

TRANSCRIPTION | Sunday, June 1, 2025 | Week 1 | Even If Series

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This morning, I get the opportunity to lead us into a new message series, and we're going to be taking a look at the book of Habakkuk, the book of Habakkuk. Now, some of you may be familiar with that book. Others of you may have not even been aware that there is a book in the Bible under that title.

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It is actually named after a prophet who lived in Old Testament times. It is situated right towards the end of the Old Testament before you flip over into the New Testament. It is a part of a section of books within Scripture known as the Minor Prophets. They're not called that because of a lack of quality. They're called that because of a lack of quantity.

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In other words, they are quite small books for for us, we discover that Habakkuk is actually three chapters. And that's what we're going to do is we're going to take a period of time and just kind of look at those three chapters. And the title of this series is even if, even if and really what we're going to do, throughout the course of it is we're going to talk about how that God invites honest questions, even if his answers feel delayed.

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We'll say it again for the sake of emphasis we're going to be talking about during this series. God invites honest questions, even if his answers feel delayed. Now I wonder, have you ever wrestled with God's silence because it's so you know, when you understand that there's a particular kind of pain that can come into your soul, your mind, your emotions, your spirit.

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When the enemy begins to convince you that you have been abandoned by the very one that you trust the most, sometimes when you're battling this kind of spiritual mindset, it can feel as though you pray, but yet nothing is happening. You obey, but it still seems like that things are falling apart. You try to believe, but it still feels like that evil is winning too many battles.

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And that's actually where we pick up the book of Habakkuk. When you go into that first chapter, what you discover is that he starts with questions, not with answers. He doesn't open his book, like so many other biblical writers, with some kind of a greeting or even a genealogical review. Instead, he starts with a groan. In fact, by his own definition, he starts with a burden.

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I want you to see these four verses that open the text. Habakkuk one verse one. The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw. Oh Lord, how long shall I cry? And you will not hear, even cry out to you, violence, and you will not save. Why do you show me iniquity and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me.

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There is strife, and contention arises there, for the law is powerless and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous. Therefore perverse judgment proceeds. What? Maybe you have not realized up until this point, is that the book of Habakkuk has great levels of similarity to the Book of Job. The difference is that it's much smaller, and that it comes from a prophetic tone.

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Now, we've already read the question that Habakkuk poses about injustice in those first four verses, but he has more questions. He's not finished yet. In fact, he has a question for God about why it feels like the Lord is being unfair. It's found in verse 13. Your eyes are too pure to look on evil, and you cannot tolerate wrongdoing.

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So why do you tolerate those who are treacherous? Why are you silent while the one who is wicked swallows up the one who is more righteous than himself? Now I get it. You may have never articulated your prayer quite like that, but it is highly likely if you have ever fallen prey to comparison. And it felt like that someone who was living a less holy life than you was succeeding in some way more than you.

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Maybe you can relate to this question. There's another question that he ask about evildoers and their dominance of the world. It's in verse 17. Will our enemies, therefore empty their net and continually slaughter nations without mercy? Now, now, here's what I find almost surprising. We are reading from the Bible. We are reading from historical records that God has chose to canonize.

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And yet, what we discover is that even though Habakkuk is asking these questions, it doesn't seem like that God is answering him quite like you might expect him to. In fact, the first element of answer that we see provided from God to Habakkuk is found in verse four of chapter two, and it says this look, the enemy's ego is inflated.

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He is without integrity, but the righteous one will live by faith. And so havoc is poured his heart out to the Lord. He's groaning before God in prayer. And this is wrong, and that's wrong. And this doesn't make sense. And that doesn't make sense. And God, I've got this question and Lord, I've got that question. And then God simply says the just the righteous are going to be required to live by faith.

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In other words, they will not live based on what they see. They will live based on the substance of the thing they hope for, and the evidence of the thing that's not seen. Now, I want you to just for a moment, imagine with me that you were born in the year 1900. Okay? You're born in the year 1900.

