

## When the Mountain Doesn't Move

### Introduction: The Power We Long For

There are few phrases in modern Christian language as compelling—or as potentially confusing—as the word *manifestation*. It evokes possibility, power, and the deep ache of the human heart to see heaven touch earth. In our age, it has become a word stitched with great emotion and sewn into the vocabulary of those who truly believe in the nearness of God, the authority of the believer, and the hope that all things—sickness, suffering, loss—can be overturned in a moment by faith. And for many, this pursuit has been sincere. It has not stemmed from rebellion or apathy, but from a deep yearning to see God's kingdom come and His will be done *on earth as it is in heaven*.

To that end, I want to begin by saying: **I believe you.** I believe your hunger is real. I believe your prayers have power. And I believe that the God who spoke the world into being still speaks, still moves, and still delivers. But as someone who has stumbled into the arms of sovereign grace, I've also come to learn that not every promise spoken in Scripture means what we want it to mean when read through the lens of our longings. God's Word is not a mirror of our desires—it is a window into *His* will.

My goal here is not to tear down, but to gently rebuild. To offer not a replacement of hope, but a reorientation of it. Not a silencing of your boldness, but a deepening of its foundation.

We live in a culture that has taught us to *declare*, to *decree*, to *manifest* what we believe God has promised—but what if the greater miracle is not found in our declarations, but in our dependence? What if the authority we seek isn't something to wield, but something to surrender to? What if real power, the kind that shakes the gates of hell and transforms the soul, doesn't begin with our voice—but with His?

Over the next few pages, I want to walk carefully through several Scriptures that are often quoted in support of what some call “manifestation theology.” We'll examine them slowly. We'll look not just at what the verse says, but what surrounds it. Who said it? Why? To whom? And most importantly, how does it align with the full story of redemption—of Christ crucified, risen, and reigning not merely to make our earthly dreams come true, but to conform us to His image?

This is not an attack. This is an invitation. To look again. To listen more deeply. To love more fiercely the God who does not always do what we ask—but who always does what is good.

So I invite you, friend, to walk with me. Verse by verse. Question by question. With your Bible open and your heart open wider still—not to a new revelation, but to an old truth: **God is God, and we are not—but oh, what grace that He is near.**

## Mark 11:24 – What Real Faith Looks Like

You’ve probably heard this one before:

*“Therefore I tell you, everything you pray and ask for—believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”*  
(Mark 11:24)

It’s a beautiful verse. Striking, even. The kind of thing that almost makes your breath catch when you read it for the first time. It sounds so bold, so full of promise. And maybe, like me, you’ve held onto it at times—hoping, praying, maybe even declaring—that God would do something dramatic. Something big.

But when I finally slowed down enough to read the whole scene—the way Jesus said it, the moment it came out of His mouth, the words right before and right after—it stopped sounding like a blank check and started sounding like something far deeper. Not weaker. **Deeper.**

Jesus had just cursed a fig tree the day before. The next morning, the disciples notice that it’s withered to its roots. They’re shocked. And it’s in that moment that Jesus turns and says, *“Have faith in God.”* That’s the setup for everything else He’s about to say. It matters.

He doesn’t say, *“Have faith in your words.”*  
He doesn’t say, *“Believe hard enough and reality will change.”*  
He says, *“Have faith in God.”*

That’s where real faith begins—not in the strength of our belief, but in the **object** of it. Faith isn’t a power source we plug into to get what we want. It’s trust. A humble, trembling, sometimes barely-holding-on kind of trust in a God who sees the whole picture and is never unwise with His timing or His answers.

And the words that follow about asking in prayer? Jesus isn’t giving us a formula—He’s inviting us into **fellowship**. Into the kind of relationship where prayer is less about getting God to do what we want, and more about aligning our hearts with what He wants. He’s showing us what it looks like to approach the Father with confidence, not because we’ve mastered the technique, but because we know His character.

