



# From Fear to Faith

by Dr. Kregg Hood

**LEADERS GUIDE**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE(S)
Table of Contents .....	1
It's Time for Faith to Rise! (A Message from Kregg Hood) .....	2
Sermon Outlines .....	3-16
Sermon Principles.....	3
Sermon Outline 1: "God Is Always On Your Side" .....	4-7
Sermon Outline 2: "The Goodness of God" .....	8-10
Sermon Outline 3: "Kingdom Living and the 100 Times Harvest" .....	11-13
Sermon Outline 4: "Lord, Set Me Free!" .....	14-16
Additional Preaching Resources .....	17
Contact Info .....	18

## IT'S TIME FOR FAITH TO RISE!

**W**e hear lots of bad news these days, don't we? Turn on the TV or radio and it won't be long before a news reporter or talk show host points out the latest round of negative economic news. Spreading fear is keeping the media in business. Only a foolish or hard-hearted person would doubt that our nation is facing difficult times. But, there is another voice that needs to be heard. It is the voice of God. And you, as a faithful minister of the gospel, have the opportunity to speak for the Lord against fear.

Our leadership team at AG Financial Solutions knows that you are on the front line of ministering hope to people. We also know how easy it is, even for those in ministry, to be worn down by negative news. That's why we have developed this sermon resource.

Here's the simple faith strategy we're encouraging you to follow:

- Pray**            Ask the Lord to give you new and better ways to preach and model trusting God. While the essential faith themes are not new, the approaches we use must be refreshed and updated often, especially in difficult circumstances. I'm often reminded of the old phrase, "Beware of the barrenness of a busy life." Listening to a constant barrage of negative news will definitely leave you feeling barren. Focus on hearing the still, small voice of God.
- Prepare**        Many churches today are familiar with series preaching and I've always liked the month-long format. However, you may only feel you need a week or two of emphasis on this topic so, whatever your preference, use these outlines as you see fit. In fact, if you develop different outlines, please send us a copy so we can share the best examples and learn from each other.
- Preach**         Stay positive, practical, and personal. Don't be afraid to preach on how God has led you and others you know through difficult times. It is always in the darkness that light shines the brightest.

May the Lord use you to lead your people to financial freedom as you teach God's promises, especially during this unusual time.

Your fellow preacher and Freedom Fighter,

KREGG R. HOOD, Ed.D.  
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## SERMON PRINCIPLES

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- **Positive, Motivational Tone**—A positive tone in your messages sets the stage for victory. It should convey that you understand there will be challenges, but that you know God is the answer. Have every sermon provide practical ways for people to take a step up in how they trust God.
- **God-Directed**—Study and pray over each sermon outline. Then, determine what you think God wants you to present to your listeners that will show His faithfulness in the midst of contemporary situations.
- **Share Your Struggles and Your Victories**—Your personal experience is powerful and real. People will follow you as they sense that you understand their fears. At the same time, they need to see that you are a fellow person of faith as well as their leader able to overcome challenges the enemy might throw their way. Personally, I always try to preach first to myself and then to my listeners.
- **Personalization & Illustration**—Obviously, these outlines are just detailed suggestions. No preacher is exactly like any other, so adjust the wording to fit your personal communication style. Add up-to-date statistics and situations that fit your region of the country. Be as fresh and timely as possible. Weave in sermon illustrations and personal stories from your congregation or ministry experiences whenever possible. There are a number of sermon illustrations in the outlines, but always stay alert for ones that fit you or your listeners even better.
- **Length**—Each lesson takes about thirty minutes to preach. Your time could vary due to many factors, such as your speaking rate, the amount of material you use from each outline, and new material you develop.

## SERMON OUTLINE 1: “GOD IS ALWAYS ON YOUR SIDE”

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Jeremiah 29:11-13 is a life verse for many people. I have a plaque with this verse hanging in my office and I never get tired of reading or hearing its message of hope. Our listeners have a hunger to believe that God, in His goodness, will bring them through any challenges that they may face. That’s what makes this passage so encouraging. In the face of troubling news, Jeremiah brings a word from God that still blesses people today.

