



What is the aim of this "FOR" series of messages?

We're looking for a 100% participation in the FOR Initiative. Out of this series, Pastor Andrew wants three things to happen: (1) Those that made a financial commitment to FOR to continue faithfully, (2) Some of us to increase that commitment, and (3) For those that are new to become included in that journey we're taking together and to join us. **For more about FOR, visit FORinitiative.org**

EXODUS IS ABOUT A JOURNEY, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, ABOUT GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN THE MIDST OF THE JOURNEY.

We're all on a journey—life is journey. We're also collectively on a journey as a church. A journey is a process of moving from a place we know to a destination we don't know. Sometimes that goes off without a hitch. But, sometimes the path we think we're going to take has unexpected detours because of things we didn't expect along the way. Nevertheless, we arrive at our destination. Many times, there are obstructions along the way that God protects us from that we may never know this side of eternity. When we feel like the journey took too long or wonder why things went a particular way, we have no idea how we've been protected.

1. How can detours in life's plans relate to faith? Can you share a detour that turned into a blessing?

A JOURNEY IS MOVING FROM A PLACE WE KNOW TO A PLACE WE DON'T.

In Exodus, the nation of Israel is taking a journey. They experienced things along their journey we can all relate to because they were moving from a place they knew to a place they didn't. We're moving from a place of generational familiarity to a place and opportunity that is unfamiliar. But at the onset of the journey, we can be assured that the God who found us then, and the God who is with us now, is the God who will meet us there. He is already ahead of us.

2. How does the concept that God is walking ahead of you affect your confidence you will arrive at the correct destination?

WHAT KEEPS US FROM TAKING THE BOLD STEPS OF FAITH THAT GOD WOULD CALL US INTO?

We like to drag our feet until things are situated first, but that doesn't allow us to demonstrate faith. Obstacles may present themselves along the journey. Sometimes we think obstacles are a reminder we're going the wrong direction when they are really opportunities for us to trust God in ways we couldn't figure it out and recognize God's guidance.

3. What potential obstacles and opportunities do you perceive about our church moving to the Rio Mesa location?

THE JOURNEY OF EXODUS WAS PREDICATED ON A PROMISE IN GENESIS

[Genesis 50:25] WHEN lets us know God WILL and that's who God is. AID means we are going to need assistance. Sometimes the aid God wants to provide isn't in the form we want it to be. We may pray for deliverance when God wants to meet us in the midst of the difficulties. He's going to meet us in the situation regardless of whether His help is in the form we'd prefer. We need to realize that God is with us along every step of our journey, both when we're feeling self-sufficient and when we're in need of aid. God reminded his people there would come a time he would dislodge them and they would need His assistance and He would be there for them.

4. What obstacles to faith make it hard to have confidence God will provide what is needed in the midst of difficulties?

AFTER A LONG TIME, WE TEND TO FORGET OR GET COMFORTABLE

[Exodus 2:28] From Genesis until Exodus, it was 430 years. That's a long time generationally to get comfortable, but things began to become uncomfortable for the Israelites as they were abused and in slavery. They began to think, "I don't think it's supposed to be like this." Some of us may have found ourselves in a place too long where we've forgotten some of the hopes and aspirations God placed in our hearts in the past. The older we get, the harder it is to lean on God's ability to move us forward in faith in contrast to our youth when we felt ready to take over the world. Or, we can find it hard to move forward because we've gotten comfortable over a long period of time instead of being proactive about where God is leading us at any time or under any circumstances. Sometimes, it takes discomfort to move us along.

5. Is there something that God whispered to you about an aspiration that needs to get dusted off?
6. How is the future of our church comfortable and/or uncomfortable as we're moving to next steps toward Rio Mesa?

THE FAMILIAR OFTEN PREVENTS US FROM MOVING FORWARD, BUT PREDICTABILITY IS NOT A BIBLICAL PROMISE.

