



COURSE 2 • 6 WEEKS

Promise to Promised Land

Stewarding a word from God across the long middle of the journey

"Wage the good warfare — by the prophecies previously made about you."

— 1 TIMOTHY 1:18

Contents

-
- 01** **Wage the Good Warfare** 1 TIMOTHY 1:18-19
1 Timothy 1:18 as the frame for your whole journey
-
- 02** **The Cave** 1 SAMUEL 22:1-2
David, hiddenness, and what God forms when nothing visible is happening
-
- 03** **The Prison** GENESIS 39:20-23
Joseph, injustice, and holding the promise when circumstance contradicts it
-
- 04** **When the Odds Don't Matter** ROMANS 4:19-21
Abraham, Caleb, and faith past age, circumstance, and logic
-
- 05** **Holding Joy Through the Fire** 1 PETER 1:6-9
Endurance and the strange joy that survives the hardest seasons
-
- 06** **The Promised Land** HEBREWS 11:13-16, 39-40
Fulfilment, partnership, and legacy — promise is not the end
-

COURSE OVERVIEW

Why this course exists

God speaks. That part, many of us know.

The harder part is what happens afterwards. The long years between hearing a word and seeing it come. The cave seasons where the promise goes quiet. The prison seasons where circumstance seems to contradict it. The slow work of maturing a promise into a fulfilment.

Paul's letter to Timothy gives us a single line that reframes the whole of this middle:

Wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, by the prophecies previously made about you (1 Timothy 1:18–19).

Prophecies are not the trophy at the end of the fight. They are the weapons Paul tells Timothy to fight *with*. This course is about that fight — the stewardship of a word across the long middle.

What the group walks through

Over six weeks, a small group walks together through the territory between promise and fulfilment:

- 1 Wage the Good Warfare** — 1 Timothy 1:18–19 as the frame for the whole journey.
- 2 The Cave** — David, hiddenness, formation. What God forms in the cave that He cannot form on the throne.
- 3 The Prison** — Joseph, injustice, delay. Holding vision when circumstance contradicts the word.
- 4 When the Odds Don't Matter** — Abraham and Caleb. Faith past age, past logic, past circumstance.
- 5 Holding Joy Through the Fire** — Endurance and the strange joy that holds.
- 6 The Promised Land** — Fulfilment, partnership, and legacy. Faithfulness is the shape of the end.

This course is for the middle. For those carrying something God has spoken and who want to steward it well across the years it takes to come to pass.

Who this is for

Small groups that have been walking together and want to go deeper. Leaders in transition. Believers carrying a long-held promise. Mentor-mentee pairs working through a long season together.

This course assumes you have received something from God. If *Hearing His Voice* is about sharpening how we hear, this course is about stewarding what we have already heard.

How the course is structured

Participant reading (15 minutes before each session): everyone reads the week's material.

Group session (90 minutes): welcome, pre-read discussion, Scripture anchor, short teaching, practice, close.

Between sessions: a weekly practice of returning to old words, declaring them aloud, writing them down again.

The facilitator edition contains everything in the participant guide plus teaching notes, Scripture deep-dives, discussion prompts, practice scripts, and prayer prompts.

A word about caves and prisons

Scripture is full of caves. David's. Obadiah's. Elijah's. The cave at Adullam where four hundred men gathered around the king-in-waiting. And Scripture is full of prisons. Joseph's. Jeremiah's. John the Baptist's. Paul's. If God's servants spent that much time in caves and prisons, these seasons are not detours from the story. They are part of how God forms His people for the promises He has spoken over them.

How to use this guide

Pastors and facilitators: download the full facilitator edition. Read it through before week one.

Small group leaders: share the weekly link with participants as pre-read. Gather weekly. Declare old words in the room.

Participants: read the week's material, bring the old journals, come with the words spoken over you.

Wage the good warfare.

● WEEK 1 OF 6



SESSION 1

Wage the Good Warfare

1 Timothy 1:18 as the frame for your whole journey

SCRIPTURE

1 Timothy 1:18–19

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Bring one old prophecy or word you have received. Declare it aloud in the group.

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this through. Then go home and find one word from God you received in your past — anything from the last week to the last thirty years. Write it down. Bring it to the session. It does not have to be dramatic. It has to be real.

One strange verse that changes everything

Paul writes to his young apprentice Timothy. Timothy is tired. The church in Ephesus is a mess. He is young, criticised, physically unwell, and running a congregation with problems. And Paul, writing to him, says something we almost never stop on:

"This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience." (1 Timothy 1:18-19)

Read that again. Slowly.

Paul is not giving Timothy a pep talk. He is giving him a *combat strategy*. Wage the good warfare. *By them*. By the prophecies previously made about you.

The prophecies are the weapons.

Not the trophy. Not the souvenir. Not the thing framed on the wall for the memory of a better season. The words spoken over Timothy are what Paul tells him to *fight with*.

This one verse reframes the entire prophetic journey.

The problem Paul is actually solving

Most of us treat prophecies as something to be *carried* rather than *fought with*. We receive a word, feel encouraged, maybe write it down, and then — if we're honest — we mostly wait for it to come true.

That is not the posture the New Testament teaches.