And I think the next verse often gets left out, but it’s part of the same breath:

*“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him...”*  
(Mark 11:25)

Isn't that interesting? Jesus connects mountain-moving faith not with bold declarations, but with humility. With a heart that lets go of offense. With relationships that are mended. Why? Because the kind of prayer that pleases God is prayer that flows out of a heart shaped by Him.

If we read Mark 11:24 like a vending machine promise—insert belief, receive result—we end up crushed when things don't work out. We wonder if we didn't believe hard enough. If our words weren't the right ones. If the delay is our fault. And without even realizing it, we start turning God into a system to be worked instead of a Father to be loved.

But when we read it the way Jesus meant it—anchored in God's faithfulness, surrounded by His wisdom, clothed in surrender—it doesn't weaken the verse. It strengthens it. Because now, the outcome isn't resting on the fragility of my faith. It's resting on the strength of His goodness.

### **And that's so much better.**

We don't need faith that manipulates the future. We need faith that leans back into the arms of the Father, even when we don't understand. The kind that whispers, "God, I trust You to give or to withhold, because I know that either way, You love me."

That's the kind of faith that moves mountains. Not always around us—but definitely within us.

### **Proverbs 18:21 – The Weight of Words**

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit."  
(Proverbs 18:21)

This one gets quoted a lot. And at first glance, it really does sound like it's saying that our words can literally manifest life or death. That what we say determines what happens. It's why some people talk about "speaking life" over situations, or being afraid to "speak death" over their future. The idea is that our words create reality. That if you say the wrong thing, you might actually bring harm to yourself or others—and if you say the right thing, you can pull blessing out of thin air.

But is that really what this verse is saying?

Let's pause and think slowly. Proverbs are not spells. They're wisdom. Not formulas to control the world, but lenses to understand how it works. And this one, like so many

others, is pointing us not to supernatural power in human mouths—but to the profound influence our words have on the people around us, and on our own souls.

Think about it: how many lives have been crushed by a cruel word? How many friendships have died from gossip, or marriages from silent contempt? And on the flip side, how many hearts have been revived by a gentle encouragement, a loving correction, or a quiet “I see you, and I’m still here”?

Words can wound. Words can heal. That’s what Solomon is saying. The tongue is a tiny part of the body, but it steers the whole ship (James 3 echoes this exact idea). It can set a forest ablaze. It can start wars or mend fences. And the person who loves that reality—the one who understands how powerful their words are—will “eat their fruit.” In other words, your speech sets things in motion. Not metaphysically, but relationally. Spiritually. Morally.

It’s not about conjuring your future. It’s about shaping your present—through truth or deceit, grace or venom, encouragement or destruction.

But here’s where the contrast becomes really clear.

If you think this verse is telling you that your words create reality like God’s words did in Genesis, then you’ll start to carry a burden you were never meant to hold. You’ll feel like you have to constantly monitor your speech to avoid accidentally speaking sickness or failure over your life. That’s a heavy and fragile way to live.

But if you see this for what it is—a call to steward your speech, to remember that words have weight—you’ll find something much better. Not control, but clarity. Not fear of saying the wrong thing, but freedom to say the right thing. Freedom to speak life—not because your words magically create it, but because you know the One who gives it.

The truth is, we’re not creators. We’re reflectors. And the more our words reflect the character of Christ—truth, gentleness, courage, love—the more they carry weight that matters. Not because they bend the universe, but because they echo the voice of the One who already does.

So yes—death and life are in the power of the tongue. But not because the tongue is divine. Because the heart behind it is either surrendered to God... or not.

And what a joy it is to speak with a heart that knows Him.

## **Romans 4:17 – The God Who Gives Life, Not Us**

“...as it is written: I have made you the father of many nations—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, the one who gives life to the dead and calls things into existence that do not exist.”

(Romans 4:17, CSB)

This verse is often pulled out of context and waved around like a banner: See? God calls things into being—and because we’re made in His image, we can too. Speak healing. Declare abundance. Manifest breakthrough. Just like God did.

