

# FAITH UNBOUND

*Overcoming the Spirit of Unbelief*

A person wearing a hooded jacket and a backpack stands on a sand dune, looking out over a vast desert landscape at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow across the sky and the undulating dunes. The person is seen from behind, their silhouette dark against the bright light of the setting sun.

ELDER KEITH J. WALKER



# FAITH UNBOUND

*Overcoming the Spirit of Unbelief*

*Written by*  
Elder Keith Joel Walker

[whpctuttle.com](http://whpctuttle.com)

# From Wilderness to Promise — A Sermon Book for Healing Doubt and Building Faith

## Overview

This sermon book is designed as a complete series you can preach over several weeks or use for a concentrated teaching retreat. It includes theological grounding, eight full sermons (with exposition, application, prayers, and discussion questions), pastoral guidance for ministering to unbelief, practical steps for congregations and individuals, the Hebrew and Greek meanings of “unbelief,” and an appendix listing biblical figures who struggled with unbelief (Old and New Testaments) with references.

## Table of contents

1. Introduction: Why This Series Matters
2. Sermon 1 — The Nature of Unbelief
3. Sermon 2 — The Wilderness Generation: A Nation That Would Not Believe
4. Sermon 3 — Leaders Who Wavered: Moses, Gideon, and Others
5. Sermon 4 — The Disciples’ Struggles: Little Faith in the Midst of Miracles
6. Sermon 5 — Personal Doubt: Thomas, the Father, and Honest Confessions
7. Sermon 6 — Roots of Unbelief and How It Spreads

8. Sermon 7 — Overcomers: Christ's Promise to Those Who Conquer Unbelief
9. Sermon 8 — Pastoral Care and Church Practices to Break the Spirit of Unbelief
10. Practical Appendix: Steps, Prayers, Memory Verses
11. Linguistic Appendix: Hebrew and Greek for Faith / Unbelief
12. Appendix: Biblical Characters Who Struggled with Unbelief (OT & NT)
13. Suggested reading, small-group guides, and a one-week devotional

Introduction: Why this series matters (short)

Unbelief is a practical, spiritual, and pastoral problem: it prevents people from entering God's rest, frustrates witness, and can become generational. The gospel both diagnoses and remedies unbelief — God gives faith; we respond in obedience. These sermons aim to move people from stuckness to action, from doubt to trust, and from isolation to community.

Sermon 1 — The Nature of Unbelief

Key text: Hebrews 3:7–19; Hebrews 4:1–2

Goal: Define unbelief biblically, distinguish it from honest doubt, and show its spiritual danger.

Outline

- Opening illustration: a modern “wilderness” story

of missed opportunity because of fear.

- Exposition: Hebrews' warning — an “evil, unbelieving heart” that refuses God's rest.
- Point 1: Unbelief is a heart posture, not just intellectual questions.
- Point 2: Unbelief resists God's promises and hardens over time.
- Point 3: Faith is both gift and response — we ask for and exercise it.

#### Application

- Invite confession and repentance; encourage memorizing one promise this week.
- Small group question: Where do you feel unable to enter God's “rest”?

Closing prayer and invitation to confess unbelief.

### Sermon 2 — The Wilderness Generation: A Nation That Would Not Believe

Key text: Numbers 13–14; Hebrews 3:16–19

Goal: Use Israel's wilderness failure as the canonical example of communal unbelief and its consequences.

#### Outline

- Narrative retelling of the spies and the people's reaction.
- Exposition: Why the report of the ten spies produced fear and unbelief.
- Point 1: Unbelief excuses God's promises based on surface evidence.

- Point 2: Communal unbelief infects a generation — spiritual consequences are real.
- Point 3: God's judgment is redemptive: He preserves a faithful remnant (Caleb/Joshua).

#### Application

- Call to collective repentance and corporate spiritual disciplines (Psalm reading, testimony sharing).
- Action: Start a testimony chain in the church — weekly stories of answered prayer.

### Sermon 3 — Leaders Who Wavered: Moses, Gideon, and Others

Key text: Numbers 20:2–13; Judges 6–7

Goal: Show that leaders are vulnerable to unbelief, how it damages the flock, and how God reforms leaders.

