



## INTRODUCTION

## **Inspiration for Leap of Faith**

In the summer of 2011 I (Alex) visited another Vineyard church in Boston. At that time The Greater Boston Vineyard (GBV) was being led by Dave and Grace Schmelzer. Dave is a long-time friend of mine and a number of folks in our church have been a part of the GBV before coming here. It was a great time for me of thinking about how to do and be the church, but one event stuck out for me. It was this experience they called “Leap of Faith.”

They had been doing a Leap of Faith each year, for at least ten years. The idea was to create space for the entire church to experience the living God in three different areas: for themselves, for a handful of friends around them and for the church.

This struck me as something that would be great to do in our church. As I interact with many of you, I hear and see how you want to experience more of God and see God do big things in your life. Sometimes it gets hard to keep having faith for that if it has been a difficult or dry season of life. It is also harder to have that kind of faith when you are just holding onto that hope by yourself or trying to have faith for something on your own. So, why not have a season where we ask God together for Him to do something new and fresh and big?

That is why we, the leadership of the church, invite you to take a “Leap of Faith” with us, and with one another during these next 40 days. For the following six weeks we will ask God to increase our faith and grow our trust that he can do great things in our lives. This introduction is intended to help give some practical ideas of how to participate in this “Leap of Faith” and some structure to how we will be thinking about it as a community. This is very much an experiment for us, and we hope you will find this kind of experiment exciting and energizing for your own faith.

**With Affection,**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Alex Van Riesen'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Alex Van Riesen  
Lead Pastor, VCFP

## Why Do a Leap of Faith?

*“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval.<sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.” Hebrews 11:1-3*

Faith is central to a spiritual life and experience. Faith is described in this passage as the “assurance of things hoped for.” This seems paradoxical. To “hope” for something, according to the dictionary, is to “cherish a desire with anticipation.” In the original biblical language it is defined as, “to wait with joy and full confidence.” So, faith, in this context, is “the waiting with full joy and confidence for your cherished desires to be fulfilled.”

Now, any of us who have been following Jesus for a while – or even those of us who haven’t – have experienced having desires that do not get fulfilled. Sure, some of them were probably things we were better off not getting, but many of them were really good things that we wanted for ourselves and others.

When we experience something like that, the natural reaction – for most of us – is to decrease our hopes and dreams, or at least the “joyful confidence” that it is going to happen. The result of having fewer things you really put your heart into hoping for is you see God doing fewer things – because you are not really hoping for them. This in turn decreases our “assurance of things hoped for” even more, which has a direct impact on our faith.

The heart, the center, of a vibrant faith in Jesus is the ongoing process of hoping – cherishing a desire – for Him to work, even if we do not see all the results we hope for. The times when we do see God provide in some amazing way are often some of the most encouraging and faith-producing times in our spiritual lives. God wants us to have the kind of faith that continues to hope, and dream, and ask him for things. He does give good gifts and we believe he will show himself to us as a community as we join together in risking to ask for more.

That is why we are doing Leap of Faith. We are asking God to help grow and increase our faith – our ability to “wait with joy and full confidence” – for a specific period of time in hopes of that influencing our faith lives for the rest of the year. Sometimes we need special help and attention to grow in our spiritual lives. This time is being set aside to focus on having “faith”. It is a time to practice the faith we see here in Hebrews – “having the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen” – and see what God will do.

## What Does it Look Like to Participate in Leap of Faith?

We would like to suggest three concrete ways for you to participate in the Leap of Faith over these next six weeks.

1. **OUR CHURCH.** Ask God to do something *powerful* for our church.
2. **YOUR 6.** Ask God to do something *wonderful* for your 6.
3. **YOUR LIFE.** Ask God to do something *specific* for you.

### 1. Ask God to Do Something Powerful for Our Church

The main concrete step you can take to participate in Leap of Faith is to pray for our church each day during the next six weeks. This year we want to encourage you to ask God to give us a new church facility.