[Phil. 4:10] Sometimes the divine trinity of our lives becomes safety, security, and stability instead of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We love the predictability of the familiar, so it's scary to move forward into unknowns. When Pastor Andrew moved as a child, what mattered was landing in a safe, secured place with parents that loved him and an assurance that eventually it would begin to feel like home. There were great memories from past places, but what was fantastic was the adventure ahead. Because God promises to supply all of our needs, we can alter our perspectives from self-focus to looking at the glorious riches of Jesus—from our deficiencies, to God's supremacies.

7. How does this relate to you personally and to your personal feelings about our church's future?

GOD HEARD, REMEMBERED, SAW, AND KNEW

[Exodus 2:23-25; Hebrews 4:15; Psalm 40:1] The emphasis in these verses isn't on what Israel did, but on who God is and what He could do. God's response to them in the past is still His response to us now. God hears: We can be confident God hears our cries for help. God remembers: The word doesn't imply God can forget, but that He's about to act for our welfare. God reminded Israel of the promise. God reminds us about the mission to which we're called—our purpose of reconciliation. God saw: God really sees you in a deep and intimate way. God knew: Jesus is able to sympathize with us. We don't have a lofty, dissociated God—he gets us! In Exodus, their prayer for deliverance echoed through space and time and was fulfilled in the finished work of Jesus for us. As we are reminded of the extent God went to express His love for us, we can move forward in faith.

8. How can we translate these concepts into a prayer for our church to move forward in God's purposes in our next steps?



BridgeChurch *Small Group Questions*



FOR SERIES WEEK #2: FORWARD * SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2023
PASTOR ANDREW SMITH. *.FOR MORE ABOUT "FOR" VISIT FORinitiative.org.

THINGS ARE HAPPENING AS WE ARE FAITHFUL TO GOD!

Our personal journey with Jesus begins when we ask Jesus to come into our lives. At the same time, we are on a journey as a church to a destination where we believe God is taking us. In Exodus, we see things that can propel us forward or hold us back on a journey. As a church, the most important thing we need to remember is who God is: The God who sees you, hears you, knows you, and reminds you of your calling and significance. Instead of looking at our abilities or inabilities, we need to have a focus on who our God is! The plagues of Egypt were associated with each of the gods of Egypt and God showed his dominion higher than each of them. God was moving and doing great things. We're also seeing great things happening in the lives of people in our church family!

1. We are striving for 100% involvement with the FOR Initiative. This Sunday, we saw some video testimonies of people who committed to the FOR Initiative and have seen great things happening in their lives. Please share if you have a personal testimony of God's faithfulness as you've made a financial or prayer commitment to FOR!

REMEMBER

[Exodus 13:3] REMEMBER! We can be forgetful people. After everything that happened with the plagues, the first thing God did was to establish the Passover to help the people remember—to remind them of who God is and what He has done. We need to be people who are intentional about being reminded of God's direction and faithfulness in our lives. The hope of us being reminded of God's future faithfulness is grounded on His past faithfulness—looking at the ways He has already moved in our lives. As God prepares the way, He will provide a way.

2. Share a time in your past when God was faithful to you that helps you remember you can rely on Him.

THE JOURNEY WON'T GO ACCORDING TO OUR PLANS

[Exodus 13:17-18] Our plans don't always flesh out in the way we expected. The Israelites got detoured. We don't like detours. God knew something the Israelites had no clue about. This is important for us to remember in our own lives. What they were going to face, God knew would cause them to turn around and return to Egypt (and slavery). Our reality is that sometimes what we perceive as an inconvenience is God redirecting us for our own good. Have you ever considered that the thing that is not going the way you wanted or is taking longer than you expected is really God's protection and provision? We experience detours as a frustration, but looking back we sometimes acquire awareness of what God was protecting us from. But, God never explained His reasoning to the Israelites, so there may be many times we don't realize what God was doing for our good. We need to realize the times we can see God's protection and thank Him for the protections we don't see.

3. How to the times our "rear view mirror" realizations of God's protection help us trust for the times when we're just frustrated with a detour without an explanation?
4. Share a time when you had a revelation from the "rear view mirror."

