



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!