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At age 14, World War One would start. He would last for four years. It would end round about your 18th birthday. And in that time period, 22 million people would be killed in battle. Later in 1918, the Spanish flu would spread in such a way that the epidemic would kill 50 million people within a two year period of time.

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At age 29, the Great Depression would begin, unemployment would hit 25%, and the gross domestic product would fall by 27%. It would last for four years at the age of 39. World War two would start. 75 million people would die, including 6 million Jews in the Holocaust who are considered God's chosen people at the age of 50. The Korean War would start.

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5 million people would perish at the age of 55. The Vietnam War would start, and it wouldn't end for 20 years, and 4 million people would perish at the age of 62. The Cuban Missile Crisis would reach its pinnacle and continue to, in some ways, I suppose, even grow from that point forward to war that the entire world set on edge, especially the inhabitants of Russia and America.

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In 1968, President Kennedy would be assassinated. And later. Excuse me. That was 1963. 1968 Martin Luther King, Jr. Would be assassinated from 1972 to 74. American politics would be rocked by the Watergate scandal. And then in 1990, the Gulf War would break out and they would go even any semblance of peace once again on and on it goes until you reach the year

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2000 and you see that the trend continues, because in 2001, the World Trade Centers would be struck on 911.

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From that, the war in Afghanistan would begin. 2400 American soldiers would be killed, 20,000 wounded, and 165,000 would lose their lives. In 2008, the Great Recession would begin, and American households would lose a combined total of over \$16 trillion in net worth and 15 million people would be unemployed. In 2010, an earthquake would strike Haiti. 200,000 people would die.

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In that one moment, millions of people lost and displaced from their homes. And then in 2020, Covid 19 would be loosed. That pandemic would completely reshape the Earth and its functionality. As we know it. Well, when you start looking at the things that have happened, even within the last 125 years, what you see is repetitive moments of chaos.

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And what can happen from that is that the enemy can quite effectively begin to convince people that God is absent. And so I think that that brings about a question that must be addressed and addressed from a biblical standpoint. And what's intriguing is that the Book of Habakkuk very adequately helps us address this question. What should I do when God feels absent?

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What should I do when God feels absent? Have you ever felt like that God was taking too long? Like you're watching things decay, marriages, morality, mental health, sometimes even church situations and God just seems to be silent or worse, absent. And so perhaps even from that comes an even greater problem, which is that the enemy begins to convince us that prayer is pointless.

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And so what will happen is you'll start to feel like if my prayers are pointless, why should I even pray? But when you go into chapter one, what you see is this man named Habakkuk, and the recording of his prayer is theologically defined as what is known to be a lament. You may not be familiar with that word, so let's break it down for a second.

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Lament is a prayer in pain that leads to trust. That's how it's biblically defined. So the first section of the book of Habakkuk is meant to be looked at as a prayer in pain. That's actually

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going to lead this man to trust. Now, what you discover in Scripture is that the biblical language for processing the pains of life are known as lamenting, lament.

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It's it's when you refuse to give God the silent treatment, even if he's not honoring your desired timeline. And so instead, what we find from this biblical example of lamenting is that pain can actually become a platform for prayer. Did you know that the Bible is actually filled with lamenting one third of the Book of Psalms, the largest book in the entire Bible, is made up of lamenting songs or prayers of lament.

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In fact, this is such an important subject that one book in the Old Testament is completely dedicated to it and actually named accordingly. It's called the Book of Lamentations. Now, whether you're in some way struggling with the pain surrounding you as an individual or an entire community, or someone's mourning their sin or someone's, you know, struggling with some kind of injustice that's happened, what you discover is that biblically lamenting is to actually find a source of spiritual inspiration in such a way that the pain becomes a platform for your prayer.

