word translated "waiting" . . . has affinity with a word that means "to entrench." God works for him that entrenches himself in Him. The idea of waiting for God here is that of digging ourselves in to God.

Waiting for God, then, means power to do nothing save under command. This is not lack of power to do anything. **Waiting for God needs strength rather than weakness. It is the power to do nothing. It is the strength that holds strength in check. It is the strength that prevents the blundering activity which is entirely false and will make the true activity impossible when the definite command comes.**

Waiting is far more difficult than working. . . . Waiting requires strength. It demands absolute surrender of the life to God, the confession that we are at the end of our own understanding of things, the confession that we really do not see our way and do not know the way. The waiting that says: "Until God shall speak we dare not move and will not move, we will not be seduced from our resolution to wait"; requires strength (The Westminster Pulpit, vol. ix, pp. 318-323).

There are times when the only hope we have, the only solution to our situation, the only cure for our condition...is to wait on God.

### **What to do while you're waiting...**

**#1: Count to 10**

When you get so frustrated with the situation and you're tired of waiting and getting angry and angrier, you've got to count to ten. We're taught as kids to count the numbers from 1 to 10 to try and cool off. The suggestion I have for you in this situation is to count 10 blessings that God has in store for you.

For example, "Dear God, I know you have blessings that are about to come my way. So I thank you now for the #1, the blessing of peace. #2, the blessing of prosperity. #3, the blessing of divine health. Etc. Etc. Count to TEN – Ten blessings!

**Deuteronomy 5:33**

*"Follow all the directions the Lord has given you. Then life will go well for you."*

**Rely on God's promises.** Rely on what God has promised.

**Romans 4:18**

*"When hope was dead within him, Abraham went on hoping in faith. He relied on the word of God."* Circle "when hope was dead within him".

**Have you ever felt that way?** That hope was dying inside of you? How do you know when hope is dying inside of you? **You start using the word "never"**. "I'm *never* going to get married... We're *never* going to have a baby... I'm *never* going to be happy again...I'm *never* going to change...We're *never* going to have a president..." Hope dies within you. What do you do when hope starts to die within you? You go on vacation! No. Notice what you do. *"When hope was dead within him, Abraham went on hoping in faith."* Circle "hoping in faith". This isn't just wishful thinking, this isn't just positive thinking. This is hoping *in faith*. Faith in God. You keep on believing.

**How do you keep on believing when you feel like doubting?** When you feel like giving up? It says there *"He relied on God's word."* And nothing is more reliable. If you're going to be a man/woman of faith you have to get God's promises in your life. Even here once again – rely on what God's promised. He relied on the word of God and that's what kept him going when hope wanted to give up. You need to read this book, study this book, and memorize Bible verses.

**Matthew 19:26** *"With God everything is possible."* When you get the promises of God in your life you will be able to hope in faith rather than giving up.

**When you come to a dead end rely on the promises.** *"While God was testing him (and that's what waiting is – a test), Abraham still trusted in God and His promises so he offered his son Isaac."* This is a test. Isaac grows up and God says I want you to give him back to Me. I want you to sacrifice him to Me. But Abraham didn't panic. I would have! But Abraham didn't panic. God says, give Me your son back. Sacrifice him to Me. But he didn't panic for three reasons, the Bible tells us.

**#2: Don't Try to Manufacture the Miracle**

I think most miracles are forfeited because we give up too soon. Naaman had to dip in the Jordan River seven times before his leprosy was healed. Elijah prayed for rain seven times before a cloud appeared on the horizon. The Israelites marched around the city seven times before the walls came tumbling down. So here is what I wonder. What if Naaman had only dipped in the river six times? What if Elijah had only prayed for rain six times? What if the Israelites had only made six trips around the wall? I think the miracle would have been forfeited because they would have given up too soon.

One of my favorite passages on the importance of prevailing in prayer is in Daniel 10. Daniel has a vision from God and he decided to fast. For three weeks it felt like the heavens were shut up. I often feel that way when I fast. I wonder why I'm even doing it because it doesn't seem like God is speaking to me any more clearly. But there is usually a breakthrough that happens. For Daniel, it happens on Day twenty-one. This is so fascinating to me. Daniel is visited by an angel. The angel says, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me." So the prayer was heard the moment it was prayed. But it took twenty-one days to answer the prayer because of spiritual opposition. For twenty days there is no understanding. I think Daniel might have thought to himself that all the fast was accomplishing was hunger pangs. But Daniel 10:14 says, "Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come." It took twenty days for him to get clarity. We want clarity now. But sometimes we have to wait for the vision to make sense. Sometimes we have to wait for the promise to be fulfilled. Sometimes we have to wait for the miracle to happen.