GOD MAY DELIBERATELY LEAD YOU INTO THE WILDERNESS

[Exodus 13:18] The wilderness is a time of waiting and refining. Hmm...let's take a trip to the DMV...who's in!? We don't like waiting. We also don't like refining because it involves challenging how we see things. God will use time in the proverbial wilderness. Moses was refined in the wilderness of Midian. Elijah hid in the wilderness from Jezebel where God provided for him. David fled from King Saul to the wilderness where a shepherd boy became a military leader and a future king. John the Baptist waited and was refined in the wilderness until the time to bring the message of repentance to the masses. Even Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to show us how to face temptation in our lives. The wilderness isn't a place we seek out on our own, but it's often a good place when God sends us there. The point of the journey is both the destination and the journey itself. The destination is important but we can underestimate the value of the journey because that's where we are changed.

5. How are your views getting challenged on the journey you are currently on?
6. Who is God trying to make you along the way?

TAKE A MOMENT FOR A FAITH EXERCISE

7. Ask God what He wants to do in your life along the journey. Write it down! Ask him to do some revealing in the waiting. Ask what God wants you to remember during the detours and show you the things He is protecting you from.

PRACTICAL PRACTICE ALONG THE JOURNEY

There are many ways that people help themselves remember what God has done for them in the past to help them trust God in the midst of future frustrations, challenges, and detours. By way of example, you might keep a faith journal, make margin notes in your Bible about how God is speaking to you, keep a rock garden where you paint on a stone an answer to prayer or times of God's faithfulness.

8. What are some ways you have done this or heard about others creating reminders of God's faithfulness?
9. Which one(s) will you choose to make a part of your faith journey?



BridgeChurch *Small Group Questions*



FOR SERIES WEEK #3: FORWARD * SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2023
PASTOR ANDREW SMITH. * EXODUS CHAPTER 16

NEXT SUNDAY IS COMMITMENT SUNDAY CONCERNING THE "FOR" INITIATIVE

We are striving for 100% involvement with the FOR Initiative. We're on a journey personally, but we're also on a journey as a church. We're moving next week to commitment Sunday. Be praying about what your commitment should be. Some of you need to follow through with your prior commitment. Some of us need to increase our commitment. Some of us need to make a commitment for the first time. For more information about FOR, go to FORinitiative.org.

WHEN WE FIND OURSELVES IN A PLACE WHERE WE DON'T HAVE CONTROL WE TEND TO WORRY OR GRUMBLE

[Exodus 16:1-3] Israel left Egypt and passed through the Red Sea. They saw God fight for them. Things were working out well for them and God gave them their first statute or rule: If you do what I instruct you, it will go well. Not that it would be *easy*, but that it would go well. Then, the Israelites were led into the wilderness. The entire community grumbled. We've got to give Israel a little grace because this faith walk and freedom was all new to them; however, the moment things didn't go the way they thought, hoped, or wanted, their response was grumbling. We feel like we're in control when things are going easy. When we find ourselves in a place where we have a loss of control, we do one of two things: (1) internal worry or (2) external grumbling—putting words to our worries. The Israelites chose to complain. It became an ongoing theme or pattern for Israel conveying a lack of faith. The real test of our faith isn't how we respond when things are easy, but how we respond when things get tough.

1. What is most tempting you to worry or complain to God about right now in your life?

WE CAN'T TIE OUR CIRCUMSTANCES TO GOD'S CHARACTER

We have a tendency to look at the Israelites response with judgmentalism on their faith, but in actuality, we do the same thing. The moment we don't feel like God is going to come through, we begin to question God's goodness and our faith, which leads to worry and grumbling. That grumbling is an affront to who we say God is. Many times we end up tying our circumstances to God's character. We begin to make an unhealthy association between our circumstances and God's goodness. The truth is that we're fickle and we change, and our circumstances change, but God's character never changes. The fact is that we're responsible for sin because we've chosen to be our own god. Humans have difficulty taking responsibility for our own actions. We shift our focus away from God to our challenges.