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And in fact, when you break it down even further, what you'll discover is that almost every place that lamenting is mentioned in the Bible, it has four parts. First, there's this place where that someone turns to God. And by that, what I mean is that they decide to talk to God in the middle of their pain.

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And then the second part is typically groaning, where they lay out the nature and the depth of their sorrow. The third part is they begin to ask God to make his promises manifest in their life. In other words, God, you said you were going to do this thing. Now I'm asking you that you will actually bring that to pass in my situation.

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And the fourth part of that is trusting where that you find the person from a biblical perspective. Just believing in God's trustworthiness. And I believe that the book of Habakkuk matches that same structure. And what you actually see is that this structure becomes a framework for lamenting what it basically becomes would be tracks for which your grief can move forward, where that God's people can journey from heartbreak to hope.

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And I think it's an important subject, because it seems to me rather unfortunate that a lot of modern day Christians are unfamiliar with this subject of lamenting. Why? Because it makes us uncomfortable. And what happens is we wind up stifling our belief and the belief of even other followers of Jesus, convincing them that that that a biblical lament should be mistaken for unbelieving doubt.

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And yet, when it comes to grief, what actually winds up happening? Because we don't process these things in a prayerful way, or even in a worshipful way, is that Christians wind up falling into 1 or 2 ditches. Denial or despair. And the worst thing about those ditches is they separate you and further disconnect you from the deliverance that God could bring.

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And so what I'd like to point out to you this morning is that that true followers of God, they they don't necessarily get to escape all of the struggles of life and sometimes even the grief that comes with loss. And so maybe it would do us some good to stop living in the denial that is phrased by us looking at everyone through hypocritical theatrical facemask saying I'm fine, I'm doing great.

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And I get it like there's a time to to speak by faith and there's there's a time to declare those things that are not as though they were, but also at the same time, many of us are hiding deep questions and struggles that are within us because we don't want anybody to know that really. There's denial and there's despair.

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Because what you discover if you carefully read the Bible, especially the Book of Psalms, the Book of Lamentations, and even the book of Habakkuk, you're going to discover that real believers sometimes struggle. What you discover is that trusting God is a process, and the Bible reveals that lamenting can actually become the language of faith for this fight. It seems like to me, when Habakkuk starts praying at the initial part here, the initial stage, it's almost like his prayer is being ignored.

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But what I like about his approach is that he does not allow his questions to become passive. Instead, there is a passion associated with the way that he approaches the Lord despite all the questions. Verse two he says, how long, Lord, must I call for help? And you do not listen to me. I

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cry out to you about violence, and yet it seems like you do not see, like Abacha isn't just seeing injustice in the world.

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He's actually pointing out throughout his prayer that he's seeing the same kind of behavior in God's people. But he looks at his nation and he discovers that it's falling apart spiritually and politically and morally. He looks around, he sees there's violence on all sides, and yet there's no divine intervention. There's injustice, and yet there's no divine correction. There's evil men in power, and yet there's no divine reversal.

00:16:22:09 - 00:17:03:04

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And in response to that, he doesn't whisper some polite religious phraseology. He shows raw honesty. And in response to Habakkuk, which we're going to learn a lot more about next week, we learn that God is not intimidated by your questions. Instead, he might be insulted by you pretending that you don't have any. And so I want you to think for a moment about the questions that you have suppressed, about the struggle that you've tried to ignore.

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Not those things that just didn't add up and they didn't make sense. What you need to appreciate about Habakkuk is that he believes in God's sovereignty, even though he's questioning God's strategy. And here's what's powerful God lets him. When you dive into the pages of Habakkuk, you see a man that feels like God's not listening, but he's still talking to him.

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And what's amazing is that God didn't strike Habakkuk for questioning. Instead, he recorded the entire process in the Holy Bible for you. And I had to learn from and to glean from. And what that means is that for you and I, like our frustration most likely isn't a sign of faithlessness. It might actually be the birthplace of a deeper trust.