The posture the New Testament teaches is *active engagement*. Prophecies are not promises that arrive by gravity. They are the terms of a fight that God has invited you into. You are expected to take them into battle.

Timothy did not need encouragement in Ephesus. He needed weapons. Paul — Timothy's mentor, the one who helped receive these prophecies in the first place — is saying: *remember the words that were spoken over you. Say them aloud. Hold them. Stand on them. Fight.*

That same instruction is now, two thousand years later, for you.

What waging good warfare looks like

There are a handful of practical movements that this verse implies. Look at them carefully, because they are the whole of course two in miniature.

1. You had to have heard something. You cannot fight with prophecies previously made about you if you never received any. If you have not heard from God, or received an encouragement from His people, that is the starting point. (That is what course one — *Hearing His Voice* — is built for.) This course assumes you have heard something. If you have not, start there.

2. You had to have kept it. *Previously made* implies memory. Timothy remembered what had been said over him. If Timothy had forgotten, he would have had nothing to fight with. Most believers' first problem with warfare-by-prophecy is that they can no longer remember what God said. The prophecy is still real; they just can't find it.

3. You have to be currently fighting. The verb is *wage*. Present tense. Ongoing. This is not a one-off skirmish. This is a posture. Paul is not saying *once, when the battle arises, you may recall these words*. He is saying *this is the ongoing terms of your Christian life*. You are always, in some sense, in warfare. You are always, in some sense, meant to be holding your words.

4. You have to be holding faith and a good conscience. The prophecies alone do not save you from drift. Paul adds two companions in verse 19: *faith* (trust in God) and *a good conscience* (integrity before Him). Without these two, the warfare goes wrong. People have shipwrecked their faith while technically holding prophetic words, because they stopped holding them with faith and integrity.

Why this matters now

Most of you came to this course because you are somewhere in the middle of something.

You received a word years ago, and the promise seems further away than when you heard it. You felt called to something, and your life now looks like the opposite. You heard from God about your marriage, your vocation, your healing — and nothing visible has moved. You said yes to something, and you are now somewhere you didn't expect to be.

This is the terrain of 1 Timothy 1:18. This verse is written for exactly this moment.

The pressure of the middle is that you begin to doubt you heard at all. *"Maybe I imagined it. Maybe it was never real. Maybe I outgrew it. Maybe God changed His mind."* That is the lie that disarms Timothy. And Paul's response is not *"try to believe harder."* Paul's response is: *go back to what was actually spoken. Declare it. Fight with it. It is still your sword.*

The ancient practice of declaration

In the Old Testament, the writers of the psalms have a strange habit. In the middle of complaint, despair, even accusation against God, they suddenly pivot. "*But You...*" or "*Yet I will...*" or "*I remember the days of old, I meditate on all Your works...*" (Psalm 143:5).

Declaration in the middle of darkness. Reminder spoken aloud when everything contradicts.

The practice of *waging good warfare* with a prophetic word is usually this: *speaking out loud what God said, when the evidence seems to say otherwise*. Not denial of the circumstances. Not pretending. Just bringing the word back into the room and letting it occupy space alongside the struggle.

Your own voice is a weapon. You already know this in the wrong direction — the way anxious self-talk shapes your day. Reverse it. Let your voice speak what God has spoken over you.

The first session

Tonight, as a group, we will do something simple and strange. We are going to take our old words — prophecies from years ago, convictions that keep returning, specific Scriptures that came alive — and we are going to speak them aloud. Over ourselves. And over each other.

Some of the words you bring will be decades old. Some will be from last week. Some will feel true. Some will feel stranded. That is all fine. The point is not whether the word is currently *feeling* true. The point is whether you will *stand on it*.

This is what Paul told Timothy to do.

The practice for this week

Before the session, find at least one word — written down if possible, spoken if still remembered — and bring it to the group. It can be:

A prophecy another believer spoke over you.

A Scripture that came alive in a particular season.

A conviction you keep returning to.

A sense of calling you received.

Something from your own listening time years ago that you have not fully acted on.

If you cannot find anything, look for the oldest testimony of God's faithfulness in your life. Something He did. That is your stake in the ground.

Before you come to the session

Come with one word, written down.

Come willing to read it aloud.

Come expecting to fight for it, not merely to remember it.

● WEEK 2 OF 6



SESSION 2

The Cave

David, hiddenness, and what God forms when nothing visible is happening

SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 22:1-2

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Name your cave. What is God forming there that could not be formed on the throne?

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this through. Come with an honest answer: are you currently in a cave? What does it look like? How long have you been there?

A prophet and a song

A teenager is tending his father's sheep in the hills of Judah. His name is David. An old prophet named Samuel shows up at the house, one day, unannounced, and pours a horn of oil over David's head in front of his brothers. *This is the future king.*

That is a big prophecy.

And then, for the next fifteen or so years of his life, David does not become king.

He plays the harp for a king who grows to hate him. He defeats a giant and watches the national praise he earned turn into royal jealousy. He marries the king's daughter and has to flee his own wedding bed with a spear thrown at his head. He runs. He hides. He lies to a priest. He feigns madness in front of a Philistine ruler. He ends up, in 1 Samuel 22, in a cave.