#### Outline

- Case study: Moses at Meribah — rebuked for not honoring God (Numbers 20:12).
- Case study: Gideon's fleece — uncertainty amid calling (Judges 6).
- Lessons: leadership requires faithfulness and humility; failures must lead to repentance and restoration.

#### Application

- Leaders' practical steps: confession, accountability, mentor relationships, spiritual retreat.

## Sermon 4 — The Disciples' Struggles: Little Faith in the Midst of Miracles

Key text: Mark 4:35–41; Matthew 8:23–27; Matthew 14:28–31

Goal: Address how close proximity to Jesus still left the disciples with “little faith,” and what that teaches us.

### Outline

- Narrative: storm on the lake; Jesus' rebuke “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?”
- Exposition: proximity to the miracle does not automatically produce faith.
- Point 1: Faith grows through testing, not mere exposure.
- Point 2: Fear and self-preservation often override trust.
- Point 3: Jesus' presence is the cure; call to “Take heart.”

### Application

- Practice: anchoring prayers during trials; community reminders of Jesus' presence.

## Sermon 5 — Personal Doubt: Thomas, the Father, and Honest Confessions

Key text: John 20:24–29; Mark 9:14–29

Goal: Give pastoral permission for honest doubt and show pathways from doubt to faith.

## Outline

- Thomas: not a villain; an honest process — Jesus meets him with evidence and mercy.
- The father of the boy: “I believe; help my unbelief” — a model prayer.
- Point 1: Honest confession of doubt invites grace, not condemnation.
- Point 2: Jesus enters doubt with evidence, compassion, and commission.

## Application

- Encourage honest confession: small groups where doubt can be named.
- Create a “doubters’ prayer evening” where people can bring honest questions to Scripture and prayer.

## Sermon 6 — Roots of Unbelief and How It Spreads

Key text: Hebrews 3; Psalm 77; examples across Scripture

Goal: Diagnose the spiritual, psychological, and cultural roots of unbelief and outline remedies.

## Outline

- Roots: fear, repeated disappointment, sin, misinformation, trauma, pride, generational patterns.
- How it spreads: gossip, cynical leadership, lack of testimony, spiritual vacuum.
- Remedies: repentance, pastoral care, counseling, doctrine of God’s character (trustworthiness), memory work (testimony and journals).



## Application

- Practical plan: church-wide “Remembrance” campaign — collecting testimonies, reading God’s works aloud, training counselors.

## Sermon 7 — Overcomers: Christ’s Promise to Those Who Conquer Unbelief

Key text: Revelation 2–3; Mark 9:23

Goal: Present the New Testament promises for those who overcome unbelief and practical means to persevere.

### Outline

- Revelation’s rewards for “the one who overcomes” — tree of life, hidden manna, crown, throne.
- Mark 9:23 — “All things are possible for one who believes.”
- Point 1: Overcoming is possible by grace.
- Point 2: Perseverance in faith is the mark of overcomers; community aids perseverance.

## Application

- Spiritual formation: baptism renewal, covenant commitments, launching covenant groups to encourage perseverance.

## Sermon 8 — Pastoral Care and Church Practices to Break the Spirit of Unbelief

Key text: 1 Timothy 4:14; Acts 14:8–10; James 5:14–16

Goal: Give pastors and church leaders practical

ministry tools to help people move from unbelief to faith.

## Outline

- Practices: listening and lament, testimony ministries, healing/impartation services (with discernment), prayer and fasting, counseling referral paths, mentoring and small groups.
- Boundary issues: beware quick platitudes; be patient; refer to professionals when trauma or mental health is involved.

## Application

- Implement a 4-week “Faith Rebuild” ministry track: assessment, pastoral care, spiritual disciplines training, testimony and commissioning.

## Prayers and Litanies (for use in each sermon)

Each sermon includes a short prayer of confession, an intercessory prayer for those who struggle, and a commissioning prayer to walk in new faith. (Examples provided in the Practical Appendix.)