It sounds bold. It sounds powerful. But it’s not what the verse is saying.

Let’s look at it closely.

The entire chapter of Romans 4 is Paul explaining why Abraham is the model of true, saving faith. Not because he did anything to earn God’s promises—but because he believed what God said, even when the circumstances made it look impossible.

Abraham was old. Sarah was barren. And yet, God told him he would become the father of many nations. Humanly speaking, there was nothing about that situation that could bring life. But Abraham believed—not in his own power, not in his own words, not even in his own faith—but in the God who gives life to the dead and calls things into existence that do not exist.

That last part—“calls things into existence”—isn’t about what Abraham did. It’s about what God does.

The whole point is to contrast God’s ability to create life where there is none with Abraham’s complete inability to do so. That’s the glory of it. Abraham didn’t manifest anything. He simply believed the One who could.

And that’s what makes this verse beautiful—not because it tells us we can do what God does, but because it tells us that we don’t have to. That the weight of fulfillment, of provision, of the impossible turning into reality—it doesn’t rest on our shoulders. It rests on God’s.

To read this verse as if we can speak life into our situations just like God did in creation misses the entire structure of Paul’s argument. This verse magnifies God, not man. It highlights His creative power, His sovereignty, and His faithfulness to keep His promises, even when we can’t see how.

And when we misread this verse, we put ourselves under a crushing pressure—believing that if we don’t “speak it,” we won’t see it. But that’s not faith. That’s performance.

The true beauty of Romans 4:17 is in the peace it offers. God doesn’t need your strength to fulfill His promises. He doesn’t need your declarations to bring about His will. He asks for your trust. Your surrender. Your open hands.

Abraham didn’t call things into being. He trusted the One who could.

And you can too.

### **John 14:13–14 – In His Name, Not Ours**

*“Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”  
(John 14:13–14, CSB)*

At first read, this sounds wide open, doesn’t it? Almost like Jesus is saying, “Just say the magic words—in *Jesus’ name*—and I’ll do it.”

And maybe you’ve heard it used that way. That as long as you tag your request with “in Jesus’ name,” you’re promised results. That it’s the stamp of authority that guarantees delivery.

But if that were true, we’d all be walking miracles. No more loss. No more confusion. No more unanswered prayers. Yet the lived experience of every honest believer—every one of us who’s wept over prayers that never got the yes we longed for—tells a different story.

So what’s Jesus really saying here?

We’re in the Upper Room. Jesus is hours away from the cross. He’s preparing His disciples for His departure. They’re frightened. Confused. Wondering how they’ll go on without Him. And into that fear, Jesus pours comfort: *“You can still talk to Me. You can still ask. And I will still move.”*

But He doesn’t say, “Ask whatever you want and I’ll do it so that you’ll be satisfied.” He says, **“so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”**

That’s the aim. That’s always been the aim.

Praying “in Jesus’ name” isn’t a magic phrase. It’s not an incantation. It’s not a guarantee of the result we want. It’s a surrender of our will to *His*. It means asking in a way that reflects who He is, what He values, and what will glorify the Father through Him.

Think of it this way: when an ambassador speaks “in the name” of their nation, they don’t speak on their own behalf. They speak as a representative, bound to the will of the one who sent them. To pray in Jesus’ name means to pray as someone shaped by His heart, aligned with His mission, longing for His glory.

So yes—He will do it. He will answer. But the shape of that answer might look different than what we first imagined. Because He sees the end from the beginning. Because He loves you too much to give you a stone when you ask for bread—even if that stone is wrapped in shiny paper and looks like a dream.

And here’s the beauty: when we really begin to pray in His name—not just with our words, but with our hearts—our requests start to change. They start to sound more like His. Less about control. More about surrender. Less about comfort. More about holiness. Less about “make my life easier,” and more about “make me more like You.”