David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. (1 Samuel 22:1)

And look at who joins him there:

And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became commander over them. And there were with him about four hundred men. (1 Samuel 22:1-2)

This is who God trains kings with. The distressed, indebted, bitter-of-soul. Four hundred men who would become, years later, his mighty ones. A future king being formed in a cave with a ragtag band of nobodies.

Now read this again: David had been *anointed*. He had *heard from Samuel*. He was *a prophetic promise walking*. And he was *in a cave*.

The word most of us want to hear

Most of us, when we receive a word from God, secretly expect a trajectory that goes like this:

Hear the word. → Feel inspired. → Move quickly toward fulfilment. → See the word happen. → Give God thanks on the other side.

The actual biblical trajectory almost always looks more like this:

Hear the word. → Feel inspired. → Begin to move. → Everything slows down. → Circumstances contradict the word. → Cave. → Prison. → Years pass. → Something forms in you that could not have formed any other way. → Fulfilment arrives, later and different than expected, and mostly in a way that makes God famous rather than you.

The cave is not a detour. It is the curriculum.

Why caves form kings

There are a few things that can only be formed in caves. These are the things God does in you while nothing visible is happening:

Character that can handle power. The David who walks out of the cave is different from the David who walked in. He has learned to wait. He has learned to spare Saul when Saul is in his hand. He has learned that God, not his own striking, is the one who puts kings on thrones.

Loyalty to God when nothing is on the line. In the cave, worship is private. There is no crowd. No platform. No return. You either love God when no one is watching or you don't. The cave reveals this, and over time, deepens it.

The capacity to lead the broken. David does not gather the competent and the connected in the cave. He gathers the distressed, the indebted, the bitter. These are the ones who become his mighty men. A king who was formed only on the throne could not lead these people. A king who was formed in a cave can — because he understands them.

Songs. Most of the Psalms were written from cave-shaped seasons. If David had not been hidden, we would not have the psalter. Some of what God does in you in the cave is not for your sake. It is for the generations that will read what you wrote from the cave, for the rest of time.

The cave is not punishment

This is the part most of us get wrong.

We enter a hard season and immediately go scanning: *what did I do wrong? What sin opened this? What am I being punished for?* Sometimes there is a real answer. Often there is not.

Sometimes the cave is not discipline. It is formation.

God forms people in caves He could have kept them out of. Job was blameless. Joseph was righteous. David was anointed. Paul was on mission. Every one of them ended up in some kind of cave or prison for seasons God could have prevented and chose not to.

This does not mean the cave is pleasant. Read the Psalms. David complains, weeps, accuses, rails, despairs. He is honest in the cave. God does not ask him to pretend.

But the cave is not God withdrawing. The cave is God *at work in a way that is not visible yet*.

What usually happens to us in a cave

There are predictable temptations.

Cynicism about the word. *"Maybe I made it up." "Maybe it wasn't as specific as I remember." "Maybe God changed His mind."* The longer the cave, the stronger this gets.

Quiet bargaining. *"If I do this for God, He'll release me from the cave."* God is not a vending machine. The cave ends when it ends.

Trying to exit early. David had two chances to kill Saul in the cave and become king immediately. Both times he refused. Early exits from caves usually end badly.

Losing the word altogether. This is why course one was about *recording*. If you lose the word in the cave, you have nothing to hold. Paul told Timothy to fight with the prophecies previously made. Not the vague sense that maybe God once said something.

Isolation. The cave is lonely. Believers are tempted to drift from church, friends, accountability. David had four hundred men with him in the cave. You need a handful of people who know where you are.

What to do in the cave

This is the practical part. When you find yourself in one:

1. Bring the word with you. Read it aloud. Weekly at minimum. Declare it the way we practiced last week.

2. Keep writing the Psalms. Not literally. But the practice: honest prayer, complaint, hope, declaration — all in the same breath. Write it down. You will need it later.

3. Stay in the body. Do not run from your people. David's loneliness was not total. He had the four hundred. Have your handful.

4. Watch for the formation. What is God forming in you that could not form on the throne? You will not see it all clearly while it is happening. But some of it you will notice.

5. Do not try to end the cave. You cannot shorten formation. Every attempt to exit early lengthens the cave.

6. Worship. Even poorly. Especially poorly. The worship of the cave is more valuable to God than the worship of the throne. No one is watching.

A final honest word

Some of you are in a cave right now. You did not come to this session to hear that your cave is beautiful and good and full of hidden meaning. You came because you are tired. Some of you have been in this cave for years.

Hear this plainly: God has not forgotten. The word has not expired. What is forming is real, even though you cannot see it. And the cave does end.

David spent years in Adullam. He did become king. And his story begins, in 1 Chronicles 11, by listing the names of the mighty men — *these were the men who came to him at the cave of Adullam*. The cave was not an interruption of his story. It was the origin of his army.

