

Not By Sight by Jon Bloom, Crossway: Wheaton, IL 2013
(39 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Where Is Your Faith?

When the storms of life hit they almost always appear stronger to us than God's Word. It is crucial for us to remember that our perceptions can be deceptive. When circumstances strike fear into our hearts, the question we must ask ourselves is, where is your faith?

What God wants is for you to trust what he says over what you see. (Page 25)

2. Neither Do I Condemn You

And yet, if you believe in Jesus, he speaks these stunning words to you: "Neither do I condemn you." Why? Because he has been condemned in your place. *All* your guilt has been removed. No stone of God's righteous wrath will crush you because Jesus was crushed for your iniquities. (Page 29)

3. The Hope of Romans 8:28

We need the hope that we have been justified by the substitutionary atonement of Jesus. And we need the hope of the promise of Romans 8:28, that God will work all things, even the fallout from our past sins, together for good for us. (Page 35)

4. God Always Answers Our Pleas

The Savior does not break the bruised reed. He hears our pleas for help and is patient with our doubts. He does not condemn us. He has paid completely for any sin that is exposed in our pain.

He does not always answer with the speed we desire, nor is his answer always the deliverance we hoped for. But he will always send the help that is needed. His grace will always be sufficient for those who trust him. The hope we taste in the promises we trust will often be the sweetest thing we experience in this age. And the reward of God's fulfillment of these promises will be glorious beyond our imagination. (Page 40)

5. We Need to Dismember Our Idols

Some of our idols need to be dismembered for us to be free of them. Jesus knows what they are and how to help us see them. It may feel like we are losing our world to lose them.

That's okay, Jesus said, "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:25-26). And as Jim Elliot said "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." There are losses that turn out to be great gain.

"Take care and be on our guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15). (Page 46)

6. Dealing with Disappointment

Disappointment is similar to anger in that there are legitimate and illegitimate reasons to feel it. If some evil has caused the event of our disappointment, the emotion could be right because evil defiles God's glory. But whatever the cause, if our emotion is growing in the soil of love and faith, it will produce a righteous fruit, like contentment or just action or gracious forbearance. But if its roots are in the soil of selfishness, it will bear unrighteous fruit, like jealousy and selfish ambition, which are themselves evil and defile God's glory. (Page 50)

7. Your Disappointment May Lead You to Repentance

The emotion of disappointment is never neutral. **Primus.** It is not vague and detached. It has roots directly connected to something we believe. Jesus wants you follow the roots. If you find that sin is feeding you emotion of disappointment, then your event of disappointment is a kindness meant to lead you to repentance. (Page 51)

8. If Jesus Appoints Us He Will Also Disappoint Us

But if Jesus appoints us, it also implies that he will disappoint us—meaning there are some appointments from which Jesus will remove us, and others that he will not grant to us.

At these times we must "trust in the Lord with all (our) hearts, and . . . not lean on (our) own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). We seldom understand all his purposes. When disappointment comes through an evil earthly cause, we need to call to mind the truth that Joseph discovered after being disappointed by his brothers: "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20). And in all cases, remember that in Christ, God is pursuing us only with goodness and mercy (Psalm 23:6). His promise is this "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" Romans (8:32).

Follow your emotion of disappointment to its roots. If you find unbelief and pride giving it life, apply the herbicide of God's promise for you. (Page 52)

9. Can You Not Know God's Provision for You?

Can you bear not knowing how God is going to provide for your urgent needs and still trust that he will? (Page 57)

10. Obedience to Jesus May Cause Unforeseen Circumstances

Jesus gave that man, and us, fair warning. To follow him is to follow a homeless man and become "stranger and exiles on earth" (Hebrews 11:13). There are simply going to be times when obedience or faithfulness to his call means we aren't sure where the provisions for our needs will come from. Unforeseen circumstances will occur. Plans will fall through. The salary might not allow for much retirement savings. Financial support might need to be raised. A thief may break in and steal. Economies may collapse. Radical generosity may be required to meet another's desperate need. A debilitating illness may befall. Religious or radical discrimination may deny. (Page 57)

11. We Are Not To Be Governed By Fear But by Faith

When these things happen, we are often tempted to fear because our earthly security is being removed. But we should not be surprised. "A servant is not greater than his master" (John 13:16). If these things happen to Jesus, they will also happen to us.

Jesus does not want us to be governed by fear at such times. He wants us governed by faith. The uncertainty we are faced is only *apparent* uncertainty. Our future and our provision and our ultimate triumph are certain to God. He has all the foreknowledge, power, and resources necessary to insure these, and he has the desire to turn everything for good for those who love him and are called by him (Romans 8:28). (Page 57)

12. How to Handle Skeptics

Be patient and gracious with the skeptics in your life. Don't assume their outward confidence accurately reflects their inward condition. Keep praying for them and share what seems helpful when it seems helpful. Keep confidently and humbly following Jesus. And trust his timing. He knows best how and when to reveal himself to them. (Page 62)

13. Jesus May Have Different Priorities than We Do

God allowed a sword to fall on James just as intentionally as he opened Peter's prison door. So the death of James is crucial for us to remember as the rescue of Peter.