That kind of prayer isn’t weak. It’s fierce. Because it refuses to settle for temporary relief and reaches instead for eternal glory.

So no—this verse isn’t promising you everything you want. But it is promising something better: that every prayer spoken from a heart aligned with Christ’s will becomes part of His plan to glorify the Father through the Son.

And that’s the kind of answer you never have to doubt.

## **Matthew 21:22 – When Faith Is Not a Formula**

*“And if you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”  
(Matthew 21:22, CSB)*

This verse sounds almost like a duplicate of Mark 11:24—another sweeping promise. Believe, and it’s yours. No small print. No disclaimers.

And for a lot of people, that feels like hope. Like finally having something solid to stand on in a world full of uncertainty. If you just believe hard enough—if your faith is pure, your doubt is silenced, and your prayer is bold—then God will do what you ask.

But what happens when you believe as hard as you can... and nothing happens?

Does it mean your faith wasn't enough? That God was willing, but your spiritual account came up short? That you failed Him in your moment of need?

That's the quiet despair tucked inside a surface-level reading of this verse. And that's exactly why we need to keep reading—not just the words, but the story around them.

Jesus had just entered Jerusalem for the final time. He was turning tables, cursing fig trees, confronting religious hypocrisy. His every move in these final days is bursting with symbolism. And just like in Mark's account, this verse about believing and receiving is connected to the **withered fig tree**—a visual warning about outward religion with no real fruit.

So when Jesus tells His disciples that if they believe, they'll receive what they ask, He's not handing them a spiritual vending machine. He's teaching them to trust the One who can do what's humanly impossible. But that trust has a direction—it's aimed at **God**, not the outcome.

That's what real faith is.

Faith doesn't mean being certain you'll get what you want. Faith means being certain that **God knows what He's doing**, even if you don't.

If you turn this verse into a formula—*faith = result*—then every delay becomes a judgment. Every “no” becomes a failure. But when you see this verse through the eyes of the disciples who heard it, and the Savior who spoke it, you realize something else:

Jesus was inviting them to pray boldly, trust deeply, and rest fully—not in the **thing** they were asking for, but in the **God** they were asking.

Because that kind of prayer isn't fragile. It's fearless.

It's not the voice of someone trying to make things happen. It's the voice of someone who knows that their Father hears, and loves, and gives exactly what is needed—even when what's needed isn't what was asked for.

There's a kind of peace that grows when you stop trying to speak things into existence and start trusting the One who speaks galaxies into being.

That's where real power is found.

### 3 John 1:2 – A Greeting, Not a Guarantee

*“Dear friend, I pray that you are prospering in every way and are in good health, just as your whole life is going well.”*

*(3 John 1:2, CSB)*

If you’ve ever heard someone say, “God wants you to prosper and be in good health,” there’s a good chance they were quoting this verse. It’s often used as a kind of theological proof that material abundance and physical wellness are God’s will for every believer, all the time. And at first glance, it can seem like that’s exactly what the verse is saying.

But here’s the thing: **this isn’t a teaching—it’s a greeting.**

This letter isn’t a sermon, a prophecy, or a doctrinal declaration. It’s a short personal note from the Apostle John to a friend named Gaius. He’s opening with warmth and kindness, like you or I might say, *“I hope this message finds you well.”* It’s not a universal promise—it’s a personal prayer.

And John says, *“just as your soul is prospering.”* That little phrase flips the whole thing on its head. Because John’s not assuming that outward prosperity is the goal—he’s saying, “I hope your physical life is as rich as your spiritual life already is.” In other words, the deepest health—the truest prosperity—is **spiritual**.

But if we take this verse and build a theology around it, we miss the entire point.

We turn a kind greeting into a divine obligation. We start thinking God owes us wellness and wealth, and if we don’t have those things, something must be wrong—either with our faith or with God’s goodness. And that quietly distorts our view of Him.

