

Living by faith in 2026

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[0 : 00] Good morning, Watermark. This morning, a scripture reading comes from Hebrews chapter 11, verses 23 onwards to chapter 12, verse 2. By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith, he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.

By faith, he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them. By faith, the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.

By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith, Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel, and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mounts of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

[1 : 56] But women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.

They were stoned. They were sawn in two. They were killed with a sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, Celeste. Well, as we obviously know, it's New Year.

[3 : 18] I trust you had a good Christmas and a good New Year. I wonder how you feel about New Year. Are you someone who likes New Year, likes the new start, new dreams, new expectations, new hopes, resolutions for the year?

Or are you someone for whom the change of the year doesn't really mean too much, just kind of same old, same old, keep on going? I'm someone who I love New Year's. I love the idea of a fresh start, new hopes, new plans, new thinking, new dreams.

It's one of the reasons why I love living in Asia, because if your first New Year's doesn't go so well, we get another one in about six weeks' time. But New Year's is, I love New Year's.

I wonder how you're feeling about 2026. If you had to pick one word for 2026, what is your word? What are your hopes? What are your expectations?

And yet, one of the things that, as I've gotten older, one of the things I've realized is that despite all my hopeful expectations for the new year ahead, one of the things I've realized is that a new year doesn't necessarily mean a new me.

[4 : 28] The same challenges, the same struggles, the same obstacles that existed in 2025 are going to continue into 2026.

Just because the calendar changes over doesn't mean everything is put right. And despite what Instagram tells you, the challenges and the struggles will remain. This next year ahead is not going to suddenly be perfect just because the calendar changes over.

And so what that means, friends, is that for those of us that are people of faith, those of us that are followers of Jesus, Christ followers, this year you and I are going to need to live by faith all over again, just like we have in years gone by.

That turning of the page of the calendar won't take all our problems away, won't change all our circumstances, won't heal all our relationships, won't necessarily bring the perfect job or the perfect spouse into our life.

And that means that this year you and I are going to need to live by faith, trusting in the goodness of the God who we believe is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, trusting in the goodness of the God who we cannot see but we hold on to in the good times and the tough times.

[5 : 41] Now, today as Celeste read to us, we are reading from or looking at this passage in Hebrews chapter 11. And the background to the book of Hebrews is that there are a bunch of Jewish Christians, Hebrew Christians that have become followers of Jesus.

But after a while, they were wondering, is this Jesus guy all that he's made out to be? I mean, maybe we were sold a fake. Maybe Jesus is not really God.

And so they're wondering maybe they should abandon their Christian faith and go back to their Jewish faith and just become regular Jews and not hold on to Jesus. Maybe Jesus is not the Messiah.

And so here are a bunch of people that are wondering whether they should continue with their faith or whether they should abandon their faith and go back. And the author of the book of Hebrews, we don't know exactly who it is, but the author is writing to them saying, don't do that.

Don't abandon your faith in Jesus. Keep on going. Keep on enduring. Keep on persevering to the end. And the whole book of Hebrews is kind of a sermon to encourage these people whose faith is struggling because of the hardships of life to keep on going to the end.

[6 : 52] And so the main point of the passage and the main point of the sermon today is that we, as followers of Jesus, get to take courage and confidence from those that have gone before us to keep on going in our faith despite the challenges in the ups and downs that 2026 is going to hold.

Let us keep on going and persevering with our faith. And so there's two main points that we'll look at today. The life of faith and the substance or the object of our faith.

Okay, so let's look at this passage together. I hope you've got it open with you. Firstly, the life of faith. Now, Hebrews chapter 11 is sometimes known as the hall of fame of faith.

Faith's hall of fame. You know what a hall of fame is? A hall of fame is in an industry or a sports team. Maybe you get people that have excelled in something. And they are inducted in the hall of fame.

It's like they are the very best of the very best. And their names are put on a list of people that are on it as being those that excel in their sport. So, for instance, every year the NBA will have a list of people that are inducted and then named or named and then inducted in the NBA hall of fame.

[8 : 03] These are the very best of the best. The people that we all look up to and remember. Hebrews chapter 11 is known as faith's hall of fame. It's a list of people in the Old Testament that had remarkable faith and trusted God despite very challenging and difficult circumstances.

