

"Steven Furtick challenges all of us—from the missionary in the third world to the family in the suburbs—to believe God for the impossible and begin living a life of faith beyond the ordinary." —Andy Stanley, senior pastor, North Point Community Church

SUN STAND STILL

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DARE
TO ASK GOD FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE

STEVEN FURTICK

SUN STAND STILL

Pastor Steven Furtick is not normal. The incredible move of God at Elevation Church is not normal. Unfortunately, audacious faith is also not normal. I don't know anyone better positioned to challenge you to rise above mundane living and embrace faith filled audacity than the man who is the epitome of Sun Stand Still faith, Steven Furtick. In every generation God raises up a few very special leaders to advance the Church and the Kingdom. I believe Pastor Steven is one of those leaders.

—CRAIG GROESCHEL

senior pastor of LifeChurch.tv, author of *The Christian Atheist* and *Chazown*



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SUN STAND STILL

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Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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To all the Elevators who believe. Heart and soul.

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PROLOGUE

This Is How It Feels

I can't lie—it's a pretty cool feeling to have Bono as your opening act. Even if his show was four and a half years before ours.

My friend Eric was the first one to make the connection for me. He brought it up as we drove past the seemingly endless line of people waiting outside the Time Warner Cable Arena in Charlotte, North Carolina. It was Easter Sunday 2010. The people were all hoping to get in the front door for the Easter service put on by Elevation Church. Seeing how the line of people wrapped around the building took my breath away.

Taking in the scene, Eric asked, "Remember when we were standing in that same line when we first moved here? Waiting for the U2 show?"

"Yeah. Kind of. That seems like a lifetime ago."

"Remember what you said to me when The Edge started playing the opening riff of 'City of Blinding Lights'? You were screaming over the music. You looked up toward the nosebleed section and told me that one day our church would fill that arena for a worship service."

"I did, didn't I?" It was all coming back to me.

“You did. You said that. Did you really believe it would happen?”

“Yeah. I did. I really believed.”

“Well, it’s happening. Right now. Look at all those people. This is crazy.”

“Yeah. It is crazy.”

But the truth is, “crazy” didn’t come close to describing it. This moment at this arena was the most surreal moment of my life. It was a culmination of the most audacious dream I have ever dared to entertain. And the dream was coming true.

You see, just four and a half years earlier, I was a twenty-five-year-old kid, moving to a new city with a few other like-minded families in tow. We had no connections. Very little strategy. Even less experience. Just a dream to start a church and change the world. And we had a whole lot of faith.

Now, in about an hour, I’d be stepping on the stage to preach to well over ten thousand people in the largest venue in our city. **This was our church. This was our moment. This was God’s answer to our prayers and the reward of our faith.**

I was about to preach the gospel from the same spot where I watched one of the biggest rock bands in the world play “Where the Streets Have No Name.” I don’t know which sensation was stronger—the thousands of memories per second flashing like a strobe light in my brain, reminding me of all the experiences that had led up to this day, or the anticipation of what God would accomplish in the moments ahead when—as it turned out—hundreds of people responded to the invitation to receive Christ and begin a brand-new life, changing our city forever.

This is how it feels to share the stage with Bono.

This is how it feels to believe God for the impossible.

This is how it feels to see the sun stand still...

CHAPTER 1

Welcome to Audacious Faith

Pastor Michael proudly showed me the place where his church was putting in new toilets. I was still adjusting to the smell, trying to pass it off like it didn't faze me. Like I walked down urine-soaked dirt roads every day.

"These toilets would not be very nice by the standards of your country," Michael explained. "I know that. But here in the slums of Kampala, Uganda, so many children are sick because the food they eat is cooked right next to the hole in the ground where they go to the bathroom. **So our church is building the nicest toilets we can here...for the children.**"

I had a hard time concentrating as he went on laying out his plans. Because as soon as he said the word "children," my gaze drifted to a cluster of kids playing some variation of Capture the Flag on the trash heap behind the church. The church was really just a shed. And instead of a flag, the kids appeared to be competing for an orange peel. It was weird how content these kids seemed playing with just a peel—more content, it appeared to

me, than a lot of kids back home seem playing with a Wii. And this garbage heap here on the edge of Pastor Michael's church property looked like the neighborhood hot spot. How, I wondered, would parents of elementary-school kids at my church react if they were asked to drop their children off at a playground like this one?