In the intro I like to talk about how the way we see God affects how much we trust Him during difficulties. When you’re going through tough times, as many in our nation and even in our church are, it’s easy to slip into a fear mode and forget that God is still with us, that problems are never new to Him, and that He will lead us through. If you see God as being more like us and limited by the situations we face, you will give in to fear very easily. So, how do you see God? For example, some see God as:

1. The old grandpa in heaven rocking and smiling, but never doing anything.
2. A stern judge waiting to catch and condemn.
3. Perfect and all-powerful, yet distant and stingy with His power.
4. Some are unsure. *Illustration: (you may even want to use the video clip): Quote from the movie Rudy. The priest tells Rudy that after all his years of studying theology he had determined two key truths: “1) there is a God and 2) I’m not Him.”*
  - a) Obviously, God wants us to understand that He and only He is in charge. But, He is also on our side and wants to be with us and help us, no matter what the circumstances.
  - b) Whenever hardships arise – financial, health, personal, etc.—never forget that God is always on our side. No matter how we see God, here’s what will help us discover this reality:
    - I. What God wants you to know is how He sees you. God always takes the first step.
      - A. Jeremiah 29:11-13

B. *I show and talk about the plaque on my office wall that has this verse and how meaningful it has been to me through several major transitions in my life. It has become a life verse.*

II. What God sees in you:

A. God sees a person of great worth.

1. “I Know”

a) Imagine this—an all-powerful being knows me and you and everything about us. *Illustration: Imagine how it would feel if the President of the United States knew you personally. That would probably make you feel impressive.*

b) Or, what if some major government or sports figure, perhaps even the CEO of the company knew you? That would make you feel like you are important.

c) When someone important knows you that makes you important.

d) Well, no one is more important than God and He knows you and cares about you. See Matthew 10:30.

2. “...plans for you”

a) An all-powerful being is making plans with you in mind.

b) Psalm 139:13-18.

c) *Illustration: A story is told of a gem dealer who was at the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show and noticed a blue-violet stone the size and shape of a potato. He looked it over as calmly as possible, and offered the vendor \$10 for the stone, rather than the \$15 asking price. The seller did not realize the true value of the stone, but it would later be certified as a 1,905-carat natural star sapphire. That was about 800 carats larger than the largest stone of its kind, later valued at several thousand dollars. It took someone who could spot the potential value of the stone to appreciate its true worth. God, who knows the true value of each and every one of His children, never sees us as a \$10 rock. To Him, we are priceless.*

- A. God sees someone He wants to help.
1. Plan description:
    - a) Prosper: He wants to bless you
    - b) Not to harm: God will never harm you
    - c) Hope: Faith
    - d) Future: Something to look forward to
  2. *Here I tell the story of my sickness in 2000 and what the doctors thought was cancer at first and wound up being sarcoidosis (which killed NFL Hall of Famer, Reggie White). I talk about how Karen and I knew God would be with us no matter what, and how many people prayed me through to health.*
  3. No matter what you may be going through now or in the future, always remember that the tests build your faith and confidence in God. Never see the world's systems as your source of strength. They can and do vanish, but God never stops looking out for us.
- B. God sees someone He wants to listen to.
1. "I will listen"
    - a) Not just hear, but actually pay attention to and listen.
    - b) *I tell the story of when my son was five and we were talking on and on at church. He climbed up on the pew, reached up and grabbed my face and said, "Listen to me, Daddy." I laughed and stopped to really pay attention. Aren't you glad God always listens to us?*
  2. God will listen intently, too.
    - a) The word, in Hebrew, carries the deeper meaning of considering, processing, or even working on something. Obviously, that can take time.
    - b) *Here I tell a story of a friend who was trying to adopt a baby and how God clearly answered his prayer exactly nine months before the baby was born.*

## II. How do we turn theory into reality?

- A. No one's a pro. We're all beginners at waiting on the Lord, but there are some keys:



- B. Seek Him with all your heart (Hebrews 11:6).
1. He will reward the person who “earnestly seeks Him.”
  2. Start by staking your own personal claim to all the promises of God.
  3. *Talk about examples of seeking God and how it has opened the door to blessings and breakthroughs.*
- C. Once you start, keep up the search.
1. There’s always more to discover about how God helps us to overcome our fears and to become men and women of faith.
  2. How? It’s a blend of learning and discovery, both on your own and with help from believers.
    - a) Bible, prayer, worship, fellowship
      - (i) *Illustration: I bring out a tall, four-legged chair, sit in it and talk about how shortening any one of the legs makes the stool wobbly. Then I mention that many Christians are struggling with fear and doubt because they have only a little emphasis on Bible reading, prayer, worship, and fellowship in their lives and how that’s not enough. Then I pull out a little four-legged footstool to make the point that if you don’t make these four activities a strong emphasis, your spiritual life will actually be pretty small.*
    - b) Sometimes you have a breakthrough or miracle and sometimes you simply see steady growth with God giving you greater strength to endure.
- D. Keep your walk with God the top priority.
1. Remember the phrase, “All your heart.” This is not a passive process.
  2. *Read Steven Covey’s story in “First Things First” about putting the big rocks in first.*