Moses. And so look at some of the things that the writer says here. Look at some of the names he mentions. He talks about Moses. He says Moses had this choice. Moses was a Hebrew, but he also grew up as a son of Pharaoh.

He grew up as a prince of Egypt in the palace. And at one point Moses had a choice. Do I identify with the Hebrews, the people of Israel? Or do I kind of hide my identity and keep my identity as a son of Pharaoh, as a prince?

And Moses had this choice. But because of his faith in God's word, what God had said, God had spoken that, trust me and I will deliver your people from Egypt. Moses identified with the slaves and the servants of Egypt, the outcasts, the Hebrews, those that were the bottom of society.

Moses identified with them rather than living as a prince of Pharaoh because of his faith and his trust in God's word. The writer here speaks about Rahab.

[9 : 19] Rahab was a Canaanite woman. She was actually a sex worker, a prostitute. And at one point she's living in a city, and some Israelite spies come to her and say, God is going to overthrow the city.

But if you will trust us and the God that we believe in, God will spare you and save you. So now she's got a choice. Where will she go? Will she believe the word of God, the word of the Israelites, the word of Yahweh, or will she believe her own people?

She has this choice. And because of her faith in God, she trusts God, and she is spared and saved, even though her whole city is destroyed. The writer thinks about the Israelites when they leave Egypt.

They leave Egypt. They come to the Red Sea, but now they're cornered. The sea is in front of them. The Egyptians are chasing behind them. Which way are they going to go? They're stuck. And they cry out to God, and they trust God, and they believe God.

God says, put your feet on the water, and I will open up the way for you. And they trust God, and God delivers them and rescues them. And on and on the writer goes with all these stories that Celestia read to us.

[10:18] People, men and women of faith who trusted God despite difficult circumstances. And so he says here, and what is it, verse 32? He says, and I don't have time to elaborate on other people, Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah and David and Samuel, or the prophets, all of whom trusted God despite their demanding situations.

All of those who live by faith. And the point that the writer is making is that those of us who have come to believe in the God of the Bible, Jesus Christ, this is the life of faith.

This is going to be your story and my story. We, too, are going to have to be people who trust God. Now, when you read this, at first, it might feel like the writer is saying, listen, just have faith and life's going to be easy.

What could possibly go wrong, right? Jesus on your side? Well, what could go wrong? Because look at verse 33. He talks about how people conquered kingdoms and enforced justice and stopped the mouths of lions.

Talking about Daniel there, escaped the edge of the sword. He's almost sounding like faith is this lamp. You just throw a prayer in the air and everything's going to go well. But verse 35 dislodges that disbelief because verse 35 tells us that actually, faith is not a superpower that makes life easy.

[11:34] Faith is holding on to God in the midst of hardship, even when life isn't easy. And not all of these people, for them, did life end happily ever after. Look at verse 35 onwards.

Friends, some people were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, even chains and imprisonment.

They were stoned. They were sawn in two. Imagine that. A saw cutting you in two. That's how some of them died. They were killed with the sword. They went about destitute, afflicted, mistreated, wandering about in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

Now, friends, why is the right of Hebrews telling us about these men and women of faith? What's his point? His point is this. This is the life of faith.

This is what it means to be a Christian, to be a follower of God. That these people, though they faced significant trials and life-threatening situations and challenges, for none of them was life a walk in the park.

[12:37] And yet they faced these trials by faith in the God that they'd come to believe in and hope and trust. The God that they could not see, but the God that they believed was faithful to his word and trustworthy and worthy of worship.

And despite the circumstance that they found themselves in, they held on to him. And the right of Hebrews is reminding these Christians of this because no doubt they're going to face challenges themselves.

He's wanting to stir their faith and encourage them and remind them this is the life of faith. Friends, some of us here are not followers of Jesus. You're on a spiritual journey, and that's great, great to have you here.

You need to know that if you do become a follower of Jesus, this is the life of faith. Becoming a follower of Jesus does not make everything easy or rosy. What it is, is saying I'm going to hold on to God and trust him despite my circumstances, trusting that he's good and he's worthy of worship. Friends, some of us I know have had very difficult 2025s. Some of us have faced great challenges, and some of us are still facing immense challenges. Friends, for some of us, 2026 will be a very difficult year.