So the first mistake is giving up. We quit praying on day nine! The second mistake is trying to manufacture a miracle. I think most of us do what Abraham did when it seems like God is taking too long. We try to manufacture the miracle for Him. Instead of waiting on God, Abraham takes matters into his own hands and he decides to sleep with Sarah's handmaiden named Hagar. And that attempt to manufacture the miracle causes more problems than it solves!

A dream is hardly ever fulfilled instantly. When God gives you an idea of what He wants to do with your life and when He actually fulfills it there is always a time gap because He wants to grow you. He wants to build you up. Eleven years after God gave Abraham his dream Abraham still didn't have a child. When he was 86 it says, "*But Sarah still had not borne any children.*" What's happened in those eleven years? The answer is *nothing*. He's just waiting on God. He's tempted to doubt, tempted to despair, tempted to take detours. But God says, No, you're going to wait for the fulfillment of the dream I've given you.

**Gen. 16:1** Age 86

*"But Sarah still had not borne any children..."*

**Gen. 16:15**

*"So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne."*

God not only lets you wait for a while but while you wait He lets you have some problems. Isn't that fun? So you go through the stage of difficulty where things go from bad to really bad to worse to impossible. And notice that at the age 99 Abraham still did not have a son. He's 99,

his wife Sarah is 89. It says, *“How can a son be born to a man my age.”* What’s worse is that God changed Abraham’s name. His name originally was Abram and God changed his name to Abraham which means “Father of a great nation.”

Imagine this: He walks into a 7-11 and the guy says, “What’s your name?” *Father of a great nation.* “Oh? How many kids do you have?” *None.* “How old are you?” *99.* That’s kind of embarrassing. It’s a test of his faith.

But eventually God fulfills the dream and at age 100 and his wife is ninety, they have a miracle baby. And they name him Isaac which means “laughter”. Because they laughed at the thought. Sarah is ninety years old. We know she didn’t believe God when God said you’re pregnant because she laughed. Any woman who really believed God and ninety and told she was pregnant would have cried. But she laughs and God laughs and Abraham laughs and Isaac is named Laughter. They have a miracle boy. And they think this is great. But then comes the most difficult phase of all.

In his book *Fresh Faith*, Jim Cymbala says, *“The hardest part of faith is often simply to wait. And the trouble is, if we don’t then we start to fix the problem ourselves—and that makes it worse.”* That is precisely what Abraham does! Cymbala says, *“We complicate the situation to the point where it takes God longer to fix it than if we had quietly waited for His working in the first place.”*

### #3: Keep Your Thoughts Captive

The battlefield is in the mind. The longer you have to wait, the more your mind goes crazy. You start thinking out every possible scenario and the endings to those scenarios. Stop doing that. Take your mind, your thoughts captive. Start thinking positive things. Take your mind off of what you’re thinking about in the negative sense and start thinking positive thoughts. It’s your choice! Stop the “What if’s....” thinking. If you continue to think that way, it will destroy you. While you wait, think positive thoughts!

#### **1 Corinthians 10:5**

*“We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.”*

### #4: Recognize the Facts in Faith

Face them. But face them in faith. Recognize the facts of your life in faith.

**Romans 4:19-20** says, *“Without weakening in his faith he (Abraham) faced the fact that his body was as good as dead and Sarah’s womb was also dead. (He’s being pretty blunt here.) yet he didn’t waver with unbelief.”*

God’s word translation says, *“Through faith he regarded the facts.”* Abraham recognizes that he and his wife are beyond childbearing years. He’s 99, his wife is 89 and it is a medical impossibility that they’re going to have children. He doesn’t deny the facts. He faces them with faith.

This is very important, get this: Faith does not ignore reality. Faith does not pretend you don't have a problem. Faith does not act like it's no difficulty. Faith is not denial. *Please hear that! A lot of people think it is.* Faith is facing the facts in your life without being discouraged by them. That's faith. It's not denying you have problems. It's not denying you have difficulties. It's not denying you're facing a dead end or a hopeless situation from a human standpoint. It is facing the facts of problems in your life without being discouraged by them. That is true faith.

