

## 12 Scriptures That Will Set the Course of Your Life on Fire

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Today I'm going to be starting a 12-part series entitled, "12 Scriptures That Will Set on Fire the Course of Your Life." I'm told by many people that that's the longest title of any series or sermon that's ever been preached. I decided to do this when Wes Fulkerson... well, I've had this information on my desk for about 2 and a half years. I really feel like the Lord wanted me to put this into a book that people could use for mentoring and discipling, but writing a book, it's very difficult for me. Every word for me is like, muaaahh! It's just hard. So, Wes has said he's going to help me. So, we're going to do this thing. Today we're going to do the first one. It will be the first chapter eventually. We'll probably change the title, but right now I like, "12 Scriptures That Will Set on Fire the Course of Your Life." I did not grab these scriptures willy-nilly. They are scriptures that I've based my life on. In counseling situations, I use them quite often. If you adopt these scriptures, if you embrace these scriptures into your life, you will experience life differently. The first scripture we're going to look at is Romans 10:11. I've quoted it often. The scripture, here it is...

### **Rom 10:11**

***...for the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."***

This scripture comes from *Isaiah 28:16*. Paul quotes it again in *Romans 9:33* and the apostle Peter quotes it in 1 Peter 2:6, but before going there I want to just kind of touch on something important from the Book of Amos. *Amos Chapter 7, verse 7* says this.

### **Amos 7:7 NASB**

***Thus, He showed me, and behold, the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand.***

First of all, what's a plumb line? I decided to show you because a lot of you, I don't think, know what it is. It's one of these do-hickies. I asked them to get me one and they got me this thing that I can knock you out with. Trust me, this is heavy. A plumb line is something they use in construction which helps them build something that's ninety degrees. For example, if you're building a brick wall. Now, I don't know if construction workers still use this but when we did this big retaining wall in my house, they had one of these, so they could make sure the wall was straight. If you don't have some kind of plumb line you're going to build a wall that goes one way or the other. It's not going to be straight and it's not going to have structural integrity. You know, my assistant Sylvia said, "Yeah, I found one of those things and now I can put wallpaper up straight." She uses this to put up wall paper. I looked at her and I said, "Why would you want to put up wall paper?" First of all, it's a lot of work putting it up. Paint goes up easier. Secondly, the female side of the relationship usually gets tired of the wall paper at some point and the male side of the family has to scrape the thing off. Uh-huh. So, a plumb line, it's a standard. The standard is 90 degrees. So, in this chapter, Chapter 7, the plumb line that the Lord has in His hand is a standard and the standard is God's word. Verse 8.

### **Amos 7:8 NASB**

***The Lord said to me, "What do you see, Amos?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said, "Behold I am about to put a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel. I will spare them no longer.***

We can't go look at the rest of this chapter but God uses the plumb line of His Word to evaluate Israel... how they were building their lives and society... by what standards. And if you read on, if you read this prophetic word from Amos, you'll see that the Israelites were building their lives upon values and standards other than the Word of God. Paganism and unrighteousness. Now hear me here. I hope you

can understand that a Christian, a born-again believer in Jesus Christ can build his or her life on standards other than God's Word. They can build their life upon standards that are not in God's Word. As Jesus said, they can build their house upon a sand and not on a rock. The tragedy, of course, is that that Christian who builds their house on the sand... *Matthew 7*, Jesus told a story about one man who built his house on a rock. Another man who built his house on the sand. The winds and the rain came and every time I say that I think of a song we sang, "The wise man built his house upon the rock." You guys know that one? You guys are old. That's okay, "The rains came down and the floods came up, the rains came down and the floods came up, the rains came down and the floods came up and the house on the rock stood firm." And, of course, the other one is the foolish man builds his house on the sand, the rains come and everything and at the end his house went smash! When I was a kid, I liked that, make noise. The tragedy is the Christian who builds his or her house on standards and principles other than God's Word, they're going to miss out on a lot of what God has for them. So, now back to *Romans*, verse 9.