[13:49] Some of us will receive bad medical reports. Some will have deep work challenges. Some of us will lose our jobs. Friends, some of us, relationships are going to be difficult. All of us

are going to have our faith tested.

And there will be mountaintop moments, and there will be deep, dark valleys. There will be exciting and rewarding times, and there will be challenging and difficult times. Friends, there will be times when we feel on top of the world, and there will be times when we feel disappointed, misunderstood, anxious, and worried.

This is real life. This is the life of faith. And for those of us who have come to know and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, from now until the day we die, this will be our story.

Learning to trust in God. You know, we are a relatively young church, and one of the things that when you're kind of under 30, is you feel like life is hard, but I've just got to push through the next few years, and then when I get to like 45, 50, everything will be fine.

I can just coast, right? All my problems will be done away with, and then I can just relax. Friends, if you are 95 years old, you're still going to need to live by faith, trusting in the goodness of the God that you cannot see, but who promises to be good for us.

[15 : 05] From now until the day we pass away, this is the story of the Christian life. And of course, it's not automatic, is it? And part of the point of this passage is that there's an alternative, because it's entirely possible to not live by faith, but rather to live by what we can see, by what we can hold on to, by what we can touch, by what we can control, ultimately in ourselves.

And yet the storyline of the Bible from Genesis in the Garden of Eden, right throughout the whole storyline of the Bible, right to Babylon, right at the end, the narrative of the whole Bible is that living, trusting in ourselves, confidence in our own flesh, what we can control and handle, is utterly disastrous, and only ends in pain and misery.

Martin Lloyd-Jones was a wonderful, wonderful preacher many years ago, and he used to say this, the very essence of the entire Christian life is to realize two things. I must have complete, absolute confidence in God and no confidence in myself.

To live by faith is the story that those of us that are followers of Jesus have dived into and inhabited. And this is what the author of Hebrews is wanting for us to.

Look at the final sentence. If you've got your Bible, we didn't read it, but the very final sentence of chapter 10, the author says this, he's talking about the temptation to fall away and to give up on faith.

[16 : 34] And he says, But we are not those who shrink back and are destroyed. We are those who have faith and preserve our souls. Friends, this is the story. This is the Christian life. This is the life of faith.

For those of us who are followers of Jesus, this is what 2026 will consist of. Living by faith in the goodness of God and the faithfulness of the God who promises to be there with us.

Now, what are the implications of this? There's many implications. Let me give you one very simple one. First is this. Do not believe the lie of the prosperity gospel. Do you know what I mean by prosperity gospel?

There's some churches, some Christians who will say, Well, if you do the right thing, if you behave the right way, do the right things, say the right things, pray the right prayers, maybe even give enough money to the church, God will promise to bless you.

You'll be healthy. You'll be wealthy. You'll be prosperous. Your business will succeed. You'll have many children. You'll find the right relationships. Just do the right things. Give money to church and God's blessing will follow you.

[17 : 33] Friends, that's not true. Sometimes you can be the most devout, faithful Christian and hardship and suffering can still come your way. And so just ask these people. Ask those people in Hebrews 11.

How did it work out for them? Tortured for their faith. Stoned, sawn in two. Killed with the sword.

The prosperity gospel didn't work out very well for them. Friends, for some of us who are not Christians, if you do become a Christian, your life will become more difficult.

You'll have more people misunderstanding you, mistreating you, rejecting you because of your faith. Don't believe the lie of the prosperity gospel. So one of my prayers for 2026, for myself, for my family, and for us as a church, is God grow our faith.

Increase our faith. Help us to become men and women of deep, deep abiding faith. Faith that endures the hardship. Faith that perseveres in the midst of difficulty. Help us to be like these men and women of old who knew how to trust you and hold on to you.

The life of faith. Secondly, the substance of faith. Now the question is this, okay, but what does that actually mean? What does that look like? Okay, so this year we're going to have to live by faith. What does that actually consist of?