## SERMON OUTLINE 2: “THE GOODNESS OF GOD”

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Use the intro to talk about the difference between reading a menu and thinking about a great meal. You can even use a video clip that shows someone cooking a really great meal.

This message is designed to help people focus on God’s intentions and power. Learning and truly believing these truths helps in two ways. First, when times are tough, we can rest assured that God, in His goodness, will bring us through them—so we keep hanging in there. Second, when times are going well, we must always remember that God is the source of every good thing that happens to us.

How to experience the goodness of God more fully and frequently (Psalm 34:8):

- I. TASTE God’s goodness—it’s truly a vast banquet
  - A. Taste the Lord’s goodness as
    1. Our Protector
      - a) Psalm 34:4-7—also Psalm 112:7, 1 Corinthians 10:13
    2. Our Provider
      - a) Psalm 34:9-10—also 2 Peter 1:3
    3. Our prayer partner
      - a) Psalm 34:15—also Romans 8:26, Hebrews 7:25
    4. Healer of our land
      - a) Psalm 34:17—also 2 Chronicles 7:14
    5. Redeemer of our souls
      - a) Psalm 34:22—also Galatians 4:5

*Note: Add examples after these points as you see fit. This will get people thinking about how many ways God can show His goodness. Be specific and practical.*

- B. Don’t just know about God and His goodness, taste.

1. Savor what He does and will do
  - a) *Illustration: Note the difference between taking vitamins and eating something that tastes really good.*
  - b) *Illustration: Show a menu and then a picture of a great meal, then ask which is more appealing – reading the menu or eating the meal.*
  - c) Sometimes we treat church like reading the menu and then never stop for the meal.

II. SEE - “Look for, watch for” - this is a very literal word, so if seeing is believing, what do you see? You can choose to see things that make you afraid or you can choose to see God.

*For an excellent message on this point, listen to Andrew Womack’s teaching on December 15, 2008, “In God We Trust” (see link on page 17).*

So, in order to SEE better:

A. Sharpen your focus.

1. *Illustration of glasses and how they are used to sharpen our sight.*
2. We sharpen our focus on God by learning more about His nature.
  - a) His greatness (Psalm 34:1-2)
  - b) His ways (Psalm 34:15-16)
    - (i) Can be tough and tender - but He is always helping us.

B. Magnify your vision.

1. Reading glasses help little things become big. How big is your God?
2. Pray Psalm 34:17-18 with genuine faith. God is a big God. Don’t just go through the motions.
3. *To help drive this point home, I like to use a film clip from the opening of the movie Shenandoah. Jimmy Stewart plays a farmer in Civil War times that called his family to the dinner table and prayed “Lord, we plowed the field, we planted the field, we harvested the crop. We cooked it and put it on the table. It wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for our hard work. But we thank you for it anyway. Amen.”*

## C. Correct your view.

1. Astigmatism is when the cornea of the eye is slightly misshapen, making it hard to see accurately. It takes a special kind of corrective lens to reshape what and how one sees.
2. It's the same with faith in God's goodness. When we hang out with other "tasters" of God's goodness (people who truly appreciate and trust in God), we will be able to reshape our vision. This is the power of good fellowship. If you're with people who are always fearful and raising doubts, they can tear down your faith.
3. *Illustration - this is a good place to talk about the current economic situation and how God's people need to have a better view of the world than the fearfulness that permeates the minds and hearts of unbelievers.*
4. *This is good time to reinforce this truth by telling a story of someone in the congregation who has experienced God's help in a mighty way.*

## III. ENTRUST - You can trust him, no matter what (Psalm 34:19).

- A. In good times, give God all the credit.
- B. In tough times, hang in there until v. 19 is fulfilled.
  1. David (Psalm 23:6)
- C. Remember, expectancy overcomes doubt.