2. Can you relate to the pull to change your view of God when things aren't going great?
3. What can we do to proactively keep our focus on God when things get rough?

HARDSHIP REVEALS WHAT COMFORT CONCEALS

How do we respond when things get tough? How did people respond when Covid-19 hit? God didn't stop taking care of his people because there was a global pandemic, but our faith was tested in a way it never had been before. When things get tough, God didn't cause the test, but He will often allow a test. When things are easy, things look good. When the heat is on, our true selves emerge. Covid revealed things that cause division and the distrust we have in people. But in the end, much of this had to do with our faith.

4. What did Covid reveal about your faith?

OUR FAITH GROWS WHEN ITS TESTED

[Hebrews 11:1] This verse provides a definition of faith. No one enjoys a test, but our faith grows when its tested. A test establishes and challenges our understanding of what we say we believe. A test's benefit is to cause us to grasp what we're being tested on.

[James 1:2-3] James tells us that the testing of our faith produces endurance. As we experience sequential tests, each test may be easier based on what you've learned before

5. How has your faith grown through a time of testing?

THE DEGREE OF OUR TRUST IS BASED ON THE OBJECT OF OUR TRUST

Jumping back to Israel, the people grumbled against Aaron and Moses. When we're under duress, we say things we don't mean. This is why we need to be slow to speak and slow to anger. There's no magic eraser for words. We also need to realize that we have a tendency to blame leadership. Often people's frustration may not be based on a leader, but it's easy to make leaders a target for blame. Every relationship is predicated on trust. The degree of our trust is based on the object of our trust. Israel took their eyes off the pillar of fire and their focus went to Moses and Aaron. When things go wrong, we want someone or something to blame.

6. How have you seen this principle of assigning blame on leaders play out?
7. How does this apply to church leadership?

WE NEED TO KEEP OUR FOCUS ON JESUS

[Hebrews 12:1-2] We need to ask ourselves if we truly trust God, then we need to be reminded to keep our eyes on Jesus. Some of us have tied our circumstances to our faith in God's character. Some of us have been focusing on something else as the pinnacle of trust...our career and finances, relationships, etc.

8. What areas of your life are you having trouble trusting God with?
9. In what ways have you been frustrated and need to realize that your faith is being tested?
10. What have these questions revealed to you about your faith?



BridgeChurch *Small Group Questions*



FOR SERIES WEEK #4: FORWARD * PASTOR ANDREW SMITH
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2023

We are striving for 100% involvement with the FOR Initiative. This Sunday, was commitment Sunday. Are you all-in with your time, talents, and finances? For more information, visit FORinitiative.org.

THE EDGE OF THE PRECIPICE

When Pastor Andrew moved to Breckenridge, Colorado for a time, he discovered a lot of fun summer activities, including rock climbing. Some accomplished friends agreed to teach Pastor Andrew and his roommate. First up was a review of safety protocols, then the first climb was one way from the bottom to the top to a trail back. His instructors told Pastor Andrew not to worry because the safety gear could hold an elephant. While Pastor Andrew said he trusted the gear, he realized that there was no way to know unless you fell. As Pastor Andrew was then introduced to repelling, they were about 100-ft off the ground and he was told, "Go to the edge of the cliff, turn around, and lean back." Pastor Andrew remembers looking down and thinking that everything they **said** seemed cancelled out by what he **saw**.

1. What experience have you had where what you were told (and trusted) was completely contrary to what you perceived?

GOD'S PROVISION WAS FOLLOWED BY A TEST OF ISRAEL'S TRUST

As we rejoin Israel on their journey, God has done some amazing things. God has instructed them to build the tabernacle that represented the presence of God among them and with them and also the holiness of God. At that point, they only had limited access to the Ark of the Covenant that provided limited access to God as opposed to our unfettered access now. God was demonstrating His provision for them and demonstrating He would do what he said. But, they were coming to a point where everything God had said would come to an ultimate test.