[18 : 44] What does that look like? Well, look at what the writer says in chapter 12, verse 1 and 2. Here he describes what the object or the substance or the essence of our faith is.

Look what he says here. He says, In other words, our Christian faith is not just an individual thing. It's not just me and Jesus.

We have this crowd of witnesses. The saints of old, the men and women that have followed God through hundreds of years, thousands of years, even before Christ came, the Old Testament saints. We're part of the story, this trajectory. Our faith is part of the story that God has been written. And these believers that have gone before us, that the writer writes about here in chapter 11, and all the Christians for the last 2,000 years are like these cloud of witnesses.

They're encouraging us and they're stirring us on. And he says, Since you're surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight or every hindrance or every obstacle and sin, which tends to cling so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

[19 : 52] Okay, so the author here, he's picturing a running race. He says, The life of faith is like a marathon. It's not a sprint. It's not 100 yards, 10 seconds.

It's a lifelong marathon. And you're running this marathon. And on the sidelines are all the other believers throughout the ages who have lived by faith and trusted God, and now they're on the side cheering you on.

And they're shouting, Go for it! And keep going! Don't give up! Okay? I don't know if my pronunciation is at all accurate, but you know what I'm trying to say, right?

Soda's laughing at me. Okay, I apologize, Soda. Add oil! Okay, they're going. They're going. They say, Run with endurance! Keep on going! We don't give up! They're on the sidelines.

There's this great cloud of witnesses. They're cheering us on in this marathon of faith. Except, What are they shouting? They're actually not saying, Add oil!

[20 : 50] Okay? They're not saying, Keep on going! You can do it! They're not saying, What doesn't kill you only makes you stronger! What are they saying? Well, look what he says.

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith. Friends, there is the Christian life in a nutshell.

Many people want to know, What is my calling? How do I know what God's will for my life is? There it is. Run with endurance the race that is set before you, looking to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith.

What does that mean? It means Jesus is the sum and the substance of our faith. Jesus is the essence and the totality of our faith. Jesus is the one upon whom our entire faith depends from beginning to end.

Run with endurance the race that is set before you, looking to Christ Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith. Friends, there's a very subtle difference, but a huge difference between, as a follower of Jesus, looking to Christ and looking to myself.

[22 : 01] It's easy as a Christian to actually look to myself and put my confidence in myself, in what I'm doing, and think that that gains me credibility with God. Versus coming to Jesus empty-handed and saying, God, I look to you.

I need you. Robert Murray McShane, he's reminded us of this phrase many, many times. He says, For everyone, look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. And then he goes on, he says, Let your soul be filled with the heart-ravishing sense of the excellency of Christ and all that is in him.

Friends, that's our goal this year. For everyone, look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. During these holidays, I've been reading a biography on John Newton. You remember, John Newton was the captain of a slave ship in the 18th century, the transatlantic slave trade, taking slaves from Africa across to America.

He used to captain a ship. He was a very, very terrible and evil and wicked man. And then one day, he encounters Christ. The ship is in a storm. He cries out to the God that he doesn't believe in.

He says, God, I don't know if I believe in you, but if you are real, save me. And the storm subsides, and he gets back to land, and that starts a spiritual journey. And for the next few years, he's on a spiritual journey.

[23 : 16] And then one day, back in London, he comes to faith, and he comes to know the wonder of Jesus. And he writes that amazing hymn, Amazing Grace. Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

But I've been reading this amazing biography on his life. And listen to how the author describes John Newton's life once he came to faith. He says this, For John Newton, the Christian life boils down largely to this question.

How do I maintain constant, undistracted, unmixed, single-hearted devotion to Christ? This life of faith, looking to Christ and treasuring him, is the great duty that simplifies the Christian life.

I love that. This is what simplifies the Christian life. Look to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith. But of course, it's not just look to Jesus generally.

There's a particularity to it. There's a specificity to it. In other words, it's easy as Christians to say, Yes, yes, okay, I look to Jesus. Okay, I'll trust Jesus this year. But actually, what Christ wants us to do, is to look to Christ, in the particular areas of life, that we find it hardest.

[24 : 24] In other words, you may have 10 areas of your life. You've got your work life. You've got your social life. You've got your financial life. You've got your relationships. You've got leisure. You've got hobbies. You've got all these things. And one of them is church life.

