

A 40-DAY EXPERIENCE
OF DARING FAITH

SUN STAND STILL

DEVOTIONAL

STEVEN FURTICK

NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

A 40-DAY EXPERIENCE
TO ACTIVATE YOUR FAITH

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NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR
with Eric Stanford



MULTNOMAH
BOOKS

SUN STAND STILL DEVOTIONAL

PUBLISHED BY MULTNOMAH BOOKS

12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200

Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921

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Hardcover ISBN 978-1-60142-523-2

eBook ISBN 978-1-60142-524-9

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Cover design by Ryan Hollingsworth

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Published in the United States by WaterBrook Multnomah, an imprint of the Crown Publishing Group, a division of Random House LLC, New York, a Penguin Random House Company.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Furtick, Steven.

Sun stand still devotional : a forty-day experience to activate your faith / Steven Furtick.

pages cm

ISBN 978-1-60142-523-2 (hardback)— ISBN 978-1-60142-524-9 (electronic) 1. Prayer—Christianity—Meditations. 2. Christian life—Prayers and devotions. 3. Faith—Prayers and devotions. 4. Bible. Joshua, X, 12-13—Devotional literature.

I. Title.

BV220.F8723 2013

242—dc23

2013029576

v3.1

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The Cure for the Ache of the Ordinary

Thank you for picking up this copy of the *Sun Stand Still Devotional*. Whoever you are and whatever you're going through, I pray God will use it to elevate your life to a new level.

This book provides forty daily readings paired with powerful Bible passages and targeted prayer suggestions for use in your quiet time with God. The daily readings are based on my book *Sun Stand Still* and on other things I've written or preached on the topic of audacious faith. They are designed to help you become someone who dares to believe God for the impossible.

In *Sun Stand Still* I retell the biblical story of Joshua, who—in the middle of a battle—threw out one of the most amazing prayers recorded in the Bible. With sunset approaching and Israel's enemies on the run, he actually asked God to stop the sun and moon, to extend the day, so Israel could complete its victory. Most people would never even think of praying a prayer like that. Yet Joshua not only thought it; he prayed it. And even more amazing—God did it.

“The sun stopped in the middle of the sky,” we're told, “and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man” (Joshua 10:13–14).

That's audacious faith.

That's the impossible made actual.

And what I suggest in the book is, why can't it happen again? Why can't we have faith like Joshua's? And why can't the very same God who made the sun stand still in the sky for Joshua do equally incredible things for us?

I've seen God answer Sun Stand Still prayers many times in my own life. He's still doing it. And more than that, over and over again people have come up to me to tell me about the amazing things God is doing in their lives in response to their bold prayers. I never get tired of hearing these stories.

Of course, the reality is that most of us don't go from ordinary faith to audacious faith overnight. Audacious faith normally has to be formed within us over time.

And that's where the *Sun Stand Still Devotional* comes in.

If you're feeling what I call “the ache of the ordinary”—discouraged because your life and faith in Jesus seems like nothing much—then let this book of short readings become a tool God can use to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary in your life. In the *Sun Stand Still Devotional*, you will learn more about our miracle-working God through His Word, submit yourself daily to Him in prayer for the changes He wants to make, and develop an audacious faith of your own.

There's a move of God under way, and all of Jesus's followers are supposed to be a part of it. His work in our world and in our lives is always far beyond what we can do on our own. But that's only half the truth. The other half is this: with God's power unleashed in your life and mine through faith, the impossible *will* become possible.

The Prayer That Stopped the Sun

Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel:

*“O sun, stand still over Gibeon,
O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.”*

*So the sun stood still,
and the moon stopped,
till the nation avenged itself on its enemies.*

—JOSHUA 10:12–13

Right here on Day 1, I'm going to throw out a challenge to you: If you're not daring to believe God for the impossible, you're sleeping through some of the best parts of your Christian life. And further still, if the size of your vision for your life isn't intimidating to you, there's a good chance it's insulting to God. You should be living by audacious faith every day. Audacity is not just for "elite Christians." It's intended for every believer. So today we're beginning a spiritual journey toward trusting God for what seems impossible. I'm thrilled to think about what it's going to do for our lives and our world.

A story from the life of Joshua serves as our template for audacious faith.

The Israelites unleash a surprise attack on the Amorites, and right from the beginning the battle goes well. But as the sun sinks toward the horizon, General Joshua faces a decision. The victory isn't complete, and once it gets dark, the rest of the Amorites will slip away. Joshua sizes up the situation and delivers one of the most gloriously unorthodox prayers in the Bible. He has the audacity to ask God to make the sun stop in the sky. To freeze time on behalf of His people.

And God gives Joshua exactly what he asked for.