## SERMON OUTLINE 3: “KINGDOM LIVING AND THE 100 TIMES HARVEST”

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One of the most well-known parables is the Parable of the Soils (Matthew 13:1-23). You can teach a creative message from this passage that fits these tight economic times by building everyone’s confidence about the link between sowing (obeying God) and reaping (results from God). Help your listeners believe that God controls the nature and extent of the harvest.

### I. Understand With Your Heart (Matthew 13:19).

- A. This parable is, first and foremost, about how we receive spiritual truth.
  - 1. Note that we understand with our hearts, not just our heads.
  - 2. Key Insight: *The way you hear determines how you will respond, and the way you respond determines how much you will reap in any area of Kingdom living that you are learning about.*
  - 3. Since the parable applies to Kingdom living in general, it will also include the topic of overcoming fear or enduring financial hardship.
- B. The four soils represent the ways our hearts respond to God’s truth.
  - 1. It is a mistake to interpret the four soils as simply four types of people - it’s much more complex.
  - 2. The four types of soil represent four types of heart responses:
    - a) The Path: a hard heart (resisting God’s truth)
    - b) Stony Soil: a superficial heart (shallow commitment)
    - c) Thorny Soil: a divided heart (compromising or fearful)
    - d) Good Soil: a receptive heart (willing and eager)
  - 3. See why it’s not enough to simply understand truth mentally?
- C. I want to have a willing heart, don’t you? (*Add illustration on willing obedience.*)

### II. Receive the Teaching with Joy (Matthew 13:20).

- A. Attitude is important in everything. (*Add illustration on positive attitude*)
- B. The number one attitude to have is that God is a good God!
  - 1. The proof of this fact is all over the Bible. Look at these examples:
    - a) God is rich in provision (Proverbs 3:9-10).
    - b) God is rich in mercy (Ephesians 2:4).

c) God is rich in wisdom (James 3:17).

2. We can receive teaching from God about giving with joy because the Lord is the One who brings the results.

C. We can anticipate God doing great things. *(Add illustration on God's provision.)*

### III. Persevere Through the Tough Times (Matthew 13:21).

A. Get ready - challenges will come. Obeying God does not mean we won't face temptations or troubles.

B. The passage says that troubles and persecution will come "because of the Word" (the teaching).

1. This tells us that the Devil is real.

2. But, don't ever forget that God is with us and He is all-powerful.

– *Add an illustration of God's protection.*

C. We want to stay true to our commitment, because if we don't, this passage says that it's actually a form of falling away.

1. Is this saying that we can lose our salvation if we don't give? Hardly. That would violate other clear passages about God's grace.

2. But it does mean we will fall back and stumble in our trust in God and our application of divine truth.

– *Add an illustration of perseverance, especially in some aspect of finances.*

### IV. Maintain God's Perspective on Money (Matthew 13:22).

A. Always watch out for man's view of money. It is full of problems because man tends to be choked by:

1. "Worries of this life." Finances, paying bills, the future, etc.

2. "Deceitfulness of wealth." The world's economic system is very dangerous because of greed, uncertainty, and materialism.

– *Add stats or an illustration from current economic situations and perseverance, especially in giving.*

B. There are only four things you can do with money: make it, give it, save it, or spend it. The Bible has a lot to say about each one, either specifically.

C. If you don't resist these issues with worldly wealth, two things will happen:

1. You'll be choked spiritually.

2. You'll miss out on God's harvest for you.

– Add an illustration on following God in giving or finances.

V. Prepare for a Great Crop (Matthew 13:23).

A. This is supernatural. God brings 30, 60, and even 100 times the investment.

1. In human strength we are thrilled when an investment produces 1, 2, or 3 times what was invested.

2. *Illustration from marketing: 30, 60, 100 times what was sown = 300%, 600%, and 1000% return on investment.*

B. Note the phrase, “what was sown”. The crop is based on the seed.

C. Hear, understand, and obey. You will see good things happen because this is God’s Word. (*Add another illustration of how following God brings blessing.*)

## SERMON OUTLINE 4: “LORD, SET ME FREE”

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Introduction - Exodus 1-3 shows how, throughout history, God’s people have endured and overcome huge odds because the Lord was with them. There are numerous parallels to the way many feel today when they feel their life savings have evaporated or their jobs are on the line. The same God who cared for Israel is still with us today.