2. Have you been at a place where you had to fully trust God for his provision? Share.

ONE OF THE HARDEST THINGS TO DO SPIRITUALLY IS RECONCILE WHAT GOD SAYS WITH WHAT WE SEE

[Numbers 13:1-2, 28, 32-33] God had **told** the Israelites He was giving them the Promised Land. It was clear it was going to happen. They'd reached their destination and God told them to go in and see what it holds for you. But then the spies reported that the people occupying the land were strong and the cities fortified and the descendants of the Anak were there, which were huge men. This made them hesitant to do what God had given them to do. In our own lives, we sometimes **see** something that looks more formidable than our ability and so we're rely on our own ability instead of trusting for God's provision. God had **said** He would give the Israelites the land, but they were **seeing** something different. One of the hardest things for us to do is reconcile what God **says** with what we **see**. And not just spiritually...going to back to repelling down the mountain, Pastor Andrew knew he could trust his friends, but it was contrary to what he saw.

3. Have you had to walk through a faith test to trust God's promises over your perception of your circumstances? Share.

A RECURRING THEME IN SCRIPTURE IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF SHIFTING FOCUS FROM WHAT GOD SAYS TO WHAT WE SEE

[Genesis 2:16-17; Genesis 3:6; Exodus 20:22-23; Matthew 14:28-29] This issue is something seen throughout scripture like a theme starting all the way back at the beginning in Genesis. God had provided everything and there was only one rule. What is deceptive about **sight** as compared to what God **says** is the process—the woman **saw** the tree was good and desirable and delightful and she began to be seduced by her sight. In Exodus, the people were awaiting God's presence at Mt. Sinai and God tells the Israelites not to make gods of gold and silver. God doesn't want them to get impatient while Moses was gone and worship something other than God. The people knew what God had **said**, but they **saw** that Moses was taking a very long time on the mountain. In the New Testament, Matthew knew that Jesus **said** for him to walk on the water, but then he **saw** the strength of the wind and waves he began to sink. Peter's focus on Jesus was shifted to a focus on his circumstances and what was going on around him. This is one of the hardest thing for us to reconcile in our journey with Jesus because we may put so much trust in what we **see** in our circumstances over the truth God has **spoken** over us in scripture.

4. What types of situations are most likely to shift our focus from Jesus to our perceptions of our circumstances?

TRUSTING GOD WITH OUR MONEY IS ONE WAY TO RECONCILE WHAT GOD SAYS WITH WHAT WE SEE

[Malachi 3:10] Israel has just reoccupied the Promised Land after being captives in Babylon and their spiritual vitality is a little plateaued. They withheld their financial worship of God. Our act of giving is an **act of worship** because worship is acknowledging who God is and what He has done. God issues a challenge with a promise. This is the only time God says that we are to test Him. In all other instances, we are told not to test God, but God says we can test him with our finances. Giving is one of the ways that we can reconcile what God **says** with what we **see**. God lets us test him with the thing we are most prone to elevate to an idol in our lives and to put the most trust in. God instead wants us to worship Him with our money.

5. Have you tested God with your money? If so, what was the result?
6. Are there things in your perception of your financial circumstances that make it hard to trust what God has promised?
7. What is your perception of financial giving as an act of worship?

RESPONSE, INVITATION, AND OPPORTUNITY

Giving out of joyfulness is a response. On the other side of the test is God's provision. Giving assures that nothing else has our affection more than God. It's our response to His invitation to trust what God **says** over what we **see**. We can step into an invitation to experience the faithfulness of God as well as His blessings, which may be financial or a growth in faith, reconciled relationships, freedom from materialism, or something you don't even realize (yet) that you need. Standing back on that repelling cliff, there was a moment that Pastor Andrew had to lean into trust to experience freedom and victory. God invites us into a moment of supreme trust with our money.

8. If God is speaking to you about being 100% committed in the area of your finances, go to <https://www.forinitiative.org/commit> to make your commitment!