Some of you are facing cancer. Some of you have loved ones who are facing cancer right now. You cannot deny the diagnosis but you can defy the verdict. Big difference. You cannot deny the diagnosis. "I don't have cancer." Yes, you do. "They don't have cancer." Yes, they do. You cannot deny the diagnosis. That's fantasy. It's denial. But you can defy the verdict. You can fight it and say, "We're going to work at this and we're going to do all we can to beat it and defy the verdict."

This is very important. There's a brand of Christianity out there that says, "Deny all your problems and just smile, smile, smile!" That's not Jesus. That's Pollyanna. It says, "I'm not sick! I've got a 104 temperature but I'm not sick." Or "I'm not in debt. I'm on the verge of bankruptcy but I'm not in debt." Faith is not asking you to deny reality. It never does. Faith asks you to face the reality in your life without being discouraged by it. It's not living in denial. It's not clinging to the past. Faith is not stubborn foolishness.

If you're still holding on to pet.com stock, let it go. That thing is dead! It's dead. Let it go. If you're still waiting for 8-tracks to make a comeback let it go. It's over. It isn't coming back. If you're still waiting for that special guy or girl to invite you out on a date, that person from high school, and it's your fiftieth reunion, let it go! That puppy's not coming home! Let it go. If you're hoping that dimpled chads will elect you president, let it go! Grieve deeply but let it go.

Some of you need to do some legitimate deep grieving in your life. Things have not turned out as you planned. What you dreamed for your life isn't going to happen. But you don't have a pity party. You believe that God knows best and you say, "Yes, it didn't turn out the way I planned but I believe God has a better plan." That is faith. "Yes, things did not turn out the way I thought but I believe God is not through with my life and He's working in my life and God has good things in store for me still." That is faith. It is facing the facts in faith. It's not fantasy. It's just not being discouraged.

One thing I've told pastors for many, many years. It's an old cavalry rule: When the horse is dead dismount. Don't keep beating a dead horse. When a dream dies you just dismount and saddle another one because God's not through with you.

Some of you wanted to get married but you never did. Some of you wanted to have children but you never have. What do you do with a blocked love? Pull yourself into a cell? Build a shell around yourself? Be self-concerned? A prickly pear? I'm never going to let anybody get close to me again. I'm not going to let anybody hurt me. I'm going to hold in my emotions. Of course not. What do you do when a love is blocked? You redirect it. You rechannel it. You know the story I've told you several times about Corrie ten Boom. When she was a young woman was engaged to be married. All of a sudden the boy broke up with her and married a friend. She was devastated. And she never did marry. She went through

life as a single woman. But she redirected her love. She didn't pull herself into a little shell. And she became one of the most loving Christian leaders of the twentieth century, influencing millions and millions of people. She redirected her love in a new direction.

### **Keep Speaking Positively**

People say...

- It's probably not going to happen anyway.
- Knowing my luck, it'll never happen.

There is power in your words! Even as you've got to think positive thoughts, you've got to start speaking positive things as well. Some people are always speaking negatively. They talk negative about God, their friends, their family, their work place, etc. "Well, I'm believing God for a new job. I have faith for a new job. But I can't stand this job, it stinks, my boss stinks, the people I work with stink etc. etc." TALK POSITIVELY IN NEGATIVE SITUATIONS. Look at the Facts with FAITH and speak positively from that point on.

### **#5: Keep Busy**

Find something to do. If all you do is sit around, depression can sit in. Thoughts can take over. Loneliness can overtake you. Keep busy. Start a new hobby. Join a community service. Join the new choir that's coming up soon. Get involved in the church. Don't just sit around watching TV and doing nothing. Keep busy.

### **Ecclesiastes 4:5**

*"Fools fold their idle hands, leading them to ruin."*

"The secret of patience is to do something else in the meantime." -Anonymous

### **#6: Surround Yourself with People of Faith**

While you wait, wait with people who have faith. Don't hang around people who are faithless and non-believing. Hang around people who you know walk with faith. If you say you don't have anyone in your life like that – find someone! Seek them out. Ask them out for a date. Build a relationship with them. For me, I want doctors of faith like my dad has. They pray with him before surgeries. They stand in faith with him. He's surrounded himself with people like that; and should we.

### **Ecclesiastes 4:2**

*"A threefold cord is not quickly broken."*

### **Conclusion:**

**Song that Craig will do will happen here.**

If you truly want to please God, you must live by Faith – Following God's Directions in FAITH, and then Believing each step along the journey while you wait...

And as you do...

You watch... you wait... you'll see!