With everything in me, I believe God still desires to make the sun stand still over the life of every believer. Obviously, not in the unique way He did for Joshua, but in ways that are equally spectacular (although not always quite as dramatic), God is perfectly willing to perform the impossible in our everyday lives. If we have the audacity to ask.



RT God is ready to act if we will be bold enough to ask, not just for a good day or a better life, but for the impossible. #sunstandstill

I tried this one time.

My wife and I moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, with seven other families. We set a goal of reaching over one thousand people in our first year of ministry. Since the average church size in America is fewer than ninety, I guess we were overshooting a bit. But we wanted to see God accomplish something so exponentially amazing that it would leave no doubt who deserved the credit.

So we shamelessly asked God to exceed our wildest dreams.


The story of our church is still being written. But here's what I can tell you now. After seven years of ministry, our church has grown to more than twelve thousand people in regular attendance. Since our opening day, thousands of people have publicly professed faith in Christ.

Sometimes when we consider the rate at which God has multiplied this ministry, we feel like we're living in a warp-speed dream world. But the story is real. We are living in the middle of a move of God.

Is there something that is seemingly impossible that you'd like to see God do through you? Maybe God has already been working in your spirit, planting a desire, sparking ideas about

the much bigger things He wants to accomplish.

There's nothing our world needs more desperately today—in individuals, families, businesses, churches, and communities—than God's saving, supernatural acts. And God is ready to act if we will be bold enough to ask, not just for a good day or a better life, but for the impossible and then will step forward to act in audacious faith.

 **PRAYER FOCUS:** Over the next forty days, pray for God to build audacious faith within you and to show you where He wants you to apply it.

Your Page 23 Vision

I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.

—ACTS 26:16

Saul of Tarsus is going along on his religious way when one day Jesus decides, *Enough of this ordinary religious order for this guy. I'm going to demonstrate My grace to him in an extraordinary way.* I can almost hear Jesus chuckling to Himself as He prepares His bolt of lightning for the unsuspecting traveler.

Saul—nowadays better known as Paul—was never the same after Jesus waylaid him on the road to Damascus. The world has never been the same either. Because Jesus used Paul as a gospel luminary to take the message of faith in Christ to the peoples of the earth. “I am sending you to [the Gentiles],” Jesus told him, “to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light” (Acts 26:17–18).

God has a way of opening our eyes with a near-blinding epiphany when He's about to do something new through us.

A few months after my commitment to Christ at age sixteen, someone slipped me a book called *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*. Written by a pastor in Brooklyn named Jim Cymbala, it read like a highlight reel of the miracles God had performed in Cymbala's church. I was mesmerized.



RT Accomplishing the impossible starts with seeing the invisible. #sunstandstill

As I sat at my parents' kitchen table with the open book, I stumbled across a line that shifted the trajectory of my life. It was on page 23: “I despaired at the thought that my life might slip by without seeing God show himself mightily on our behalf.”

Somehow I knew: *One day I'm going to start a church in a big city to reach people far from God.*

The words in the Cymbala book set off a nuclear reaction in my soul. In retrospect I can identify it as an epiphany. At the time, though, it was just a strong impulse and a naive enthusiasm. I couldn't know what it would lead to. In fact, everything would change.

If it hasn't already happened to you, I believe *you* will have a Page 23 vision. A Damascus road moment. My prayer for you is that your epiphany happens very soon. It will start with a seed of inspiration that takes root in your imagination. Over time it will produce a harvest of obedience for the glory of God. And the whole process will take place deep in the soil of your faith.

To be clear, I'm not suggesting that the only visions God gives are about starting a church or doing the kinds of things we typically associate with ministry. In fact, in most cases there is no lightning bolt and no connection to a religious profession.

But the bottom line is this: if you're going to ask God to do something impossible in your life, you have to have some clarity about what you're asking for. You have to know you're not just spinning a fantasy or going on a delusional ego trip.

Meditate on this thought as you go through the day: *Accomplishing the impossible starts with seeing the invisible.*



PRAYER FOCUS: If you haven't already received a Page 23 vision, ask God to make you ready for it and receptive to it, sensitive to His word for you.

Ignite the Ordinary

God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

And Moses said, “Here I am.”

“Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

—EXODUS 3:4–5

When you strip the biblical miracles of their spectacular special effects, a common plot point emerges: extraordinary moves of God begin with ordinary acts of obedience.

Consider Moses's first encounter with God.

Moses is tending the family sheep out in the nondescript countryside.

He happens to notice a bush that's caught fire.

He walks over to take a look ...


Up to this point, it's not exactly a riveting scene, is it?

In reality, the illustrious burning-bush encounter that seemed so captivating in Sunday school is ... really ... quite ... ordinary. Moses is performing menial manual labor, working for his father-in-law. It's dusty. The sheep stink. Does it get any more mundane?

