

## On-Track; The Way

Today, we're starting a new sermon series, "ON TRACK." In the next 6 weeks, we will talk about how you can grow in the benefits of the Resurrection we discussed Easter Sunday! I hope you will be guided in ways where you can allow God to build within you, an out of the Box - faith, trust and confidence in the Lord.

Imagine what life would be like if you had absolute confidence in God that:

- there really is a God
- there is a personal God who knows your name
- God will be with you forever and promises never to leave you or forsake you
- this God will help you through everything that happens to you in life

Imagine if you had that absolute confidence in God!

**What if** you had that kind of - amazing, out of this world confidence in God, so:

- No matter what happens: you trust God!
- No matter how bad things get: you know God knows what's going on and has everything under control!
- No matter what happens: you have total peace!

**Imagine – no fear, no anxiety, no worry:** Not about your kids or your health, not about your finances – nothing! Such unshakable confidence in God, that the Lord is with you and has everything under control! **Imagine!**

To have such confidence that God is in control and is working things out, that you totally trust God's promise: "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*"  
Romans 8:28 (NIV)

**Imagine if your faithless like that!  
I started this way for this reason...**

This is where God wants to take you

When you read the Bible, it's theme is God trying to give you this extraordinary, out of the box, over the top confidence in God. **The reason that is the story of the Bible and your life is because...**

- **In the beginning**, the break between humans and God happened around the issue of trust and confidence... about faith!
- **In the beginning**, the break between God and humans was not just about disobedience. Not God giving Adam and Eve a to-do-list and they only got 3 out of 4 right and God said, “Sorry, you’re out of here!”

What broke the relationship between God and people is the refusal to trust God! People thinking God is withholding something good from them, so they decided – I can’t trust God... I do not believe that God wants the best for me!

The relationship break between God and humans happened over the issue of confidence or trust! **And God has been working to get us back On-Track ever since!**

No matter if you are religious or unreligious, doubting God or not believing in Him at all. **God has been working to draw you into – key word – relationship**, that is built around absolute confidence in Him. God wants you to have really big faith, big confidence in Him! **That is what God wants!**

Imagine if you had that great confidence in God! Our lives would be transformed if we lived everyday with this God sized confidence!

**God wants to grow your confidence in Him into something extraordinary!**

Our purpose at the \_\_\_\_\_ Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ – that means growing up or blowing up your faith, your trust, your confidence in Jesus!

**The more confidence you have in a relationship  
the better the relationship!**

It’s true in marriage

It’s true between parents and children

It’s true between employers and employees

The best relationships are characterized with confidence/trust... and the same is true with our relationship with God... and that is the whole message of the New Testament... God wooing humans back into a confident, trust based relationship.

**Isn't it true...** for those who doubt this God stuff... the real problem isn't about disobeying God, the problem... for most people is:

Do I believe this stuff? Can I trust God enough to turn my life over to Him?

**The tension is – I want to - - but I'm not there yet!**

But God wants to grow your confidence in Him! **There's a cool passage of scripture and** the only place in the Bible where Jesus was amazed

**Listen as we read Matthew 8:1-13**

In this scripture, **Jesus performs 2 miracles and 2 guys express faith...** but this is the only place in the Bible where God is amazed by what someone does!

People were amazed by what Jesus did... but **this is the only place where Jesus says – wow!** How'd you like to be the first person to ever make Jesus say, **“Woe! Did you see that?”**

And it's not because someone did an extraordinary act or a great obedience. Jesus did not say, **“Did you see him NOT commit adultery? Did you see that person NOT gossip?”** Why? **It's not about rules or Laws!**

AFTER the man is healed of leprosy, a **Roman Centurion came to Jesus for help!** This is notable because these are the bad guys, the Romans are the occupying army! They pick up people and they're never seen again, they force people to do things they don't want to do. You hide your valuables from these guys and a Centurion is a ranking Roman Soldier who has 100 of these bad guys assigned to him.

Imagine – Jesus and His Disciples walking along... and this Centurion comes up, probably with other soldiers; and the disciples think, we're doomed! Why are the Romans coming – **Peter, what did you do this time?**

But this pagan Roman, non-God fearing, heathen Centurion came to Jesus and asked, “I need a favor! My servant lies at home paralyzed and suffers terribly.

Imagine - the Jews hated the Romans. The people with Jesus heard the Centurion and probably thought – we hope he dies and it's contagious, we hope you and your 100 soldiers get it, and we hope the Emperor gets it!!! Jesus let's heal some Jewish people, but don't waste your time on this heathen whose been persecuting us!

Then Jesus said, “Shall I come and heal him?” I can hear the disciples, “Jesus, you can’t help the Romans, they’re the enemy!” But Jesus said – I’ll go and help. Then the Centurion replied, “**Lord, I don’t deserve you coming into my home, but say the word and my servant will be healed!**”

Apparently, this Centurion was watching, he saw Jesus had authority. He figured, Jesus could do whatever he does from miles away and heal his servant wirelessly... hands free. He had confidence Jesus could heal his servant from anywhere!

The Centurion explained in verse 9, he was under authority and had authority, he saw Jesus had authority over disease and death. This Soldier saw similarities in authority between himself and Jesus. He had authority over 100 men and the only reason his brutish soldiers obeyed him was because he was the symbol of ROME!