***Romans 10:9-10 NASB***

***<sup>9</sup> that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; <sup>10</sup>for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.***

That's the gospel. Just a few words. That's the gospel. When someone asks you, "How do I become a Christian?" and you can only take them to one scripture, there it is. It really isn't that complicated. We simply confess that we're sinners. We have sinned against, we have transgressed God's standard, His plumb line. And we ask the Lord to forgive us, and in that forgiveness, we're now able to have a relationship with God. And that forgiveness happens because Jesus took our sin, those things that we've done or are going to do in our life that are outside of God's standard (and God is holy, God's a holy, just God, there's consequences for when we sin) and Jesus took that judgement upon Himself and died for each and every one of us on the cross so that you and I could know God, have the forgiveness of sins, live with the Holy Spirit inside of us and have eternal life. What a wonderful gift. Simple truth, how to become a Christian. You've probably heard the four spiritual laws, but most people stop right there. They don't go to verse 11. You see, Paul says you can become a Christian but there's one other thing you have to remember, one important thing how I want you to live your life.

***Romans 10:11 NASB***

***For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed"***

This is my favorite Scripture in the Bible. I quote it more often than anything else. I told my wife that I want it on my tombstone. I know nobody will go look at it, but I want it there anyway. She goes, "Dave, I'm going to die first." She always says that. She's 12 and a half years younger than me. I bring her to the mirror and go, "Look! What do you think?" She's convinced.

Paul wants to make sure that these Roman Christians and us remember that God is 100% reliable 100% of the time. God keeps His promises always, always, always. He can do no other. He's Holy. I like that song that Shane wrote because we're singing it to God, "You are Holy." And when you sing that, I hope you recognize that what you're saying is, "In Your holiness You do what You say. You don't lie. I can trust that You are 100% faithful." Paul reminds us that if we trust God and make decisions in our life based on His Word and His principles, His commands, we will not regret it. As years go by we can then look back on our life and rejoice in God's faithfulness, His vision, His direction, His provision. And this is what Joshua did in his old age.

***Joshua 23:14 NASB***

***Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, (in other words, I don't have much longer to live) and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words***

***which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed.***

Isn't Joshua saying, "We put our trust in God, we did it His way and God came through." *Romans 10:11* reminds us that if I do it God's way, even if it goes against societies values, even if it goes against what my heart is screaming for me to do, even if it goes against what my friends are telling me to do, even if it goes against what the government is tell me to do, if you do it God's way, ultimately you won't be sorry. You know the only time I've been sorry in my life is when I haven't done it God's way. When I look back on my life and I can see things, we all can, and I always wonder, "What would have happened in that situation if I had done what God wanted me to do?" I just know that we have to trust God and in the trust, you just keep moving forward because so often, friends, you make a decision to trust God, the circumstance or decision, and you make the decision and then you start going the way that God wants you to go and it doesn't look very good. It almost looks like God hasn't heard you. It almost looks like God is doing just the opposite of what you're trusting Him for. But I'm here to tell you, after being a Christian for forty years, God always comes through. But you see, we have to endure. We have to wait on God. It's a whole other message but *Psalms 25:3* says, "They who wait on the Lord will not be ashamed." "They who wait on the Lord will not be disappointed." "They who wait on the Lord will not be disturbed." ...depending on your translation. In other words, if you wait on God in the midst of making a decision, He's going to come through for you. You're not going to be disappointed in God. *Hebrews 10:36* says this.

***Hebrews 10:36 NASB***

***For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.***

Notice, sometimes we have to endure. Sometimes we have to just keep walking. Jesus said take one day at a time and if you keep doing that, you'll receive what is promised.

***Galatians 6:9***

***Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.***

So many times (I think I know this) Christians miss out on the miracle that God has for them because they give up. I've had so many decisions and circumstances in my life where I can go one way or the other and it really boiled down to, am I going to do it God's way or not? And then waiting on God. And I don't want you to think that when you make that decision to trust God in whatever circumstance or situation you're in, everything is rosy. Sometimes it gets worse. You make a decision to follow God and all of a sudden it gets worse. It may cost you. There may be ramifications. You may be persecuted, you may lose a job, you may lose a relationship, lose finances. You may lose friends. But ultimately when you follow Jesus, you're never sorry. When you follow Jesus, years later, you'll look back and say, "Whatever I had to give up, glory to God because of where I am now." That's why Paul said, "I look at everything that I've lost in my life, to live for Jesus, and it's like garbage compared to knowing Jesus and being in His will."