Almost all encounters with God begin that way. You may be living under the illusion that when God ignites great things in your life, He'll announce it with a big bang. He might. It's more likely that He won't. So stop waiting around for the big bang. Pay attention to the subtle clues and the still, small voice. Maybe you'll hear it this very day.


What we call a miracle is really just the right combination of your ordinary ingredients and God's extraordinary expertise. When God's super collides with your natural, sparks will fly.

God may call you to serve as an unknown youth pastor of fifteen kids in a moldy basement for a youth room and with an Atari for entertainment. Ordinary. But He may also be providing you an opportunity to pour your life into one of those teenagers who will go on to preach the gospel in a thousand places you'll never go. Extraordinary.

 RT When God's super collides with your natural, sparks will fly. #sunstandstill

God may lead you to stay at home with your young children, forfeiting a second income. Ordinary. But along with diapers, dishes, and naps, you receive the gift of time—to model discipline, instill values, and speak life into your kids. They could grow up to be Joshuas of their own generation. Extraordinary.

If God is calling you to make a big difference today, He is likely to start in a small way—a bush that only you will notice. Will you remove your shoes, draw close, and receive your assignment? Will you give the Lord permission to ignite your ordinary? If you will, before long your faith will start carrying you to a higher level than you ever thought you could reach.

 **PRAYER FOCUS:** Ask God where your burning bush is. Tell Him you're ready to take off your sandals for a holy encounter with Him.

What Is Your Vision Worth to You?

I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”

—NEHEMIAH 2:2-3

This is not your normal vacation request to an employer. If Artaxerxes is displeased by what Nehemiah asks him for, he has the power to end Nehemiah's life. Gulp.

And even if Nehemiah gets what he wants—permission to go to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls—this will mean hardship. He will have to leave his comfortable job with the Persian government, travel across a desert, and undertake an immense project.

But Nehemiah has a vision for what God wants him to do. And this vision is worth everything to him.

When my wife and I and the other seven families on our team started Elevation Church, we all knew the costs would be relatively high. We sold our houses, quit our jobs, and moved to a different location. We had no salaries. No benefits. Just a burning conviction that there had to be more to life than 401(k)s, additional square footage, soccer leagues, and church activities usual.

We had a vision. We knew it was from God. And it was worth everything we had to give up to watch it become a reality.

What is your vision for your life worth to you?

Here's how to know the answer to that question: What would you give up for your vision? Your time? Your pay grade? Your comfortable lifestyle? Your current career to start a new one? Your current home to move to a new one in a new city? Your relationships that are holding you back or bringing you down?



RT If your vision for your life isn't worth giving yourself up for, it's not worth giving yourself to. #sunstandstill

Even your life?

If you wouldn't give up such things for it, the problem probably isn't that you're just not passionate enough about your vision. Now, it could be that—maybe you've somehow been lulled into apathy and complacency about a vision that's truly worth everything—but probably not.

The problem more likely is that your vision isn't worth being passionate about. You've got the wrong vision. Or at least a vision that's too small.

Think about this today: if your vision for your life isn't worth giving yourself up for, it's not worth giving yourself to. Stop spinning your wheels over something that can't stir passion within you. Go back to the drawing board. Pray. Seek. Dream. And acquire a vision from God worthy of your life.



PRAYER FOCUS: Ask God to give you a vision for your life that's big enough to be passionate about. And the courage to take the risks needed to turn it into a reality.

Seize the Vision

No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

—JOSHUA 1:5

Most nights I slip into my boys' rooms after they're asleep, just barely place my right hand on their heads, and whisper: "God, raise up my sons to be the greatest men of God of the generation." I tell them that I'm praying this for their lives when they're awake too. Of course they don't understand many of the implications of this. But one day they will. I'm just trying to stock their hearts with raw material that God can use to build a vision within my boys when they're older.

The point I'm trying to make has very little to do with me and my boys. It has everything to do with you and your vision: If you want to see God do something impossible in your life, you have to open your heart and mind to God's vision for your life. You have to seize it.

Joshua has been a faithful second in command for many years. But talk about having a tough act to follow. For the Hebrews, Moses was a legend in his own time—the president, chief justice, and chairman of the Joint Chiefs all rolled up in one. But now he is dead, and Joshua is next in line.

Joshua's term of office is starting at a perilous moment in the nation's history. The people are about to try to take Canaan from several people groups who aren't exactly eager to vacate the premises and hand it over.



RT Stop trying to have all the answers before launching out in faith. #sunstandstill

The vision isn't in question: occupy the Promised Land. But before that can happen, Joshua has to seize the vision. And judging by the number of times "Be strong and courageous" shows up in Joshua 1, apparently God knows this leader is scared of failing.

God steps in with encouragement. Just as God was with Moses, so He will be with Joshua. God promises, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Interesting how He says the same thing to us [Hebrews 13:5, NKJV].)