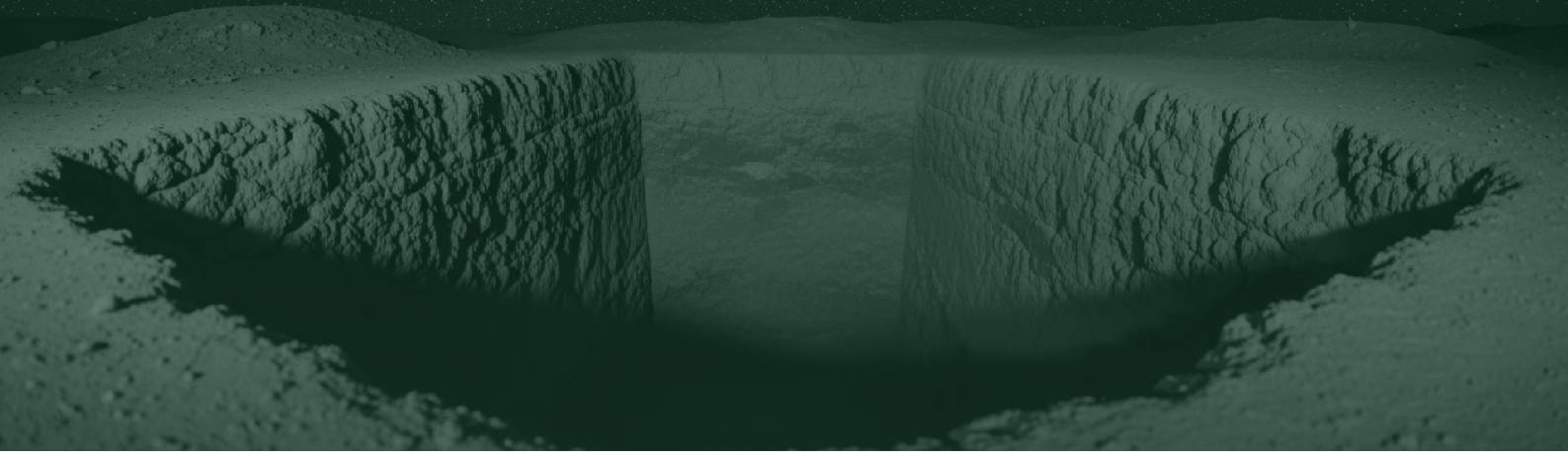
Your cave may be the origin of things you cannot yet see.

Before you come to the session

Name your cave. One honest sentence.

Answer: what is God forming in me that could not be formed on the throne?

Bring the word from last week. We will speak it again.



SESSION 3

The Prison

Joseph, injustice, and holding the promise when circumstance contradicts it

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 39:20–23

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Identify where the promise seems contradicted. Re-receive the word in the face of the contradiction.

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this through. Come with one specific way that your current circumstance seems to contradict what God spoke to you. Be specific. *"I was called to marriage and I'm still single at thirty-nine."* *"I was told I would have children and I've had three miscarriages."* *"I was called to ministry and I've been out of work for eighteen months."*

A seventeen-year-old dreams

Joseph is seventeen. He has two dreams. In the first, his brothers' sheaves bow down to his. In the second, the sun, moon, and eleven stars bow down to him. God gives him, unmistakably, a future.

Two chapters later, he is in a pit because his brothers hate him. One chapter after that, he is sold to slave traders. One chapter after that, he is a household servant in Egypt. Six verses after that, he is in prison on a false accusation.

From dream to prison, it takes about four chapters.

Read that carefully. The dream was real. The prison was also real. The gap between them is not an illusion. And between the dream at seventeen and the fulfilment of the dream at thirty, Joseph spends about thirteen years in a slow downward trajectory — every external evidence pointing *away* from what God had shown him.

This is where most people lose the word.

The difference between cave and prison

Last week we looked at the cave. Hiddenness. Formation. Slow work in a quiet place.

The prison is something else.

The cave is where God hides you. The prison is where the world contradicts the promise *and keeps you there*. In the cave, you are forming. In the prison, you are waiting, and the waiting is being *made harder by someone else's sin*.

Joseph does not end up in prison because of his own failure. He ends up there because he did the right thing. Potiphar's wife propositioned him; he refused; she accused him; he went to prison. The prison is the direct result of his obedience.

This is the prison most believers dread. Not the consequence of sin. The consequence of faithfulness.

What the prison does to the word

A prison season does specific damage to a promise.

It makes the word feel like a lie. When Joseph is in prison on a false accusation, every external signal says the dream was wrong. He is not rising. He is descending. The gap between what God said and what is happening is growing wider, not narrower.

It exposes your hope's foundation. In the cave, you can still believe the word because the season is simply *quiet*. In the prison, you have to believe the word while the season is actively contradicting it. This is a different muscle.

It invites interpretation of circumstance as verdict. Many believers quietly conclude, in the prison, that God has changed His mind, or that they misheard, or that they disqualified themselves. The prison is designed, by the accuser, to make you read the circumstances as the verdict.

It tempts you to manufacture an exit. Joseph could have slept with Potiphar's wife. He could have forged documents. He could have compromised with the cupbearer or the baker to try to buy his way out. He did not. He waited.

Paul's instruction to Timothy — *wage the good warfare... holding faith and a good conscience* — is precisely the prison posture. You hold the word. You hold faith. You hold a good conscience. You do not try to cut corners out of the prison. You wait.