I was twenty-four years old. One month earlier I was in a service like this. I was already a Christian, but I had been really challenged to trust God with my life, do it His way. And I went forward. I said, "Okay I'm going to go do it." One month later God put me to the test. One month later. I had to make a choice between the young woman that I loved, been going with for two and a half years. I wanted to marry her. I don't want to go into detail, it was a very long time ago, except that I had a choice to make. It was very simple. Follow God or get married to this girl. Well, I chose God, obviously. That's why I'm telling you this story. I still remember her driving away in her Datsun station wagon and if you know what a Datsun is, that simply means you're old. Datsun is Nissan. Datsun changed its name to Nissan. I don't know the whole story, I just know that Datsun and Nissan are the same thing. She had a white Datsun station

wagon and I saw her drive away and my heart broke because I knew I was never going to see her again. Because what the Lord had me tell her, was pretty... 'this is the way it's going to be' kind of thing. And being twenty-four, I don't think I said it very, well, this is the way it is, you know?

I look back at that decision and I glorify God. I'm married to an awesome woman today. You know, all that would have been different. God had something else planned for me. I just had to be obedient. A couple years later, I'm twenty-eight years old. My brother Mark and I are attending seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. It's a denominational seminary. It's very liberal. It seemed like every day Mark and I were defending God's Word. We were defending the inerrancy, the infallibility of God's Word on every issue you can imagine. They were trying to tell us that whole sections of God's Word, you know, we didn't have to really believe. Then it came time to go on our internship. You go for two years: you go on internship for a year then you come back for your final fourth year. I knew in my heart of hearts, "I can't do this. I can't be part of this. I can't be part of this denomination." I think it was one of the hardest decisions I ever made in my life because I knew I was going to disappoint my family. I was going to disappoint numerous people who had been giving to Mark and I monthly so that we could go to school. My father said, "We Hoffman's have been blank (this particular denomination) for four-hundred years." He said that to me. I don't know how he knew that, but he was positive. Good German stock. Four hundred years. We'd always been this particular... what are you doing? My mother called us and asked us not to move home. Not to move back to San Diego. Go somewhere else. And she said that because she was worried about my father's health. Then I had lots of people telling me, "Stay in this denomination. If you leave, who's going to help reform it? Stay in it so you can help change it." Well, Mark and I knew that wasn't going to happen. It had already gone too far. And on top of all that, I knew I would be leaving security. They had already told me and I'm sure they told Mark too, that because you're one of the few conservatives here, there's churches out there that want you. As soon as you graduate, you'll have four or five churches that will be vying for you. I mean, I could start out with a great salary that took me probably twenty years to finally get. Anyway, I'm not bitter, God. I'm not at all. And I have this, and to leave all that for nothing. Nothing, nothing. Blackness. I don't know. I remember Mark and I driving out of Dubuque, Iowa and that's always a good thing. Trust me. Driving out of Dubuque, Iowa and Mark and I were looking at one another going, "Oh my goodness. What are we doing? Where are we going?" But, I want you to know that that decision (and I know Mark would say something along the same line) that decision to do what God wanted us to do and walk into an unknown future set on fire the course of my life. Trust in God. There have been so many decisions, temptations, compromises that I've been tempted with throughout my life and I've told you whenever I've compromised, rationalized, I've always regretted it. Mark and I... it was hard starting this church and I don't want to make it out like it was, you know, that somehow, we should be pitied or something or you should take an offering for us, but it was tough. It really was. I remember going over to my brother's house, he and Linda and Neil was a little baby and Neil's bedroom was a closet. It was tough, but even then we didn't regret doing things God's way. There was a peace and a joy of knowing that we're in the river of God. We don't know where we're going. We had people tell us, "How can you tell us you're in God's will? Look! The way you're living! How can this be God?" And then when they were gone, you would say, "Yeah, how could this be You?" Just being honest with you.