And it's easy to, I look to Jesus, and eight out of these nine areas, but this area, I just want to hold control. I want to take control. And the life of a Christian is to live by faith, in the particular area, that we find it hardest.

Friends, where is it hard for you, to live by faith? What is the one area of life, that you want to keep control? Where is the one area of life, that you want to do it your way?

Jesus says, look to Jesus, the founder, and the perfecter of our faith, in that area of life. And the author of Hebrews here, gives us one more reason, one more motivation, to keep on going, this life of faith.

Because look at what he says here. He says, Jesus Christ, was the most fully human, that's ever lived.

[25 : 37] The most fully human person. The most alive, the most perfect, the most sinless human being, who ever lived. Utterly pleasing to God the Father, in every sense.

And he's now seated, at the right hand, of the throne of God, in glory. And yet, Christ's road to glory, passed through, the horrors, and the suffering, of Calvary.

Jesus didn't bypass Calvary, he went through Calvary, to glory. And what the writer of Hebrews, is saying, is that, Jesus is like, on this marathon, that we're running, Jesus is ahead of us.

He's leading the pack. And our job is to keep our eyes, fixed on Jesus, and to follow him. And what that means, is that one day, if we follow him, and hold on to him, we too will get to glory.

But our road to glory, like Jesus, will also pass, through Calvary. Will pass through suffering.

Friends, the one who, carried the cross, and endured hostility, hardship on chain, and shame, on the road to glory, calls us to follow him.

[26 : 40] To keep looking to him. To trusting him, on our own road. Friends, those of us, who are followers of Jesus, as we live by faith, our journey, will not be very different, from Christ's journey.

We follow a suffering servant, and we will suffer too. We follow a despised savior, and we may be despised too. We follow a rejected savior, and we may be rejected too.

Friends, we follow a savior, who endured hardship, and came through, suffering to glory. We too, will come through, suffering to glory, if we hold on to him, and endure.

And that's why verse 3 says, Celeste didn't read it, but verse 3 says, therefore consider him, consider Jesus, who endured such, from sin, and such hostility, gains himself, that you too, may not grow weary, and faint hearted.

Friends, Christ is our leader, he's running ahead of us, and he says, look to me, trust me, I will take you through. Friends, Christ went through, the ultimate suffering, through the horror, of the cross, of Calvary, so that we too, can go through, our minor sufferings, knowing that we too, will come through, on the other side, as we hold on to.

[27 : 46] Listen to how, Tony Ranke puts it, in his book, he says, rejoicing in Christ, is a daily pursuit, on the mountaintops, and in the valley, as we conquer, and while we keep on fighting, when the Lord is shining on us, and when he seems to be, hiding his face from us, nothing undercuts, the Christian life, like Christ amnesia, it means forgetting about Jesus, thinking we can live safely, for a moment without Christ, without his atoning grace, without renewed communion with him, keeping

Christ in view, at all times, is by far the hardest, and the most essential, part of our calling, as Christians.

So friends, what should we do about this? How does this affect our year? Let's think about this briefly, if this life of faith, is pursuing Christ, and holding on to him, daily, rejoicing in Christ, looking to Christ, trusting in Christ, delighting in Christ, keeping constant communion, with Christ, and living by faith, in the faithfulness of the God, that we cannot see, how might this shape your hopes, your dreams, your ambitions, your priorities, for 2026?

Friends, what might this mean, for your diary, your calendar, your scheduling? Maybe it means, getting up a little bit earlier, each day, and starting your day, by feasting your soul on Jesus, on his word, and reading, praying, confessing sins, and reminding yourself, of where your hope, and life lies.

Friends, what might it mean, for your social media use? How much are you on your phone? Are your digital devices, distracting you, from Christ, and keeping you, from focusing on him? How might it, fixing your eyes on Christ, and living by faith, affect the way you budget, the way you save, the way you spend?

How you think about your home, and how you use your home, whether you can open it up, invite other people in? Friends, how might the life of faith, change the way you think, about your career, in 2026? Have you been idolizing work, in your career?