What God does in the prison

Two things become visible in Joseph's prison that were not visible in the cave.

The prison produces administrative gift. In the prison, Joseph is put in charge of the other prisoners. He becomes, essentially, the prison manager. *The Lord was with Joseph, and He showed him steadfast love and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison* (Genesis 39:21). The skills he will use, years later, to manage an empire through famine — are being forged in prison administration. This is not coincidence. Prison is the management training.

The prison positions you for unlikely meetings. In the prison, Joseph meets Pharaoh's cupbearer. This meeting does nothing for Joseph for two more years. And then it does everything. When Pharaoh has a dream no one can interpret, it is the cupbearer — and only the cupbearer — who can say *"I know a man in prison who interprets dreams."*

If Joseph had never been in prison, he would never have met the cupbearer. If he had never met the cupbearer, he would never have been called to Pharaoh. If he had never been called to Pharaoh, he would never have been positioned to save Egypt, Israel, and his own brothers' families.

The prison is the unlikely hallway to the throne.

Holding the word through contradiction

The test in the prison is whether you can hold a word *when your life contradicts it*.

This is not the same as the test in the cave. In the cave, you are holding the word when nothing is happening. In the prison, you are holding the word when the *opposite* of the word is happening.

There are a few honest practices that help.

Re-receive the word. Go back to it. Read it aloud. Say, "*God, I received this. I believe You said it. And my life is pointing the other way. I do not understand. And I still stand on it.*" Not because you feel it. Because you are choosing it.

Reinterpret circumstance cautiously. Circumstance is not always the verdict. Joseph's fall–backwards trajectory was, the whole time, moving him toward Pharaoh. You cannot read the story from inside chapter 39. You can only read it from chapter 50 — and by then, it looks entirely different.

Refuse early exits. If a way out of the prison involves violating the conscience, it is not God's way out. God does not deliver by asking you to compromise the person He has been forming you into. Joseph refused Potiphar's wife; that obedience was what *kept him in prison*. The same obedience that *keeps* you in the prison is what *positions* you for the throne.

Make friends in the prison. Joseph did not become bitter. He served the other prisoners. He interpreted their dreams. He did his work well. This is not resignation. This is the shape of a person whose promise is intact.

The contradictions you are holding

Some of you are in prisons tonight. Not all caves. Not all delays. Some of you are living the direct contradiction of a promise.

You were told you would be a father and the infertility continues. You were called to lead and you have been overlooked again. You were told you were healed and you are still sick. You were promised restoration in a relationship that remains broken. You heard God about a financial provision and the bills are stacking up.

The prison asks you: *will you hold the word when the world tells you it is a lie?*

Timothy held. Joseph held. Every one of God's long–promise leaders held through a prison season. The way you hold is by declaring the word in the room where the contradiction is loudest.

This is not denial. You are not pretending the contradiction is not real. You are simply insisting that the contradiction is not the verdict.

The practice for this week

Two honest moves.

- 1 Name the contradiction clearly.** One sentence. Where does your life currently contradict what God said?
- 2 Re-receive the word in the face of it.** Write it out. Read it aloud. Say, *"I am choosing to hold this word even as I see this contradiction."* Do it daily for a week.

Before you come to the session

Come with the contradiction named honestly.

Come with the word from last week still in hand.

Come expecting to be prayed over by people who can see the future even when you cannot.



SESSION 4

When the Odds Don't Matter

Abraham, Caleb, and faith past age, circumstance, and logic

SCRIPTURE

Romans 4:19-21

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Name the odds against your word. Then declare the word louder than the odds.

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this through. Come with one promise you still hold, and a clear-eyed account of the odds now against it. We will bring them both into the same room.

An old man takes a hill

Caleb is eighty-five years old and asking for a mountain.

In Joshua 14, forty-five years after Moses promised him the hill country of Hebron, Caleb stands in front of Joshua and says:

"So now, behold, I am this day eighty-five years old. I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming. So now give me this hill country of which the Lord spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the Lord said." (Joshua 14:10-12)

Read that again. *Great fortified cities. The Anakim* — the giants whose mere presence forty years earlier had convinced ten of the twelve spies that the promised land could not be taken.

And Caleb, at eighty-five, is asking for them.

Not the easy land. Not the suburbs. *The hill country with the giants.*

The look of faith past age

Abraham is also old. A hundred years old. His wife Sarah is ninety. They have been holding the promise of a son for decades. In Romans 4, Paul gives us this line about Abraham:

"He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (since he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised." (Romans 4:19-21)

Look at the phrase: *when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead*. This is not denial. Abraham is not pretending the odds are in his favour. He is looking honestly at the odds — *his body was as good as dead* — and still trusting the word.

This is faith past logic. Not faith *without* logic. Not faith *against* logic. Faith that has looked at the logic, acknowledged it, and still chosen to trust God's word above it.

Abraham is a hundred years old and trusting for a son. Caleb is eighty-five and asking for giants. These are the odds-defiers of the Bible. Both of them have been holding a word from God for decades.

The odds in your life

You are probably somewhere between Joseph's prison and Caleb's hill. Which means you have a promise that now looks unreasonable.

