

WORDS FROM BIGTOP

Weekly Devotional

July 27, 2026

Forsaking All, I Trust Him

A devotional on Faith, Hope & Love

*“And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” —
1 Corinthians 13:13*

I was at a Sunday morning worship service with a dear friend this week, and I watched the Holy Spirit move in her in a way she did not expect. She grew up on the other side of the world, raised in a Buddhist home, and later came to America and began learning Catholicism. That morning, in a charismatic Pentecostal service, something entirely new was stirring in her heart.

She is one of the most generous people I know. She pours herself out for everyone around her — her sons, her clients at the nail salon, her friends who need a hard truth spoken in love. She has a no-nonsense way of cutting straight to the heart of things. But underneath all that giving, she carries a quiet dread — a fear that the other shoe is always about to drop, whether it's the finances, the relationships, or the next thing she can't control. She is a woman consumed by the fear of being out of control, even as she holds everyone else's world together.

That morning, the pastor gave an altar call — a call to repent, to submit to God, to receive the gift of grace that Jesus purchased when He carried our sins to the cross. But between the language and the pace of it, she couldn't catch every word. Still, her heart was heavy with the weight of the Spirit even though her mind hadn't fully caught up to the moment.

How many of us have been right there? Good people, doing good work, raising good kids — but never quite figuring out how to lay our own cross down and pick up His yoke instead. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. But what about the people who don't know Him yet? It's hard to imagine anyone in the 21st century going without the joy He brings — and yet here she was, so close, still reaching for words she didn't fully have.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will

find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” — Matthew 11:28–30

And somewhere in all of this we have to be honest with ourselves: it is not enough to be a good person. Good works never bought anyone a seat at the table, and they were never meant to. We are not called to be good people. We are called to be God's people — surrendered enough to actually live out the path He has laid for our lives instead of the one we keep building for ourselves.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.” — Ephesians 2:8–9

Hope has been the word of my life these last few months. I've walked away from a job and a ministry, still waiting on God to show me what's next. It's been a dark stretch. But hope has carried me — the same light of Christ that was placed in me as a boy has been rekindled and has refueled a weary soul more than once.

There's a passage in Revelation where Jesus commends the church at Ephesus for its hard work, its patience, its refusal to tolerate what was false — and then says one thing against them: you have forsaken the love you had at first. That's exactly where I found myself when I walked away from that job and that ministry. I hadn't stopped serving. I hadn't stopped showing up. But somewhere along the way, doing the work of God had quietly taken the place of knowing the God I was doing it for. I think now that the dark stretch was never really about the job at all — it was God stripping away everything I'd built so I'd come looking for Him again instead of for what I could accomplish for Him. And when I finally stopped running the machine long enough to just sit with Jesus the way I did as a boy, I found the same love that was there before any title, any platform, any ministry ever existed. That's the love I keep coming back to — not a better version of me for God, just me and God, the way it started.

“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.” — Revelation 2:4–5

I think back to when my wife and I had just had an infant of our own and adopted the three amigos — two girls and a boy — and a little girl from California — five kids under ten in our house — right as the economy collapsed around us. We lost our home, we lost our cars, and we ended up sleeping on air mattresses in the church we were building. No showers, barely any water, and I was substitute teaching to keep a little income coming in. We cooked on a hot plate, mostly ramen noodles. It felt like camping that never ended. But God met us there. We would drive out to Crousey Springs to swim every few days, and people would just show up — from San Antonio, Dallas, Oklahoma City —

bringing food, bringing worship, treating our little gathering like an old-fashioned tent revival. We started that summer with maybe five or ten people. By fall, we were over a hundred. Someone donated the money to move a single-wide onto the church property, and it became our home and our children's church on Sundays. The congregation built a wooden play scape so the thirty-plus kids running around had somewhere to burn off their energy. Blessing after blessing, story after story of God building something we never could have planned. I've heard it said, "You want to make God laugh? Make a plan." I believe it.

So here, with that same friend standing next to me in that service, feeling the Holy Spirit move in a mighty way — but no one had ever told her she didn't have to carry the weight of the world by herself. God has called us to lay down our yoke and pick up His, because His burden is light.

Later that evening, over dinner, I asked her the hard questions. Did she really understand what the pastor was asking of her in that call to salvation? Did she understand what it means to let God be God — to stop trying to manage every outcome out of fear? It's often said the Bible tells us, in one form or another, not to fear 365 times — once for every day of the year. Yet the world manufactures fear at every turn, in every headline, unless you have Jesus to lean on and Jesus in your heart.

| *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." — 2 Timothy 1:7*

FAITH — Forsaking All, I Trust Him

That's the call of salvation. Letting go of the reins and believing God actually has a plan, even when we can't see it from where we're standing.

| *"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." — Hebrews 11:1*

HOPE — Helping Other People Everyday

My friend already understands hope in one sense — she lives it out every day by giving to the people around her. But it's worth asking ourselves the same question I'd ask her: do we help others so we can feel some sense of our own worth, or do we help others because we want them to know the real joy that only Christ brings? Hope isn't something we manufacture by staying busy for other people. Hope is what's left standing when everything else has been stripped away, and it holds because it isn't built on us.

| *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” — Romans 15:13*

LOVE — Living Our Victory Externally

Letting the world see the love of Christ in what we think, what we do, and what we want — not just what we say on a Sunday morning.

| *“Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” — 1 John 3:18*

The story didn't end at that dinner table, either. I bought her a Vietnamese-English Bible, and now we're going through it together — she's teaching me a little Vietnamese, and I get to walk her through the love of Christ, page by page, in the language her heart was raised in. Watching someone meet Jesus for the first time while I stumble through words that aren't mine might be the clearest picture of Living Our Victory Externally I've seen in a long time.

Faith, hope, and love — Paul told the Corinthians these three remain, and the greatest is love. My friend is still on her journey, and honestly, so am I. But I walked away from that dinner grateful for a God who meets us in the middle of a language barrier, in the middle of a flooded-out summer with five kids and no water, in the middle of every place we thought we were carrying the weight alone. He's been asking for the reins all along.

Forsaking all, I trust Him. Will you?