Mark and I have had staff pastors here at this church try to really hurt this place. We've had people try to cause dissention and hindrances to what God has been trying to do here and inside you want to defend, you want to do things, but God has told us to do certain things, you know? And the board was with us. One guy in particular, a staff pastor that we had to let go, he was teaching our young people that there were whole portions of Scripture that were not for today. Mike, you were on the board, you remember that. Well, what do you think Mark and I did? Oh, good job dude. No! I'm sorry, you can't be here anymore. Well, this young man, you remember, Mike, he got a hold of the mailing list of everybody in the church and wrote them all a letter about how wonderful Mark and Dave were. If you believe that I've got some land. That's not what he said. What surprised me is that almost overnight we lost a lot of people in the church. There's no way to really know but it's 150 somewhere, maybe a little less, I don't know but it amazed me how quick people believe the worst of other people. That was really a lesson for me, really

shocking. And this is kind of a side note. When you hear something about someone else, don't just believe it right off the bat. Especially someone who's in the ministry in some way. Look, I'm not naïve. It's not easy to trust God when you can't see around the corner. But I'll tell you this. The decisions you make to trust God when you cannot see around the corner are the decisions that will set on fire the course of your life that Jesus has for you. The truth is, you and I cannot have a significant relationship with anybody, let alone God, if we don't trust them. How can you have a relationship with anybody of any significance if you don't trust them? If you don't trust them, you're suspicious. You're going to live in suspicion of them and the suspicion is, that they might not always think of your best. They might even say or do something to harm you. At some point, they may do something, or they just may not have your best interest at heart. So, how can you ever have a meaningful relationship with them? If someone is asking, you may say, he or she is a nice person. You may speak well of them, but you'll never be close to that person because you don't trust them. You have suspicions in your heart against them. Now please don't miss this, that's the way many Christians live their life with Jesus. They profess Him. They say they love Him. They pray to Him. They speak well of Him, but in the core of their being, they don't trust Him. They're suspicious of Jesus... that somehow God doesn't have the best for them. Somehow things aren't going to work the best for them if they do it God's way. They are suspicious of the way of the Bible... how Jesus is calling them to respond is inferior. Somehow God won't deliver. But our God is a Holy God. He's always faithful 100% of the time. He's always reliable. He doesn't always do things like we want, but if you trust Him in it, you do your best... and I'm not standing up here saying that my whole life I'm a 100% faithful to God, I can't tell you that... I just know that the times I haven't been are the times I regret. He is faithful to all His promises. *2 Corinthians 1:20* tells us this.

***2 Corinthians 1:30 NASB***

***For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.***

God will show Himself faithful to the Christian that puts his trust in Him. Let's just read a couple scriptures about God's faithfulness. Just a few of the myriads. Just kind of my favorites, I guess.

***Deuteronomy 7:9 NASB***

***<sup>9</sup> Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments.***

***1 Corinthians 1:9 NASB***

***God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.***

***Hebrews 10:23 NASB***

***Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.***

***2 Timothy 2:13 NASB***

***If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.***

Again, these are only a few scriptures of myriads of them. Now, make no mistake, I want to pound this in. Trusting God, doing it His way, going out, start walking the way of holiness, the highway of holiness may be tough at first. Initially things may not go very well. You may be ridiculed, you may lose, you may even be persecuted, but ultimately you will reap the promise of God.

Forty years ago, a month before I was faced with that decision with my girlfriend, I was sitting in a service like this and it was an evening service. It was at Faith Chapel if you guys remember that years ago. And I

don't remember who the guy speaking was. I didn't hear a word he was saying anyway because as soon as he started, almost right away, God was talking to me. And I knew it was God because He was telling me things I didn't want to hear. I didn't want to hear it. He said to me, "This man in just a few minutes is going to ask people to come forward to dedicate their lives to Jesus. To go anywhere, do anything for Jesus. Say yes to Jesus, yes to Jesus. And you're gonna get up and you're gonna go forward." I said, "No, I'm not." I hated to be in front of people which is kind of ironic. I hated to be in front of people. When I had to give a speech at school it was just like, I couldn't sleep all night. I was horrible! I did not want to go forward. So, this guy's waxing eloquently and I'm having this argument, "Jesus, I can do that right here. I don't have to go forward. Sure, I'll go anywhere you want, do anything you want me to do. I'll make the commitment right now. No problem." He would not leave me alone. Then I hear Him yell, I mean, just a very firm voice, "Get up right now and go." I jump up and I run forward. I'm standing there. Now, the guy hadn't asked for an altar call, nothing. I'm standing there. He stops and looks at me and I'll never forget, he said, "Well, I guess it's time for an altar call." That's what he said. But I want you to know that decision that night to obey God, let His truths guide my steps, (as generally as well as I could) set on fire the course of my life. One month later it was put to the test, wasn't it? I will admit to you, it's easy at 65, been a Christian for 43 years, it's easy to do it God's way. So much easier now to trust God than it was 43 years ago. I got a whole lifetime of examples of God being faithful. That's why, young person, when you make this decision to follow Jesus no matter what, it's good to have an older guy or an older woman in your life. They can help you when you start having some doubts. If you're a young person (and I consider you young if you're under 30... if you're 30 years old you might not think you're young, but you're young, trust me, my goodness) if you put your trust in Jesus, there's no better way to live. There just is no better way.