Why did God let James die?

The question is relevant because at some point most of us will find ourselves facing death, pleading for deliverance, and not receiving what we think we are asking for. And it points to a different lesson that all of Jesus's disciples must learn: Jesus often has different priorities than we do. What may feel desperately urgent to us may not be urgent to him—at least not in the same way. (Page 66)

14. Death for Christians Is Victory for Them

James was not being neglected by Jesus. He was in fact the first of the twelve to experience what Jesus prayed for in John 17:24: "Father I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world." Peter's deliverance from prison was remarkable. But he lived to die another day. James experienced the true deliverance: death being swallowed up (1 Corinthians 15:54) by the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25). (Page 67)

15. A Far Better Life with Christ

There will come a time when Jesus's prayer for us to be with him will override our prayer for prolonged earthy life. And when it does, we will experience a life far better, richer, fuller, purer, and more joyful that we will shake our heads in wonder that we ever pleaded to stay.

May God increase our "desire . . . to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better" (Philippians 1:23). (Page 67)

16. God Will Not Overlook Our Wrong Decisions

God will not spare us from all awkward and painful decisions. Neither will he spare us from wrong decisions resulting from our fallen finiteness, even if they are made in the integrity of our hearts. God has his purpose in all these. But what we can trust him to do is faithfully give us the correction and guidance we need at the time he deems right. (Page 72)

17. God Sometimes Changes Our Direction

So when you find yourself suddenly moving in a direction you had not planned, take heart; the Great Planner has something much better in mind for you and countless others. (Page 84)

18. Jehoshaphat Pleads Their Case before the Lord

So Jehoshaphat gathered the people of Judah in Jerusalem for a fast. They stood before the temple and the king, in an act of great leadership, pleading their case before the Lord and then said, “We are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (2 Chronicles 16:12).

Isn't that a beautiful confession? It is so childlike in its humility and faith. It is, in fact, another Old Testament picture of the gospel. We are powerless to save ourselves. But when we look to God and call on him for deliverance from the impending judgment, he brings about a salvation beyond our wildest imagination. (Page 88)

19. Real Freedom Is Deep-Seated Confidence in God

Real freedom is not liberty to do what we want or the absence of distress. Real freedom is the deep-seated confidence that God will provide *everything* we need. The person who believes this is the freest of all persons on earth, because no matter what situation he finds himself in, he has nothing to fear. (Page 89)

20. Faith-Testing & Faith-Building

Trusting in Jesus and his word over our perceptions is difficult to learn. That's why the Lord takes us through so many different faith-testing faith-building experiences. (Page 100)

21. Faith That Makes Jesus Marvel

Jesus, the “founder and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2), once marveled at the great faith he found in a man. And it's the only instance recorded in the Gospels when Jesus responded that way. Who was this man? A rabbi? No. A disciple? Nope. A Roman soldier. (Page 103)

22. Are You Content With Weaknesses?

Every day we seek to follow Jesus, we deal with incessant weakness in our bodies, emotions, relationships, families, vocations, and churches. We are “beset with

weakness” (Hebrews 5:2). And they tempt us to discouragement, sometimes exasperation.

But one of the precious gifts of 2 Corinthians is that, through Paul, God teaches us a great gospel paradox of the life of faith: God’s grace is more clearly seen and more deeply savored in our weakness than in our strengths. (Page 109)

23. Paul’s Knowledge of Himself

For all his attainments, Paul viewed himself as the foremost of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Apart from God’s grace in giving him the free gift of Christ’s righteousness, all of Paul’s achievements were “rubbish” (Philippians 3:8-9). Paul knew who the impotence of self-righteousness (Philippians 3:6-9), he knew who had brought him to faith (Acts 9:5), called him to be an apostle (Romans 1:1), sent him to make Gentiles disciples (Romans 1:5), and called him to suffer for his sake (Acts 9:16). Yes, Paul knew that he worked harder than just about everybody. But he knew that it was not him, but the grace of God that was with him (1 Corinthians 15:10). (Page 111)

24. Thank God for Your Weaknesses

Here’s the secret: the more aware you are of God’s grace, the more humble, prayerful, thankful, patient, gracious, content, and joyful you will be. And you are more aware of God’s grace when you are weak than when you are strong.

God will use the strengths he has given you. He certainly used Paul’s strengths. But if it’s contentment in God that you long for; then thank God for your weaknesses. Because it is through them that you and others will really know that God’s grace is sufficient for you. (Page 112)

25. God Ordains Our Deep Disappointments for Greater Glory

God only ordains out deep disappointment and profound suffering for the sake of far greater joy in the glory he will reveal to us (Romans 8:18). It is crucial to remind one another of this. Before we know what Jesus is doing, circumstances can look all wrong. And we are tempted to interpret God’s apparent inaction as unloving, when fact God is loving us in the most profound way he possible can.