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When you when you break down Habakkuk, name his actual name. It has a meaning. Some theologians say that it means to embrace. Other translators say it means to wrestle. And yet still others would say that it means to embrace through wrestling. I like that that latter summary of the two parts, because the book of Habakkuk actually shows you how to do both.

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It shows you how to embrace and it shows you how to wrestle in this beautiful little prophetic book. What you discover is that have a good wrestles with God's timing, yet he doesn't walk

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away from God's presence. He embraces the tension between belief and bewilderment with what's happening around him. And yet at the same time, he prays, prayers that feel like they're unanswered because he trusts that there's a God who still listens.

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And he's asking deep questions. And what you discover is that for Habakkuk, God doesn't view that as a sign of rebellion. He views it as a sign of relationship. And what I've learned with my own kids is that the more my relationship with them grows, the deeper their questions become, the more they're willing to just put out on the table and have a conversation about it to discuss and to dialog our way through life's most difficult questions.

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When you ask a hard question of God, it can actually be a sign of the deepness of your relationship with him. Because you don't cry out to a god you've abandoned, you cry out to a God you believe is still listening. And what we discover in the Book of Habakkuk is that God allows people to wrestle with him, and he doesn't want you.

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To run away. And so many times when we feel something we don't understand or we still feel something we can't make sense up, we just run away. And what God is saying is, no, no, I want you to embrace me in the question. I want you to wrestle with me through the struggle and what happens for Habakkuk is he actually discovers that God has a vision and a plan for the earth that is beyond his wildest imaginations and dreams.

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In fact, one of the things that God reveals to Habakkuk is in chapter two verse 14 and he says, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord's glory, glory as the waters cover the sea. That's one of my favorite verses in the entire Bible. You want to know what God's plan for the earth is?

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It is that in due time, there would be an awareness of God's presence to the north, the south, the east and the west, and that every aspect of earth and humanity would be made aware of it. And so, even when it feels like that's not happening, it is still God's plan and it is still God's vision. And if you want to see how this thing ends, pick up your Bible flip.

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Flip over to the Book of Revelation and you're going to discover God's still got a vision. God's still got a plan. And when you read the back of the book, God still wins. And what Haberkorn discovers is that God's not intimidated by his fleshly inability to understand. Instead, he would speak to him out of the book of Proverbs and say, that's why you don't need to lean to your own understanding.

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It's why God reveals himself to be the author and finisher of your faith. And so I think if I could offer you a challenge this morning, it would be this. I would challenge you to bring your real self to God. That the next time you go into a place of prayer, don't ignore the pain points in your life.

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I think some of the best advice that I ever got from one of my mentors is that about 20 years ago, he leaned into my spiritual journey and he said, Eric, when you pray, remove all the pretense. Like, just get real with God. Like like whatever the failure was. Fully acknowledge it. Don't hold back. Don't try to sugarcoat it.

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I think sometimes when we feel like we're trying to embrace the Lord through repentance, that we've kind of gotta put it together in this neat little package. And yet, I don't think that's what God desires at all. I think the Lord enjoys raw honesty. Here's why. He already knows what's behind your religious veil. And so when you just get real and you lay your real self on the altar, what it allows you to do is to bring your disappointment and to get honest, to bring your delay.

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That thing that you thought would have happened by now, but it didn't. And you don't understand why. And you lay it on the altar to bring out your doubts and admit God. This is where I'm struggling. This is where my faith feels fragile. This is a place, God. Where? Where I'm wrestling with you. And ultimately, what can come out of those moments is that you get to embrace God because you didn't run away from God.

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And you start to realize that lamenting is not a weakness. It is worship in the key of honesty. And some of us haven't been honest with God or anybody else in a really long time. And the best way to discover sometimes what you need is for that thing, or that person to go missing for a season. And some of us, our appreciation for God has grown in these moments where there's been this sense of absence because we realize how much we really need him.