It makes comfort the goal. It makes success the marker of spiritual maturity. And it leaves no room for the countless saints throughout history who were poor, sick, and yet deeply loved by God.

But the truth is, Scripture is full of people who walked in intimacy with the Lord and still suffered—Job, Paul, Timothy, the early church, even Jesus Himself. And none of them measured God’s faithfulness by their circumstances.

When we let 3 John 1:2 say more than it was meant to, we set people up for confusion and heartbreak. But when we let it be what it is—a warm blessing, not a blanket promise—it becomes even more beautiful. Because it reminds us that God does care about our whole lives. He sees our needs. He hears our cries. And yet, **the health of our soul is always His highest priority.**

And that's good news. Because our bodies will fail. Our plans will falter. Our bank accounts will rise and fall. But if our soul is anchored to Christ—if we're prospering there—then we have riches the world can't touch.

The kind of prosperity that doesn't end with a downturn or a diagnosis. The kind that's rooted in something eternal.

### **Habakkuk 2:2–3 – Waiting on God's Vision, Not Wielding Our Own**

*"The Lord answered me: Write down this vision; clearly inscribe it on tablets so one may easily read it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it testifies about the end and will not lie. Though it delays, wait for it, since it will certainly come and not be late."*

*(Habakkuk 2:2–3, CSB)*

This passage gets quoted a lot in circles that focus on dreaming big, declaring destiny, and setting bold goals with faith. People often take it to mean: *"If God gave you a vision, write it down, speak it out, and it will surely come to pass."*

It's used to justify the practice of "vision boarding" and "manifesting"—writing down your dreams so you can speak them into being, as if the act of recording and repeating is what unlocks the future.

But if we step back and ask what's actually happening in this moment of Scripture, the weight shifts. In a good way.

Habakkuk is a prophet. And he's not sitting in a workshop brainstorming life goals—he's standing on a watchtower, crying out to God about the evil and injustice around him. He's troubled by the silence. He's confused by God's plan. And he's bracing himself for an answer he knows might shake him.

And God says, *"Write this down."*

But what is *this*?

It's not a personal dream or a business plan. It's a **prophetic vision**—a divine declaration of what God is going to do to judge wickedness and ultimately bring justice. It's a promise that, even when evil seems to triumph, **God will not forget**. He will act. And the fulfillment of His Word is not on our schedule—but it is guaranteed.

That changes everything.

God isn't telling Habakkuk to write down his desires so he can fuel them with faith. He's telling him to write **God's vision**, so that others can be warned and comforted. This isn't about us crafting our future—it's about trusting the future God has already declared.

And here's the powerful contrast:

When we turn this passage into a tool for manifesting what we want, we quietly make ourselves the author of the vision. We treat God like a publisher we're hoping will sign off on our dreams. But this passage invites us to do something much harder, and much holier: to wait.

*"Though it delays, wait for it..."*

Waiting on God's timing is one of the hardest things a soul can do. Especially when everything in us wants to act, declare, and force things forward. But God's visions don't need our hustle. They need our trust.

And that's the freedom in this verse. God is not asking you to create the vision. He's asking you to receive it, hold it, and wait for it.

So yes—write down what He's shown you. Treasure it. Pray over it. Return to it. But don't turn it into a blueprint you're responsible to fulfill. Because if God gave it, *He will bring it to pass*. Not one second too early. Not one second too late.

And in the waiting, He's not just preparing the promise. He's preparing you.

## **Jeremiah 29:11 – A Promise in Exile**

*"For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the Lord's declaration—"plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."*  
(Jeremiah 29:11, CSB)

You've probably seen this verse on mugs, journals, and graduation cards. It's one of those Scriptures that people reach for when they're trying to move forward—into a job, a dream, a marriage, a season of new beginnings. And honestly, it's easy to see why. Who doesn't want the assurance that God has good plans? That the future is bright? That disaster is off the table?

But this verse wasn't written to someone who was stepping into success.

It was written to a people who were neck-deep in **exile**.