You have waited too long for the promise to still be plausible.

You are too old for the thing you felt called to.

You have too much against you for the word to still make sense.

The circumstances have hardened beyond what you can see God moving.

This is normal. This is where most long promises end up. The question is not whether the odds are against the word. The question is whether the odds are God's concern or yours.

What Abraham actually did

Paul says Abraham *grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God*. That phrasing is worth sitting with.

Abraham did not *grit his teeth*. He did not *positive-think* the son into existence. He did not *manifest*. He gave glory to God.

Giving glory to God in the face of impossible odds is a specific practice. It looks like:

Talking to God about what He can do, not about what you cannot.

Declaring who He is, not rehearsing the problem.

Remembering what He has done before, and saying it out loud.

Refusing to let the conversation about His promise become mostly a conversation about the obstacles.

When you *give glory* to God, your faith grows. Not because of positive thinking. Because you are turning your attention toward the One whose character is the actual foundation of the word.

Paul puts it in three moves at the end of the passage: *fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised*.

Able — capacity.

To do — action.

Three things to hold. God has the capacity. God acts. And what He said, He will do.

Caleb's phrase

Go back to Caleb. Read that last line of his speech again, slowly:

"It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the Lord said." (Joshua 14:12)

It may be.

This is not a man who is cocky. This is a man who is honest. He does not know, exactly, how this will work. He just knows that the word was spoken forty-five years ago, and he has been waiting, and he is still as strong as he was then, and he wants the hill with the giants.

The phrase *"it may be"* is one of the holiest phrases in the Bible. It is faith without arrogance. It is hope without presumption. It is the posture of a believer who does not presume on God and does not give up on Him either.

It may be that the Lord will be with me. And if He is, the giants come down.

This is the posture of the long-promise carrier.

What the odds actually are

Here is the honest theological note.

The odds are real. Abraham's body was as good as dead. The giants at Hebron were genuinely large. Sarah was genuinely barren. The circumstances are not imaginary obstacles that faith can wish away.

And yet.

The odds are not the final word. God is the final word. And He does what He promised, even when the odds have stacked against it for decades.

This is why the weight of the promise does not rest on your strength. You are not expected to believe the odds away. You are expected to hold the word, give glory to God, and let Him do what He said He would do.

Hebrews 11:11 has a line that carries this well: *"By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered Him faithful who had promised."*

Sarah did not consider her age. Or rather, Sarah considered her age, and then *considered Him faithful who had promised*. Both things are there. The honest assessment of the odds, and the deeper assessment of His character.

What this week is about

Somewhere in your hand is a word that now looks unreasonable. You are older. More tired. The window you thought the word would come through has closed. The circumstances have hardened.

This week you are going to practice Caleb's *it may be*.

Not *I refuse to acknowledge the odds*. Not *the odds don't bother me*. But *the odds are real, and He is more real, and I am still asking for the hill with the giants*.

The practice for this week

Two moves.

- 1 Write down the odds.** Name them honestly. *"I am forty-three, I have no partner, the promise was marriage and children."* *"I have been unemployed for eighteen months. The promise was fruitful work."* *"The relationship has been broken for a decade. The promise was restoration."*
- 2 Write down the word louder than the odds.** Under the odds, write the word. *"And He said _____. He is able to do what He promised. It may be that He will be with me, and I shall see it just as He said."*

Read both aloud every day this week. Odds. Word. Declaration.

Before you come to the session

Come with the odds named honestly.

Come with the word louder than the odds.

Come willing to ask, in front of the group, for the hill with the giants.



SESSION 5

Holding Joy Through the Fire

*Endurance and the strange joy that survives the
hardest seasons*

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 1:6-9

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Name one moment joy has surprised you in a hard season. Share it.

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this through. Come with one moment — specific, recent if possible — when joy showed up in a season you did not expect it to. A laugh in the middle of grief. A peace in the middle of the fight. A gladness you could not explain. Bring it.

An inexplicable word from Peter

Peter is writing to believers who are scattered, persecuted, and facing increasing pressure for their faith. Real suffering. Not theoretical hardship. Ordinary Christians losing jobs, houses, reputations, sometimes lives.

And what does he write to them?

"In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith — more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire — may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexplicable and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:6-9)

Read that sentence again. *Joy that is inexplicable and filled with glory.*

Inexplicable joy. Joy that should not make sense given the circumstances. Joy that coexists with genuine grief. Joy that is not a denial of hardship but somehow runs beside it.

This is the joy Peter is teaching. Not the absence of pain. A joy that survives the fire and is proved real by it.

What joy is not

Before we go further, let us be honest about what this joy is not.

It is not denial. Peter names the grief plainly. *"You have been grieved by various trials."* He does not pretend the trials are not grievous. The grief is real. So is the joy. Both at once.

It is not a feeling you can manufacture. You cannot produce inexplicable joy by trying harder. If you could, it would be *explicable* — the product of your effort. It is called inexplicable because it does not come from you.

It is not constant. Even Jesus grieved. Even Jesus wept at a grave. Joy does not require that you are always smiling, always content, always stable. It coexists with sorrow. It is a different thing than happiness.