Pastor Michael's church members obviously weren't worried about it. They had been under the shed worshipping loudly for about an hour, and I realized they thought nothing of the fact that there was a small goat eating breakfast on top of the trash heap right next to where their kids were tossing around the orange peel. A scrawny, hungry, scary-looking goat.

Michael must have noticed that I was taking in the scene. "This is a Muslim hill," he continued, yanking my attention back to our conversation. "I am used to facing a lot of opposition. A lot of people do not want me here. Especially the witch doctor who tried to destroy our church by threatening our members. But when we prayed for God to make fire fall down from heaven, and his house burned down that same week, he left us alone."

I shot him a questioning look.

"Do not worry," he said, a twinkle in his eye. "He was not home at the time."

For the rest of the tour, I could barely keep up with Pastor Michael. He was moving fast and talking even faster. I felt clumsy and white trying to dodge the mud puddles while he led me down alleys through the slum. This was his village, he said. With every step, he detailed how he wanted to transform it for Christ. A school on this lot. A doctor's office on that lot.

"For the children," he kept saying...



Tonia could act like a total diva if she wanted to. She's pretty, well paid, locally famous, and uber-talented. So people in our community are noticeably shocked when they show up to help serve breakfast at a homeless shelter and see Tonia in the kitchen making scrambled eggs.

It happened the other day. She was volunteering with an outreach group from our church when somebody asked me, "Isn't that the lady from the news?"

"Yeah, that's Tonia. She's awesome."

"What's she doing here?"

"She's serving."

"Huh. Wow. That's impressive."

Actually, I would describe the way Tonia does her life as a few notches above impressive. I'd characterize it as *audacious*.

Strictly according to her job title, she is a news anchor—a multiple-award-winning one at that. But *news anchor* doesn't begin to capture the essence of who Tonia is. **She's a community service superhero who has designed her life around leveraging her on-camera talent to make an off-camera impact.** She's better at it than anyone else I've ever met. Charlotte is filled with teen moms, homeless families, and shut-ins who have been touched by Tonia's passion to serve. And she's relentless about recruiting others to serve with her.

In her latest project, she set out to convince thousands to join her for an initiative called Love Week. She was asking them to commit to giving five thousand hours of service to the city. In a single week. It had never been done before.

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I can't say I was surprised when I heard that Love Week added up to more than ten thousand service hours. That's just how Tonia rolls. When she gets a vision, it usually sounds a little out there. People try to explain to her that it's never been done before. And I think she likes it that way. If it's necessary, and it's never been done, she seems to assume that's because God intends for her to do it.

To the untrained eye, a pastor standing in the slums of Kampala, Uganda, and a news anchor scrambling eggs in Charlotte, North Carolina, don't have much in common. The challenges they face are as different as the hemispheres where they live. But I see them as twins: They share the same spiritual DNA. They're driven by the same passion. They accomplish ridiculously amazing things for God's glory. Their faith seems to be turbocharged from some source that the average Christian never quite taps into.

It's hard to define exactly what sets Michael and Tonia apart from other people who claim to believe the same things they believe but lead, by contrast, mediocre lives. Most believers I've met actually *do* want to find the source of Michael's and Tonia's high-octane faith—and they want it desperately. They just don't know where to look for it.

Sun Stand Still is all about discovering that kind of faith. I call it *audacious faith*. By the time you finish this book, the same faith that pulses in Michael's and Tonia's everyday life will be pumping through your veins too. You'll understand that God has much more in mind for your existence on this earth than merely surviving. What you consider possible for your life will expand be-

yond anything you've ever imagined. And the way you approach God and experience him every day will change too. Radically. Suddenly. Irreversibly.

But first, some honest disclosure.

A THEOLOGY OF AUDACITY

This book is not a Snuggie.

The words on these pages will not go down like Ambien.