Jeremiah was delivering a message from God to the Israelites who had been ripped from their homeland and dropped into the middle of Babylon—a place of captivity, confusion, and culture shock. They wanted to go home. Fast. But God told them to settle in. Build houses. Plant gardens. Seek the peace of the city. Because they weren't going anywhere for **seventy years** (Jeremiah 29:4–10).

That's the backdrop. That's the moment into which God says, *"I know the plans I have for you..."*

So what does that mean?

It means that God's good plans can include **long seasons of waiting**. Even sorrow. It means that His version of prosperity may not always look like escape, but like endurance. Like roots going deep in hard soil. Like hope that holds steady, even when deliverance feels far away.

If we read this verse like it guarantees our personal comfort, we'll feel abandoned the moment suffering shows up. But if we read it as the declaration it truly is—that God has not forgotten His people, even when they're in the middle of exile—we'll find something far more secure than a quick rescue: we'll find **faithfulness**.

God wasn't giving Israel a pep talk. He was giving them a **reminder**. That even in the discipline of exile, His covenant love had not been broken. His plan was still unfolding. And the future He had for them—though distant—was certain.

And that's where the real promise lies for us too.

This verse isn't about guaranteeing that our dreams will come true. It's about anchoring us in the **character of the God who holds our future**, even when our present feels like Babylon. Even when we don't know how long we'll be waiting. Even when it looks like He's forgotten.

He hasn't.

God's plans are always good—but they are **His**. Not always painless. Not always fast. But always faithful. And always for the good of those who are His.

If you're in a season that feels far from flourishing, this verse isn't a promise to be pulled into the light. It's a reminder that God is **already there in the dark**—working, shaping, planning... still giving you a future, and a hope.

## **Conclusion: The Voice That Doesn't Shake**

I know it can be unsettling to reexamine verses you've leaned on for years—verses that felt like lifelines in the dark. Maybe even now, you're wondering what you're supposed to hold on to if not the declarations, the vision boards, the faith statements. Maybe there's a quiet ache beneath the surface, like something's been taken from you.

But I want to gently suggest: what if something's been given instead?

What if the invitation isn't to manifest your future, but to trust the One who holds it? What if real peace comes not from speaking the right words, but from resting in the right God?

Because here's the thing—when you look at your doctrine, when you hold it up to the light of Scripture, and then lay it alongside your lived reality—there should be harmony, not dissonance. It should ring true in both the sanctuary and the hospital. In answered prayers and lingering silence. It should hold when the mountain moves, and when it doesn't.

That's the beauty of good theology. It doesn't promise you control—it gives you confidence. Not in your ability to shape reality, but in God's unshakable commitment to His glory and your good.

The more I've sat with these Scriptures—not as sound bites, but as whole, living truths—the more I've realized: they don't shrink when we stop trying to make them say what we want. They expand. They stretch out into something even more solid than the promise of instant results. They become a doorway to knowing God—not just using Him.

And that changes everything.

It changes the way you pray. No longer as someone trying to unlock a code, but as a child coming to a Father. It changes the way you wait. No longer wondering if your delay means failure, but trusting that timing belongs to Someone wiser. It changes the way you hope. No longer banking on specific outcomes, but rooting yourself in Someone who never fails.

You were never meant to carry the weight of speaking things into existence. You were meant to listen for the voice that already did—and still does. The same voice that called light out of darkness, that summoned dead bones into life, that spoke over the waters and calmed the storm.

That voice still speaks. And His name is Jesus.

So lay down your formulas. Let go of the pressure to manifest. And rest—really rest—in the love of a God whose plans are bigger, better, and more eternal than anything you could declare.

He doesn't need your words to move.

He's already moving.

And He loves you enough to say “no” when you only see part of the picture.

That's not absence.

That's Fatherhood.

This is the kind of faith that holds in the silence.

The kind of hope that doesn't need hype.

The kind of truth that feels like coming home.

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