We have rented at Cubberley for over 29 years. It is apparent to us that the consistency we have been able to enjoy here at Cubberley, in terms of renting, is not likely to be the case after 2016. In addition to that reality, we believe God wants to move us into a more permanent and consistent facility, in Palo Alto, where we can grow and build upon what we are already doing. We are exploring partnering with other churches, renting other school facilities and exploring business properties that might be open to a church. We are just at the beginning of this process, but we believe God is going to do something dramatic and powerful to demonstrate his presence and goodness in this process.

Therefore, I want to invite all of us to pray – every day - for God to reveal to us this new venue and to clear the way for us to enter it.

We all want to see our faith increase. I know I do! I hope that praying for this new venue, and doing that together, will be part of the way God increases all our faith during this years LOF.

Of course, you may already have something on your heart to ask God for our church. What dreams do you have for our church and its place in this area? Ask God to clarify that and then pray for it every day during the Leap of Faith.

## 2. Ask God to Do Something Wonderful for Your 6

This year the theme of our Leap of Faith is “The Dream Life”. We will look at the life of Abraham and how God leads him to dream about his future and what God wants to do in and through his life. The desire is that we would see this 40 days as a time to “dream” for our friends and family and those simply living around us, and dream with God about what he could do for them. Then we will pray that God would cause these “dreams” to come true in the lives of those we pray for and for them to grow closer to God.

Some of the friends we have know how good God is and how much he loves them, but most do not. Jesus has put us in their midst to be one of the ways that he expresses his love to them. With our words, our actions and now our prayers, we can desire that they experience something fresh and real from the God who loves them.

The hope is that God will put six people – at least ***two*** of which are people in your daily life but not currently in the church - on your heart to pray for daily during the Leap of Faith. It is important that those you choose to pray for be local so that you can actually have some interaction with them and see or hear when God is actually doing something in their lives. Given this years theme, and the focus on relationships, that should not be too difficult.

Who *wouldn't* want to see Jesus concretely bless six people in our lives, either in our family, or in our church community, or living next door, or that we see each day at school?

**[i] Ask Jesus who your six are for this Leap of Faith.**

Who is God inviting you to pray for during these next six weeks?

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_____	_____
_____	_____

### 3. Ask God to Do Something Specific for You

A lot of what you might want or hope to happen in your life *can't* happen unless God gives it to you. It has been the experience of many of us that the greatest gifts we have received in life have come when we have asked and sought God for them.

We all need to learn what it looks like to continually look to God to give you the things you really need in life. If you don't directly and consciously look to Him in such a way that you'll know that He did it if the thing actually happens, that means that you'll look to other sources to give you those things. Even if we manage to get some neat things when we haven't looked to God to give them to us, they rarely pan out with the kind of joy and life we were hoping for from them.

God likes to be the giver of all good things. When we learn how to take Him up on that offer it seems that he doesn't only give us those gifts, he also fills the gifts themselves with life.

So why not take these six weeks to see if that can be your experience on some key things you'd like to see happen in your life?

You might be asking, "Why would I do this? What if it doesn't happen?" If you actually choose something you really dream for – something that means a lot to you – then you are risking major disappointment! Yes. But risking being disappointed is a hallmark of actual faith. Remember, faith is the *"assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen."* The point of faith is to take real desires and longings to God – things we cannot do for ourselves – and trust Him for the result.

The reason to take this first step is to put yourself in a position to see that God is actually alive; that he actually listens to your prayers and that He cares about you.

God wants us to ask him for things, and to keep asking. Let's agree together that these six weeks will be a place to start or to ask in a more focused and consistent way. What is one of your "dreams" that you want to ask him to do for you?

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## IN SUMMARY

*Here are the three concrete elements of the Leap of Faith, condensed for the sake of memory:*

1. **YOUR LIFE.** Ask God to do something *specific* for you.
2. **YOUR 6.** Ask God to do something *wonderful* for your 6.
3. **OUR CHURCH.** Ask God to do something *powerful* for our church.

May the Lord do great things as we move out in faith together!