[29 : 39] Maybe you've been neglecting work, and following Jesus, means taking your work, more seriously. Friends, how might this, shape the way you handle, disappointments at work, being overlooked, for a promotion, a gain, being misunderstood, by those around you?

Friends, how might holding on to Jesus, and living by faith, this year, affect your relationships, relationships, to your family, relationships, with friends, relationships, with colleagues, relationships, with church?

Are there any relationships, that need to be healed, or mended? Anyone you need to forgive, or anyone you need to ask, for forgiveness from them? Our passage started off saying, since we are surrounded, by such a great cloud, of witnesses, let's lay aside, every weight, every hindrance, every sin, that tends to clog our feet, and stop us from running.

Friends, I wonder what obstacles, or hindrances, we need to cut off. Are there any sinful habits, or patterns, that we need to get rid of, as we look to Jesus, and trust in him? Friends, maybe some of us, need to make some decisions, before the service even ends, to reorientate our hearts, our lives, to Christ, and to trust in him.

Friends, for those of us, who are not Christians at all, maybe you're here, and you're not a follower of Jesus, maybe you're here, because you're trying to make sense of life, maybe you feel lost, and you feel like, I don't know where I'm going, in 2026, maybe let me try religion.

[30 : 58] Friends, I want you to know, let me tell you as plainly, and simply as I can, you were made, to know, the God of the universe, the God who made you, and brought you into existence, knows you the best, and loves you the most, and he says, that peace, and rest, will only ever be found, in knowing him, and coming to him.

Friends, the Bible says, that because of our wrongdoing, our sin, we've been cut off from God, it's like this relationship, is broken, is fractured, and you know what it's like, in a fractured relationship, have you ever been distant, from someone, a loved one, someone you're close to, it's horrible, it's terrible, you're meant to be, in a close relationship, and enjoy each other, but there's a fracturing, the relationship is, there's a distance, it's the worst feeling, in the world, friends, you were made, to be in a relationship, with the God of the universe, and there's a distance, and life will never, never, be peaceful, or restful, until you're reconciled, but did you see, what our passage said today, our passage said, that the God of the universe, Jesus Christ, loves you so much, that he was willing, to go to the cross, for you, Jesus Christ, went to pay the penalty, for the fracturing, paid to, went to die, to reconcile, to restore the relationship, friends, Jesus Christ, loves you so much, that he was willing, to go to that extent, those lengths, to bring you peace, to bring you rest, you'll never know, rest and peace, until you know Jesus, friends can I ask you today, choose to follow him, choose to know him, come to trust in him, come to be part, of the people of faith, let your year, 2026, be marked, by living a life, of faith,

Robert Murray McShane, used to say, for everyone, look at yourself, take 10 looks at Christ, why, such infinite majesty, and yet such gentleness, and grace, and awful sinners, like me, and you, rest in his grace, see his all seeing eye, settle on you in love, and take rest, in his almighty arms, friends,

that's what Jesus, has done for you, but for all of us, for this year ahead, don't try and do it, on your own, don't try and make, 2026 a better year, in your own strength, in your own power, friends, don't try and be, a busy body at church, be someone, who lives by faith, trusting the God, that you cannot see, but who went to the cross, for you, who died and rose again, that you might live, by faith, and experience life, let's come to him in prayer, and do that now, let me pray for us, father God, as we come to, the start of this year, 2026, my prayer for us, my prayer for myself, my prayer for us, as a church, God increase our faith, grow our faith, help us as a church, help us individually, help us to believe in you, and to trust in you,

God not just generally, or generically, but God specifically, in the areas of life, where we find it hard, to trust you, Jesus I pray, come and be big in our hearts, come and be big in our lives, God for those of us, that are parents, for those of us, that are married, those of us, that are single, help us God, with our relationships, help us at home, help us to trust you God, God for our work lives, for family life, for our hobbies, and our desires God, for our dreams, and hope for the future, and Jesus help us, to trust you, God when life is hard, this year, and the storms, come our way, help us to hold on to you, to live lives of faith, to trust you, Jesus for those of us, that are not yet followers, of Jesus open our eyes, to see you, reveal yourself to us, and help us to know you, we pray this in your great, and wonderful name,
Amen, Amen.