It is not a reward for staying strong. You do not earn joy by passing the fire test. Joy is given, not earned. Often it shows up in the exact moment you think you cannot go on.

What joy actually is, in Scripture

The joy of Scripture is strange.

Paul sings in a prison at midnight after being beaten (Acts 16:25). Habakkuk declares he will rejoice in God even if the fig tree does not blossom (Habakkuk 3:17-18). Jesus, *"for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross"* (Hebrews 12:2). James tells believers to *"count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds"* (James 1:2).

These writers are not naïve. They have seen the worst. They know what trial is. And they speak, repeatedly, of a joy that holds in the fire.

What is it?

The best phrase in the New Testament is Paul's: *"sorrowful, yet always rejoicing"* (2 Corinthians 6:10). Both at once. Not an oscillation. A simultaneity.

Joy, biblically, is the settled sense that God is still good, that His word is still holding, that you are still known and loved by Him, and that the story is still going somewhere. It survives the fire because it is not built on the fire going out.

Why fire matters for the word

Peter says your faith is being *tested by fire* — and that what comes out of the fire is *more precious than gold*.

Fire does two things to faith.

It burns off what was false. Most of our faith carries a lot of additions that will not survive a fire. Spiritual ambition. Social performance. Cultural Christianity. Romanticised expectations of how God should act. The fire burns these off. What is left is what was actually true.

It refines what was real. What remains becomes denser, brighter, heavier. The same way gold is refined in a crucible — the metal does not lose its goldness in the fire. It *becomes more itself*.

The same thing happens to a promise held through the fire.

If your word was mostly your own ambition dressed in Scripture, the fire will burn it off. But if your word was actually from God — if what was spoken was real — the fire will not destroy it. It will refine it. What comes out the other side will be denser, brighter, truer than what went in.

This is why some of the most prophetically precise believers are the ones who have been through the most fire. They have been refined. What they speak has weight because it has been tested.

Joy is the evidence

Peter makes a strange move in verse 8. He names the joy that results from holding faith through the fire, and calls it *"inexplicable and filled with glory."*

The joy is the evidence.

Not the circumstances changing. Not the prayer being answered. Not the word being fulfilled yet. The joy itself, surviving the fire — that is the proof that something is real.

If you are in a long hard season and a quiet joy still visits you — at unexpected moments, in the middle of weeping, over small things — that joy is testimony. Not that the season is about to end. That God is still with you in it, and your faith is still holding, and what you have is real.

This is a different kind of assurance than most of us look for. We want the outcome as proof. God gives the joy as proof.

The difference between joy and resignation

A careful distinction.

Joy through the fire is not the same as giving up. It is not saying *"I have accepted that nothing will change."* It is not lowered expectations dressed as maturity.

Resignation says, *"I have stopped hoping."* Joy says, *"I have stopped demanding the outcome and started trusting the One."*

These look similar from a distance. They are entirely different up close. The resigned person has let the word go. The joyful-in-fire person is still holding the word — they are just also holding joy, because their confidence has moved from *the word arriving* to *the One who spoke it*.

Joy makes you more able to wait, not less. It does not replace the word. It accompanies it.

What this week asks of you

After four weeks of caves, prisons, contradictions, and odds, this week gently asks: *what has survived?*

What is still here after the fire?

If you answer that honestly, some of you will find the answer is *the joy*. A small, quiet, strange joy that has not left — even when the word has not arrived, even when the circumstances have not shifted.

This is evidence.

Count it. Name it. It is not accidental. It is God's testimony to Himself in the middle of your fire.

The practice for this week

Three honest moves.

- 1 Name a moment.** When has joy surprised you in this season? Be specific. A particular morning. A song in the car. Laughter at something small. A peace while praying that you did not expect.
- 2 Ask what has survived.** After the fire so far, what of your faith is still here? What has not burned off? Name that clearly. It is your gold.
- 3 Let joy testify.** Every day this week, look for one small joy. Receive it as evidence. Not evidence that the word is about to be fulfilled — evidence that the One who spoke it is still with you.

Before you come to the session

Come with one moment joy surprised you in this season.

Come with an honest note on what has survived the fire so far.

Come expecting, if you are in the fire tonight, to be visited by a joy you did not manufacture.

● WEEK 6 OF 6



SESSION 6

The Promised Land

Fulfilment, partnership, and legacy — promise is not the end

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 11:13–16, 39–40

SESSION

90 min

PRACTICE

Name one promise already fulfilled you have forgotten to celebrate. Name what you are still holding.

PARTICIPANT READING

Before the session

Read this through. Come with two lists. First: promises God has already fulfilled in your life — however small, however partial — that you may have forgotten to name. Second: what you are still holding. We will close the course with both.

A strange ending to a chapter of heroes

Hebrews 11 is the great chapter on faith. It names Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, David — giants of long-promise-carrying. And then it says something strange at the end.

"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."
(Hebrews 11:39-40)

Read that again.

These heroes of faith. These long-promise-holders. *Did not receive what was promised.*

At least not in the way they expected, and not in their lifetimes.

Abraham died holding the promise of a nation he could not yet see. Moses died on a mountain looking at the land he was not allowed to enter. David died with the temple he longed to build left to his son. Joseph's bones travelled in a coffin for four hundred years before arriving in the land of promise.