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And God says in Zabka 214, that's my plan. That's my vision, is that ultimately people will realize how much they need me and how much they should desire me and want me, to the point that the knowledge of his glory would cover the whole earth. As the waters cover the sea. And I just feel like this morning that somebody needs to know that God may.

00:24:24:09 - 00:24:51:15

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God may seem silent, but he is never still. You realize that before God even created the first man and woman, that there was just a big dark ball of earth with water on it. And the Bible says that God was moving. God may seem silent, but he never remains still. Even when you don't see it as the song says, he is working.

00:24:51:18 - 00:25:14:29

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And what you're going to discover as we go through this message series is that God will respond to Habakkuk. And we're going to talk about that next week. Talk about it in depth. But what this week shows us what this first chapter in the beginning stages of chapter two reveal to us are. A few things we need to understand is that when God is absent, still look for him.

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And secondly, when prayer feels pointless, still cry out. And thirdly, when faith feels fragile, still wrestle with God and welcome his embrace even in the fragility of what's going on with your soul. Here's why. Because even in silence, God is still sovereign. Can I get an amen from somebody on a Sunday morning?

00:25:46:11 - 00:26:17:14

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So here's the deal. That in the tension between what you see and what you believe, God has a vision for you. And everything that's around you. It's another thing it's going to unfold throughout the series. So ask your questions and pour out your prayers and trust that even when God feels absent, he is likely just preparing something deeper.

00:26:17:16 - 00:26:38:21

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And so this morning, I'm going to invite him to to play some music. And in a few moments, we're going to go into a time of prayer together. In a time of response together. And as we do, I really just have one strong suggestion for you today. Pray an honest prayer.

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Pray an honest prayer. If there's a place of distress. If there's a place of despair. If there's a place of discouragement. There's a place of doubt. Lay it all on the altar. Even when he's absent

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or he feels that way. Or the enemy convinces you that you seek him. Even when the enemy is trying to convince you that your prayers pointless, still cry out.

00:27:06:06 - 00:27:37:09

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And even when your faith is so fragile that it might break as the enemy tries to deconstruct you. Wrestle with God. Don't run away from him. I've shared with you many times that there was a moment in my life when I went through an extended period of sickness. Now in the middle of that, I started to battle thoughts that up to that point in my life, I don't think I had ever really experienced.

00:27:37:12 - 00:28:04:22

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It may sound silly to you or odd, but I remember going to bed at night and the enemy telling me things like, you won't wake up the next morning, or you better make sure everything's in order because you're not going to live to see your kids teenage lives. I remember those battles and those struggles, and what came out of that was this, this crisis of faith.

00:28:04:24 - 00:28:28:09

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You know, the Lord has promised, according to New Testament Scripture, that he will not place upon you more than you can bear. And it's something inside of me. My faith became fragile. Something started cracking. Something started to break. I just didn't understand. And I felt like it was inappropriate for me to express that to the Lord, or to have those kind of prayers.

00:28:28:11 - 00:28:42:25

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And yet, one day I just got so at the end of myself that I went into a little prayer room that we had there at the house and, and I just laid out before Lord. And I just started crying out in a way I had never done before. And I got honest. I'm like, God, you've got to show up.

00:28:42:26 - 00:28:53:00

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I do not understand. I'm more confused. And I've ever been like, God, I. I'm not even sure.

00:28:53:02 - 00:29:19:15

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If all this is real. I was embarrassed. I felt so little. And yet, in the middle of that prayer, I felt this overwhelming unction. Get in your car, drive 2.5 hours to a church service that I knew was convening where someone that I had a relationship with was going to be preaching. I didn't want to get in the car.

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I didn't want to be away from my family. I was tired of travel, but I did it the whole way. I was thinking, this is stupid. What are you doing? Like you did not hear God tell you to do this. I got there and I was going to try to hide in the back of this auditorium. The moment I walked in, somebody recognized me like, hey, come up to the front.