So in your anguish of soul, hear Jesus ask with strong affection, “Do you believe this?” (John 11:26) (Page 123)

26. Jesus Wants Our Faith Resting on the Rock of His Word

Jesus's timing and purposes are not always clear to us, though they are always best for us. So he wants our faith resting on the rock of his Word and not on the sand of our circumstance. (Page 126)

27. Do the Next Thing

When we are not sure what to do next, as Elisabeth Elliot says, "do the next thing." (Page 127)

28. Trust His Word When You Don't Understand

In following Jesus there are seasons of bewildering intensity and seasons of bewildering waiting. He does not want us to panic during either. He is in control of both. When you don't understand his ways, trust his Word.

And when you're not sure what to do next, do the next thing. (Page 127)

29. Jesus Prays for Us

Jesus also prays for us. When we do fail, we must remember what Jesus said to Peter before his failure: "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32). Peter was going to sin—miserably. But Jesus had prayed for him. And Jesus's prayer was stronger than Peter's sin, and it's stronger than our sin too. "He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). And: if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleans us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). (Page 130-131)

30. We Must Assess Our Weak Witness on Unbelievers

So we assess the role our weak, stumbling witness plays in our family members' unbelief, let's remember Jesus—not even a perfect witness guarantees that loved ones will see and embrace the gospel. We must humble ourselves and repent when we sin. But let's remember that the god of this world and indwelling sin is what blinds the minds of unbelievers (2 Corinthians 4:4). (Page 140)

31. Some Families Will Divide Over Belief in Jesus

So take heart! Don't give up praying or unbelieving family members. Don't take their resistance as the final word. They may yet believe, and be used significantly in the kingdom.

And while they resist, or if they died apparently unbelieving, we can trust them to the Judge of all the earth who will be perfectly just (Genesis 16:25). Jesus does not promise that every parent, sibling, or child of a Christian will believe, but he does painfully promise that some families will divide over him (Matthew 10:34–39). We can trust him when it happens. (Page 141)

32. God Can Make All Grace Abound in You

All four Gospel feature the feeding of the five thousand because God wants you to believe that he “is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8). For if you really believe this, your worries are over. (Page 151)

33. The Man Was Blind for Proclamation

Let me restate what Jesus said: this man was blind because God *made* him blind in order to demonstrate his power in him (Ex. 4:11). His blindness was *nothing* to do with his or his parent's personal sin. The purpose of this man's disability was not punishment but proclamation. (Page 154)

34. God Has a Purpose for Suffering

Let us be very careful in interpreting God's purpose in suffering—our own or someone else's. Often we cannot see any redeeming reason for it. It might appear or feel like God's judgment, or just the grinding gears of the blind, uncaring cosmos.

The man born blind reminds us that our perceptions and God's purpose can be very different, even opposite. If we are going to be skeptical, it is best to be skeptical of our perceptions. And he reminds us that when Jesus finely reveals the real purposes, we will find them more glorious than we ever dreamed and the reward so overwhelming that there will be no trace of bitterness, only overflowing gratitude. (Page 156)

35. God's Word Sometimes Make Circumstances Worse Not Better

Sometimes faithfulness to God and his word sets us on a course where circumstances get worse, not better. It is then that knowing God's promises and his ways are crucial.

Faith in God's future grace for us is what sustains us in those desperate moments. (Page 170)

36. Be Content with What You Have

Today be content with what you have (Hebrews 13:5) and be faithful with what you have been given (Matthew 25:21). Humble yourself under God's mighty hand, trusting that he will exalt you at the proper time and in the proper way (1 Peter 5:6).

Be like Andrew. This shadow servant was faithful, obedient, responsive, trusted, willing, and courageous. Tradition says that he continued to preach the gospel and plant churches until he was martyred by crucifixion in the AD 60s.

Let us serve in the shadows God places us with that same humble, joy-filled, overcoming faith. (Page 175)

37. They Have Authority Only by God Authority

And this is critical to remember when, for Jesus's sake, we find ourselves at the mercies of powerful earthly authorities (governing, vocational, financial, or religious) that "seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 2:21). Their selfish interests may even inflict evil upon us. But the Bible is clear: what they mean for evil, God means, and will turn, for our good (Genesis 50:20).

Remember Jesus's words to Pilate: "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11). The same is true of us. Those in authority over us are there by God's decree, and they will give an account to him. (Page 190)

38. Follow Me

The only thing that qualifies us to be followers of Jesus is that we are sinners who need grace. Sinners are the only kind of people Jesus calls. (Page 193)

39. Redeemed Sinners Only Need Jesus Continually

Jesus did not call us because of our righteousness or gifting. He called us when we were dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1) and blinded by the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). He called us when all we had was need.

And now that we are his disciples, all we redeemed sinners still really have is our need of him. He is the Vine and we are branches; apart from him, we can do nothing (John

15:5). He supplies us with the Spirit (Galatians 3:5) so that we serve only in the strength and grace that he supplies (1 Peter 4:11). (Page 196)