## Practical Appendix: Steps, Prayers, Memory Verses

- Ten practical steps (confess, pray for faith, memorize promises, faith journal, obedience in small things, fasting and prayer, faith partner, preach gospel to self, address root causes, keep serving).

- Daily prayer templates and a 7-day devotional.
- Memory verse list for congregational memorization (Hebrews 3:12–19; Mark 9:23; Matthew 17:20; Romans 4:18–21; James 1:6–8; Revelation 2–3, etc.)

## Linguistic Appendix: Hebrew and Greek meanings

### Hebrew

- Root: א-מ-נ ('-m-n; 'aman) — faithfulness, firmness, reliability.
- Noun: אֱמוּנָה (emunah) — faith, faithfulness, steadfast trust.
- Verb: אָמַן (he'emin) / אָמַן ('aman) — “to believe, be faithful.”
- Unbelief in Hebrew texts is often expressed by negation (e.g., לֹא אָמְנוּ — “they did not believe”).

### Greek

- πίστις (pistis) — faith, trust.
- πιστεύω (pisteuō) — to believe.
- ἀπιστία (apistia) — unbelief, faithlessness (a- + pistis = without faith).
- ἄπιστος (apistos) — unbelieving, faithless.

Representative verses: Mark 9:24 (“I believe; help my unbelief”), Hebrews 3:12 (“an evil, unbelieving heart”).

## Appendix: Biblical Characters Who Struggled with

## Unbelief (selective lists with references)

### Old Testament — clear or primary examples

- Israel (the exodus generation): Numbers 13–14; Hebrews 3:16–19
- The ten spies: Numbers 13:25–33; 14
- The grumblers/murmurers: Exodus 16; 17; Numbers 11
- The golden calf offenders (people and Aaron): Exodus 32
- Israel at Meribah/Massah (testing God): Exodus 17:1–7; Numbers 20:2–13
- Moses (rebuked for insufficient trust): Numbers 20:12
- Gideon (asked for signs; Judges 6–7)
- Many of Israel's kings and the nation during apostasy periods (examples throughout 1–2 Kings)
- Jonah (resisted God's will and mercy; Jonah 1–4 — a refusal rooted in resentment rather than pure intellectual doubt)
- Elijah (after Carmel fled in fear and despair; 1 Kings 19)
- Abraham & Sarah (moments of hesitancy and fear: Genesis 12; 17–21; Genesis 18:12 showing Sarah's disbelief-laughter)

Additional OT notes: many instances of “they did not believe” are collective and expressed in narrative

rather than as single named individuals.

## New Testament — clear examples

- The disciples (collectively) — rebuked for “little faith”: Mark 4:35–41; Matthew 8:23–27
  - Peter — walking on water and sinking (Matthew 14:28–31); denial (Matthew 26:69–75)
  - Thomas — John 20:24–29 (doubted the resurrection until he saw)
  - The father of the demon-possessed boy — Mark 9:14–29 (the famous line: “I believe; help my unbelief”)
  - Many in Israel who rejected Jesus despite signs — John 12:37; John 3:18–20
  - Early witnesses who initially disbelieved resurrection reports — Luke 24:11
  - Paul’s addresses to Jewish unbelief (collective): Romans 9–11; Acts 13:46; Acts 28:24–25
  - Individuals who demanded signs and hardened their hearts (various Gospel references)
- Additional NT notes: Scripture records both honest struggles (Thomas, the father) and willful rejection (many who refused Jesus’ witness).

## Suggested sermon series schedule and leader’s notes

- Eight-week preaching plan: one sermon per week, with mid-week small groups covering questions and

practical assignments.

- Leader's packet: discussion questions, one-week devotional to accompany each sermon, suggested songs/worship focus, recommended testimonies to share.
- Recommended pastoral cautions: always evaluate mental health/trauma; don't substitute spiritual counsel for professional therapy when needed.

### Suggested further reading

- Hebrews (Bible study)
- Andrew Murray — Absolute Surrender
- C.S. Lewis — Mere Christianity (on the nature of faith)
- Charles Spurgeon — selected sermons on faith and assurance
- Practical pastoral books on counseling and trauma (for ministering to deep-rooted unbelief)

### Closing benediction (for series closing)

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13). Amen.”