00:29:38:02 - 00:29:57:14

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I'm like, I don't want to come up to the front. Like, I just want to sit back here and hide and try to work through this crisis of my faith. I wound up on the front row and this gentleman was preaching that I value his prayer life more than any other person I've ever met. And I do not say that lightly.

00:29:57:17 - 00:30:16:28

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Like I know the man goes after the Lord in prayer, and he started preaching from the book of habit. And he started talking about how God is not intimidated by your questions.

00:30:17:00 - 00:30:37:26

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And that how one of the best things you could ever do is stop pretending that you have them. As he brought that message to a close, he did something extremely out of character for himself. He didn't know I was coming even though I was going to be there. He had seen me, I guess, while he was preaching, he said, Eric, Eric, stand up.

00:30:37:29 - 00:31:02:21

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I thought, you've got to be kidding me. Like, I don't I don't want this right now. He began to speak into my life about how God had heard my questions, and he was going to provide an answer, and he specifically said to me, it will be proven in such a way that you will never again doubt the reality of God's power and presence.

00:31:02:23 - 00:31:06:25

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And I'm here to tell you.

00:31:06:27 - 00:31:42:00

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That I don't know how God is going to eventually reveal himself in your situation. It may look different for each one of us, and don't try to compare how it works for you to how it works for somebody else. Just don't run away from God. Wrestle with him. You're going to discover he always wins. And years later, I look back on that moment and I can tell you my faith has never been the same.

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He's taken me from one level to another level to another level, and it would take me a long time to get through all of the good things I could say about my relationship with the Lord. I don't know where you're even if might be today. But if God feels absent, still seeking, and if the enemies convinced you that prayer is pointless, still cry out.

00:32:11:27 - 00:32:43:24

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And if your faith feels fragile, don't you run away from God. You get on an altar and wrestle and let the embrace of heaven do what only God can do. Heavenly father, you bow our hearts and minds before you and we admit God that first and foremost, we're sinners in need of a Savior. God, there are people under the sound of my voice today, both in church, online, and in this auditorium, that are not in relationship with you, and they desperately need heaven's touch.

00:32:43:27 - 00:33:10:20

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I pray God that right now, as they ask you to forgive them of their sins, that they would believe that because of your cross, you're willing to do it because of what you did in the tomb. You can do it. And that God, you would bring them to a born again experience, that they would begin to walk with you, that you would lead them, you would guide them, and they would become disciples of your will and your work and your way, and that God, before this day is out, they would look somebody in the eyes and publicly testify and confess.

00:33:10:22 - 00:33:39:16

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I am now a follower of Jesus Christ. I'm saved. I'm born again. But God also pray for people who are under the sound of my voice that Lord, they they. It's not that they've not been in a relationship with you or that they've never had a relationship with you. They are just going through some challenging times where that when they they look at the things that are happening around them, they just can't make sense of it.

00:33:39:16 - 00:34:03:16

Unknown

And God, they they've done their best to not lean to their own understanding. But there's been moments where the enemy's voice has been real and even successful in the bringing moments of distress and despair to their soul. And yet, God, today we hear your unction, and we are motivated to bring our lives right before you. And for some of us, it will be through a lifted hand.

00:34:03:16 - 00:34:20:26

Unknown

For some of us, it'll be about at the seat where we're at. For others of us, God, it's going to be at an altar today, and we're just going to invite you to show up, show out and show off in our life that God you would begin to release to us the vision that you've had for our life and the surroundings of our life all along.

TRANSCRIPTION | Sunday, June 1, 2025 | Week 1 | Even If Series

00:34:20:28 - 00:34:38:20

Unknown

But we didn't see it. We weren't in sync with it. We weren't calibrated to it. But God, over the next few weeks and starting today, that's going to change. Lord, we worship you. We thank you for your goodness and your grace. In Jesus name. This church said Amen and Amen.