And the Bible calls these people heroes of faith.

This reframes everything.

Promise is not the same as fulfilment

Most of us, when we think about the prophetic journey, imagine arriving. The word spoken over us at twenty comes true at forty and we sit in the sunshine on the other side.

Hebrews 11 quietly tells us this is not always how it goes.

Some promises are fulfilled in your lifetime. Many more are fulfilled *through* your lifetime — in the life of your children, your spiritual descendants, your community, your nation. Abraham did

not see a nation of stars. He saw one son. Isaac saw two sons. Jacob saw twelve. By the time you get to David, you have an actual nation. The promise was fulfilled — just not in Abraham's personal timeline.

This is the honest theology of promise.

You are not the last chapter of your own story. You are a chapter in something larger. What God spoke over you at twenty-two may not fully arrive in your lifetime. Some of it will. Some of it will arrive through the people who come after you.

This is not failure. It is faithfulness. It is Hebrews 11.

But some promises do land

And some of them already have.

This is the move most of us skip. We are so focused on what has not yet happened that we forget to count what already has. The fulfilments that arrived quietly. The words that came true in ways we did not notice because we were looking for something else. The partial fulfilments that are real but not yet complete.

Go back through your life and ask:

Where has God already been faithful to a word He spoke?

Where has He done something I prayed for so long I stopped noticing when it arrived?

What small fulfilments have I failed to celebrate?

The practice of remembering what He has already done is half the practice of holding what He has not yet done. If you do not celebrate what has arrived, you will not recognise fulfilment when it comes.

Fulfilment usually looks different

Another honest note.

When fulfilment arrives, it almost always looks different from what we were waiting for.

Abraham was looking for a son. He got a son, yes. But the real promise was a nation, a land, a blessing to the ends of the earth, and ultimately a Messiah. The fulfilment of the promise of Abraham was, in its fullness, Jesus Christ — born of his line two thousand years later.

Could Abraham have imagined that at his campfire in Genesis 12? No. But that does not mean the promise failed. It means the promise was bigger than Abraham's imagination.

Your promise is probably bigger than your imagination too.

When what arrives does not look like what you were expecting, do not conclude that the word failed. Sometimes the shape of fulfilment is larger, stranger, and slower than what you thought

you were promised. Sometimes it arrives through means you did not anticipate. Sometimes it takes a form your twenty-two-year-old self could not have named.

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

Far more abundantly — which means also, sometimes, *very differently*.

Partnership matters

Hebrews 11:40 has a curious line: *"since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect."*

Read that carefully. The heroes of Hebrews 11 — Abraham, Sarah, Moses, David, all of them — *are not made perfect apart from us*.

Their story is not complete without ours. We are part of their fulfilment, and the believers who come after us will be part of ours.

Which means the prophetic journey is not an individual sport. You are in partnership with generations. The word God spoke to you may be completed by someone you will never meet, two or three generations from now, because you held faithful through your cave, your prison, your contradiction, your fire.

You are building something that your children, biological or spiritual, will finish. And they are building something that will finish in ways only God can see.

This is why the course is not a solo project. Why it is in small groups. Why we are building a culture of remembering. Because the promise is never just yours.

Faithfulness is the shape of the end

If fulfilment is not always what we think, and if some promises are completed in generations we will not see, what is actually the *point* of the prophetic journey?

The point is faithfulness.

Not: did you see the outcome. But: did you keep holding, through the cave, through the prison, through the odds, through the fire, the word that was spoken over you.

This is what Paul tells Timothy at the very end of his own life, in his second letter: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"* (2 Timothy 4:7).

Not *I have seen it all happen*. Not *every prophecy came true in the way I expected*. *I have kept the faith*.

Faithfulness is the shape of the end. The fruit is not the same as the fulfilment. The fruit is the person you have become while holding the word through everything that tried to knock it out of your hand.

What this session celebrates

Tonight, together, we are going to do two things.

First, we are going to remember what God has already done. Every person will name at least one promise that has already been fulfilled — however small — and we will celebrate it.

Second, we are going to name what we are still holding. Every person will say what word they are taking out of this course and into the rest of their life.

Then we will bless each other. And we will send each other out — not to some dramatic new stage, but back into the ordinary hours of your lives, where the real waging of good warfare happens.

The practice for the rest of your life

Three things.

- 1 Keep a record of fulfilments.** Start a simple list. Every time God answers something, add it. Add the date, the context, the original promise. Return to it in hard seasons. It will become your own Hebrews 11.
- 2 Keep holding what has not yet arrived.** Continue the declaration practice. Wage the good warfare. 1 Timothy 1:18 is not just for the weeks of a course. It is the posture of a lifetime.
- 3 Hand it forward.** Speak the words God has spoken over you to the generations after you. Record them. Teach your children and spiritual children to look for the fulfilments. Build the culture of remembering beyond this small group.

Before you come to the last session

Come with a list — short or long — of promises already fulfilled.

Come with the word you are still holding.

Come ready to bless and be blessed.

*"Wage the good warfare, holding
faith and a good conscience."*

1 TIMOTHY 1:18-19