I was watching the television last night and there's a newscaster that Mary and I like to watch, and it's interesting to me how so many people in our culture view truth now. Truth is how you feel. Truth is your opinion. Facts don't matter. Facts do not matter. It's delusional. I listen to this and I think, this has got to be demonic. If whatever facts you want to give me don't agree with my opinion, you're wrong. It doesn't matter. It's an amazing phenomenon. I think it is. We used to have something called 'apologetics' in the church. You know why you don't hear much about it anymore? Because telling people about the resurrection of Jesus and that it's a historical fact and all that, it just goes... (*motion hand over head*). I'm not saying that is always true, but...

**Proverbs 28:26 NASB**

***He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered.***

**Proverbs 14:12 NASB**

***There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.***

I have a simple question for all of you this morning to close off this message. By what plumb line, by what standard are you living your life? To say it another way, starting right now, today, how are you going to live the rest of your life? Because I don't think it's ever too late to begin. And young person, if you're under 30 you've got your whole life ahead of you, for heaven's sake. You're young. Youth is a blessing. There are a lot of reasons why being young is a blessing. You've got your whole life ahead of you. God can do great things in your life. He wants you to experience great and mighty things in your life. He'll help you marry the right person. He'll help you have a good marriage. My father was a marriage counselor. That's what he was best at. And he said not one time in 40 years did two Christians come into his office, he said, "Even if they told me, 'I can't stand her' 'I can't stand him' if they came in the office saying, 'We know divorce is not right, we know we have to work this out, help us' did they not work it out, fall in love again and have more love than they had before." Not one time in 40 years! Think about that for a minute. If you're married or about to get married or if you've only been married a short time, everything is great at first. Being married is good. I was talking to a brother the other day, he goes, "We're fighting now." I said, "Oh, welcome." I said, "All right. God is giving you an opportunity to grow. You can grow bitter and angry

at your wife or you can get with her and grow. Get some counseling.” And I said, “You don’t have to go to church... just get some older couple and sit down with them.” They’ll go, “Oh yeah, yeah. We went through that.” We’re all the same, basically. But you have a good marriage if you’re committed to Jesus. If divorce isn’t an option, both of you, you’re going to work it out and then you’re going to have a love that you never would have ever had without going through the stuff. I hope each of you in here listening to me hopes that when you’re 65 like me, you can look back at your life and glorify God. God has worked all things together for good in my life. I could just go on and on about how He has blessed me. And if you’ve made a decision to trust God, you’re going to become 65 and you’re going to say the same thing, unless there’s suspicion in your relationship with God. So then, how do you get over this suspicion? Now, this may be where I may lose some of you. I don’t like to talk about victims. Don’t tell me you’ve had a hard life. Listen, we’re talking about Jesus. Jesus can change anything, anything. He can come into the most broken life and He can make something wonderful out of it. So, how do you get rid of the suspicion? How do you trust? It’s very difficult. You just do it. What do you mean you just do it? You say, “I’m going to trust Jesus” and when the doubts come, you go and pray with somebody. You do whatever you have to do to get yourself back on the road again and pretty soon it won’t be so hard. You see, the devil wants you to make all kinds of excuses. “I’ve been hurt so much in my life. I can’t possibly trust God.” Don’t you think God knows about that? It was pretty easy for me to trust God (I’m just being honest) because Mark and I grew up in a family... I could trust my parents. I could trust my father. I knew he had my best interest at heart absolutely, positively 100%. So, it was easy for me to transfer that to God. But all right, I understand that some of you didn’t, but I can’t find anywhere in here (*opening Bible*) where it says that’s an excuse not to trust God. It may be harder. And I have compassion, I do, I have compassion for someone who’s trying. I really do. The church staff, all of us here, we’ll do everything we can to help you get over that suspicion. But you just do it. You just start on the road. You go one day at a time. Jesus said, live one day at a time, each day has trouble of its own. ***Trust God and do not lean on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.***