Joshua seizes the vision. We know this because practically within moments he is issuing orders to get the campaign under way (Joshua 1:10–15).

If you've received a vision from God, you need to seize it too. Don't waver or put it off. Stop trying to have all the answers before launching out in faith.

All God needs is all you've got. Give it to Him—today.



PRAYER FOCUS: Deal with God in prayer about what He's asking you to do today and about the things that are holding you back from it. Be bold. Commit to respond.

Sanctified Naiveté

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.

—1 CORINTHIANS 1:26


After the initial detonation of my Page 23 vision, God kept confirming my passion to move to a major metropolitan area to start a church. But here's the thing: I knew nothing about big cities. My hometown had a population of six thousand people. We thought a trip to Wal-Mart was an event to get all dressed up for. I knew even less about starting a church. And I felt way too young to take on such a serious task. But somehow I sensed none of this would ultimately matter. When God speaks, He does not stutter.

I think I know why God gave me a bold vision for my life at such a young age. He had to get to me before I was old enough to know any better. See, audacious faith starts with sanctified naiveté. And there's an unearned optimism that comes as standard equipment when you're young.

You might have your own sanctified naiveté. You could be in any season of life. You might be getting older and feeling as if you're running out of time. You might be young, as I was. You might be inexperienced. You might be poorly educated. You might be short on friends and funds, credentials and qualifications. From an objective standpoint, you might not look anything like heaven's pick for planting the impossible on the shores of the mundane.

If so, you're in great company.

The faith Jesus founded gained its popularity among nobodies. When we think about the congregations of the New Testament era, we have to think about the likes of everyday shopkeepers, day laborers, and stay-at-home moms. God planned it that way "so that no one may boast before him" (verse 29).

 RT Sometimes it's better if you don't know any better. #sunstandstill


But the undeniable fact is, these people went on to spread the underground revolution of grace in Jesus until it filtered into the whole known world. The greatest movement in the history of humanity sprang from the faith of audacious nobodies.

Maybe being naive and under-resourced isn't so bad after all.

Sometimes godly enthusiasm makes up for a lack of experience. Sometimes Spirit-filled determination compensates for a deficiency of knowledge. Sometimes sheer trust in God's vision trumps every reason why not. The legions of the naive can change reality just by being ready to walk into the visions God gives.

So don't despise your naiveté. If God is calling you to do something for Him today, take the first step.

Sometimes it's better if you don't know any better.

 **PRAYER FOCUS:** Ask God to preserve your childlike faith in Him and to use your inadequacy to display His sufficiency.

Give Me My Rocks

Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

“I cannot go in these,” [David] said to Saul, “because I am not used to them.”

—1 SAMUEL 17:38–39

For days none of Israel's fighting men have been willing to confront the Philistine giant Goliath. Then David, a shepherd boy, volunteers. King Saul instructs the equipment manager to bring out the best armor and heaviest artillery Israel has to offer.

David tries it on, takes a test lap, and turns up his nose. "This is nice," he says, "but it isn't for me. I have to work with what I know. Somebody help me get out of this oversized armor and hand me my sling."

In the end he wears what he always wears and uses the weapons he's familiar with—leather sling and some smooth stones. And the strategy pays off. (Audacity always does.) David kills the giant and saves the day.

In my early days as a pastor, a consultant suggested that the people of Charlotte weren't going to relate very well to my preaching style. I was confrontational and abrasive. They wanted conversational and inviting. If I really wanted to grow a church, he said, "Dial it down." Maybe I should "communicate" my "messages" sitting on a stool instead of running around. Above all else, I should keep it short. If I preached over thirty minutes, they wouldn't come back.

I tried that. It wasn't me.

Then one day I let loose. I didn't bother with a stool. I pretended like the clock in the back of the room wasn't there. I preached with authority and energy. With passion and edge. Loud and fast. And long. Some would say I shucked the corn that day. Whatever I did, it felt good. It felt authentic.



RT God did not create you to fit in. He intends for you to stand out. #sunstandstill

For some reason the people came back in greater numbers the next week.

That's when a liberating realization flashed inside me: *God has been preparing me all my life for this. My anointing flows freely when I tap the vein of my unique abilities and my distinctive passion.*

Mediocrity is mass-produced. Destiny is custom designed.

Cookie-cutter Christianity dials down your distinctions. Audacity amplifies them.

You're never going to amount to half of what God has dreamed of you becoming unless you embrace the unique person God made you to be in the first place. He's made you on purpose for a purpose. You have a unique DNA with unique talents, passions, and experience that no one else on this earth has.

God did not create you to fit in. He intends for you to stand out.



PRAYER FOCUS: Ask God to help you understand better who He made you to be. Ask

Him, too, for the courage to live out that identity with abandon as you go after the impossible dream He has given you.

God Is Bigger

*As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

—ISAIAH 55:9

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