The Centurion thought - if these 100 soldiers obey me because I represent ROME; death and disease obey Jesus because He represents somebody!

He recognized that they both were under authority, he probably didn’t know who’s authority Jesus was under, but that authority was unbelievably powerful and had power over life and death! So he knew Jesus didn’t have to come to his house to heal his servant, Jesus could heal the servant long distance. Just by giving an order!

**The soldier saw something no one else saw and when Jesus saw this, He was so amazed and astonished, he said – WOE!!!**

This amazement wasn’t connected to obedience, it was about the Centurion’s faith!

Jesus said to the Jews around him, I wish all of the Jews were like this Roman Centurion! The only time Jesus was astounded was because of a Roman’s confidence in Him and the Holy God He was and represented!

Jesus said that He had not found anyone with such great faith!  
What moves Jesus’ is BIG faith/trust/confidence in Him and the Father God who works through Him and is Him, trust and confidence in the Holy Spirit of God!

What is most honoring to God is confidence or trust in Him!

What builds a family to be strong is the confidence and trust between a husband and wife! A parent and child, Grandparents and grandchildren! What thrills and honors God... more than just following rules and rituals, is our expression of confidence.

That is the essence of relationships... and that is what God is after!

So... if God is into this big, big faith or confidence...

## **What causes our confidence in God to Grow?**

Over the years, I've met people in many parts of the world... and I talk to people about their faith journey. I talk with them about their highs and lows in life.

### **Over and over again, 5 things come up.**

Now this list is not from out of the bible or from Pew Researchers. I have seen these 5 things, these 5 catalysts, build me or others faith or confidence in God. Over the years, I've heard at least one or more of these things cause people's confidence in God grow big in each story. So over the next 5 weeks, each week we'll talk about these things that grow big, big confidence in God.

### **Here are some disclaimers...**

**First:** This is not a list to do. I am not saying "If you do these 5 things, it will make your faith big."

**Second:** This is not a list from the bible, but they have a biblical foundation.

**Third:** This is not an all-inclusive list, you may find other things that were catalysts that build big faith in life. This is only my observation and a pattern I've seen in the lives of many, many people.

### **But here's why I believe it is important to talk about these 5 things.**

I believe, as you evaluate your journey of faith in Jesus Christ, and move forward in this adventure of faith, you'll find these 5 things come up in your life. **I have also found that the Community Church's ministry is built around these 5 things.**

#### 1. Life-appliable teaching

When people talk about their faith journey, the story often includes... **Then** I was invited me to a bible study or small group. **Then** I started going to this church. **Then** I heard this practical, biblical teaching that made sense and answered my questions. You may have gone to church your whole life, but never opened a bible or heard about God's promises or principles. **Then** I went to this church or study and suddenly I saw things I never knew were in the bible or that it was so practical.

## 2. God-given relationships

When people tell their story, the story includes “...**and then I met** this person, **I met** Pastor so-and-so.” One of the things God uses to grow our confidence in Him is people! And looking back on your faith life, you can see **how God placed these people**, key relationships into your life! You see how God plops people in your life and they came along side of you and that relationship was a God-given blessing.

## 3. Personal practices

These are what someone taught you. Like **how to** spend time alone with God or you were encouraged **to start** praying regularly, someone gave you a bible and told you **to start** reading it. Or gave you one of the bible reading plans available at the Guest Counter and started reading the bible on your own. Maybe someone **gave you** a journal to write in, a Christian book to read or challenged you **to start** giving to God on a regular basis. These personal practices build big confidence in God!

## 4. Realizing that God has a plan

I heard this over and over again as people share their faith story! They say something like – then **they asked** me to teach, **they asked** me to volunteer, **they invited** me on a mission trip... and then you heard that God has a plan for your life. You learned that you were created for a purpose, and served people in Jesus name. You were scared to death - but then you started praying in your own words, and it probably went like this – HELP! You found yourself dependent on God and God said – that’s exactly where I want you to be! When God uses you, your confidence in God grows as God works through you. That’s why I encourage mission trips, they grow faith!

## 5. Life-changing experiences

When people talk about how God grew their faith, usually something happened and they experienced God move like never before! Somebody got sick, they got a divorce, a child died... you got married, you had a child, you were healed in a miraculous way. In that story, you could have gone either way, sometimes it’s bad and sometimes it’s good. It was a pivotal event and God got your attention, and God showed you things you never saw before. For men, it’s often starts when they participate in a ministry, and start giving to God – then they often experience God like never before! These life-changing experiences grow your confidence in God.

Remember, this isn’t a to-do list, you can’t go out and experience a God given, life changing experience. You can’t go out and do a God given relationship.

- These are things you look back on. But it's important to know this list, if you're a parent – get your child into the environments where these things take place. If you are a Christian, you can get yourself into an environment – like in this church, where these things can take place and look out for these things.

When you are aware of when these things take place and know God will place these things in your life to grow your faith up BIG. You can step forward in bold faith and confidence; you will better know and understand God's will when it comes!

Remember, God wants to grow your faith - if you allow God to do so! The greater the confidence in God, the greater the faith and the greater the intimacy with God... that's what God wants! **Faith like a certain Roman Centurion!**

**Prayer:**