- I. The Children of Israel were in bondage – are you? This story parallels today’s needs; fame of Moses.
  - A. A look at their situation (Exodus 1:1-8).
    1. 70 people moved to Egypt during the famine - they prosper and multiply.
    2. New King - fears them and turns them into slaves (Exodus 1:8).
    3. Exodus is a story of God’s rescue mission.
  - B. Look at our situation (compare their “Bondage Areas” to the ones that parallel today):
    1. Economic - Stock market
    2. Geopolitical - Terrorism, wars, and worries about wars
    3. Moral decay - Compare to situations today
    4. Insecurity - Crime statistics
    5. Doctrinal - Biblical illiteracy now in the church
    6. Other - Sin, worry, doubt, sickness
  - C. You can choose to be in bondage or you can choose to be free.
- II. Why God wants you to be free (Exodus 1:1-22).
  - A. He doesn’t want you to feel like a victim (Exodus 1:9-10).
    1. They were strong and numerous and could have defeated Pharaoh, but they just didn’t believe it.
    2. How strong are you? And how strong is God?
    3. *Illustration: There are so many ways that we can feel like victims – economic, relationships, etc. Many Christians are even enduring persecution right now, but God always helps us to overcome. Comment on this or tell a story that illustrates how God is not limited by what happens to any of us.*
  - B. He doesn’t want you to despair (Exodus 1:11-22).



1. In the face of opposition and oppression, God was still with them.
    - a) They faced slavery, ruthless treatment, and murder, yet their numbers grew and their spiritual convictions were deepened (the verse says they feared God). Plus, they grew in emotional courage by crying out to God to help them against Pharaoh (even for 400 years!).
  2. *Add illustration.*
- C. He wants you to see things through His eyes (Exodus 1:17).
1. Relationship with God gives you His eyes.
    - a) Genesis 15:13 → Romans 4:17
  2. He is training us to trust Him. What are you looking for?
- III. Freedom Slogans for the People of God:
- A. Relax - “Be still and know that I am God.”
1. This is the start of the story, not the end. It’s the same today, too.
  2. Psalm 46:10-11 (let go); Psalm 37:7 (rest, KJV)
  3. What troubles you? Does God have hold of it? Always give it to Him.
- B. Believe first to see later (this is always the way the Lord works).
1. The world says “seeing is believing”. (Mark 15:32)
  2. God says “believing is seeing.”
    - a) 2 Chronicles 20:17, John 11:40, Matthew 9:28
  3. What are you waiting for? Envision God making it happen.
    - a) *Illustration: We all have several like this, but I especially like one about my friend and fellow church leader who saw the Lord heal him and add several more years to his life.*
- C. Anticipate. Remember the old phrase, “God is seldom early, but never late” (Exodus 3:7-8).
1. *Illustration: George Mueller, an 18<sup>th</sup> century British minister and an amazing man of faith, supported his orphanage entirely through prayer. He never asked anyone for a contribution but simply prayed to God about his circumstances and the needs of the orphans he cared for. Someone once observed, “It looks like a hand-to-mouth proposition.” Mueller responded, “Yes, it is. But it is God’s hand and my mouth.”*

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2. *Tell a “mountain-moving faith story”. Ask people to think about what they need to ask God to do and for them to trust Him to do it – or something even better.*

## ADDITIONAL PREACHING RESOURCES

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Many preachers around the country are now preparing and presenting lots of excellent new sermons on similar themes. We've run across a few that are really helpful and have online links to allow you to listen and get more ideas for your own ministry.

Also, since this Leader's Guide is in an electronic format, it is easy to update. If you have a message you would like to share or know of a sermon that you feel would be helpful, please send us the information so we can access it. We'll take the best ideas and add them to this document.

Here's a link to John Lindell's recent message, "Take Heart." John is the lead pastor at James River Assembly in Ozark, Missouri.

<http://jamesriver.org/messages-media-podcast/messages/182/>

For another excellent message on moving from fear to faith, listen to Andrew Womack's recent teaching, "In God We Trust" (December 15, 2008). Go to [http://www.awmi.net/tv/this\\_week](http://www.awmi.net/tv/this_week), and click on the link for this message title and date.

Dr. Gregg Hood's series of books can be used church-wide to train on biblical stewardship and help church members find financial freedom.

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- Take God At His Word (English and Spanish) [www.takegodathisword.com](http://www.takegodathisword.com)
- From Debt to Life
- Escape the Debt Trap
- Rich Towards God

## CONTACT INFO

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Please send your ideas, outlines, sermon links, and other suggestions to:

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