I'm not writing to calm or coddle you.

With God's help, I intend to incite a riot in your mind. Trip your breakers and turn out the lights in your favorite hiding places: insecurity and fear. Then flip the switch back on so that God's truth can illuminate the divine destiny that may have been lying dormant inside you for years. In short, I'm out to activate your audacious faith. To inspire you to ask God for the impossible. And in the process, to reconnect you with your God-sized purpose and potential.

You could think of this book as a one-volume theology of audacity. You probably don't have one of those yet, but it's essential. In fact, if you ever encounter a theology that doesn't directly connect the greatness of God with your potential to do great things on his behalf, it's not biblical theology. File it under Heresy.

I'll take that further: 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.**

Audacious faith is the raw material that authentic Christianity

is made of. It's the stuff that triggers ordinarily level-headed people like you and me to start living with unusual boldness. When you live this way, your eyes will be opened to see your day-to-day life in vivid color. Your spiritual growth will accelerate at a supernatural pace.

If you're like most Christians, *audacity* is not a word you use to describe your faith. *Audacity*, my dictionary says, makes regular people behave with "boldness or daring, especially with confident disregard for personal comfort [or] conventional thought." And, if you think about it, confident disregard for the status quo is the essence of the gospel. It describes the radical path Christ's life took on earth. It goes to the heart of what it means to live by faith.

Of course, every believer in Jesus has a measure of faith—it's the prerequisite to salvation. But after that, if we're honest, we think of faith primarily in terms of a spiritual thought or a comfortable feeling. We hope it's enough to get us to heaven when we die. But in the meantime, it's barely enough to keep us praying, giving, and going to the eleven o'clock service.

Let me ask you: does the brand of faith you live by produce the kinds of results in your life that you read about in the biblical stories of men and women of faith?

Chances are, not even close.

For most of us, this disparity is hard to live with. The chasm we see between our mundane spiritual experiences and the overcoming faith we read about in the accounts of biblical heroes is downright discouraging. It can create a heavy weight of condemnation and a sense of failure in our hearts. We can begin to feel like maybe our faith isn't the real thing. Some believers I've known have gotten so tired of faking faith that they have just given up altogether.

POSTTRAUMATIC FAITH DISORDER

I'll admit that faith is a sore subject for millions. It's been abused, mishandled, distorted, and ultimately disfigured. Sometimes it seems like there's a custom-tailored faith for everyone:

If the Galatians 2:20 kind of faith—"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by *faith* in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me"—is too clunky for you, trade it in. Exchange it for an easier, no-money-down model.

If trusting in the miracle-working power of Jesus is too *out there* for your modern mind, play it safe. Don't ever ask God to provide for you supernaturally. Don't dare to ask for physical healing or anything else that would put God on the spot. Because what if he *doesn't* come through?

A lot of Christians I know stagger through life in a daze. Suffering from posttraumatic faith disorder, they hunker down in the basement, open a can of Beanie Weenees, and wait for the end of the world.

Am I reading your mail? If so, you're probably stuck in spiritual survival mode. You've settled for spiritual mediocrity. You're not trying to be a hypocrite. It's just that so far the faith thing hasn't, well, *worked* for you.

But we can't let abuses and misunderstandings hold us back. God has no plan B. The Bible throws down the gauntlet in Hebrews 11:6:

Without faith it is impossible to please God.

It doesn't get any plainer than that. Faith isn't just a Get Out of Hell Free card. It's the most vital building block of your

relationship with God. And it's the only real foundation worth establishing your life on.

We can't abandon the life-changing promise of full-frontal faith because some have dealt with the topic recklessly and unbiblically. It would be a shame for us to let bad experiences or past disappointments keep us bound, poor, and blind to what God wants to do in our lives.

We've got to find a better way.

THERE IS A BETTER WAY

You're about to discover what happens when you dare to *believe* God for the impossible, *ask* God for the impossible—then *act* in audacious faith for his glory.

You're about to discover that faith is not a drug to sedate you through a life you hate; it's a force to transport you to another realm of reality.

There *is* a better way—a higher calling to fulfillment and significance that God deeply desires for your job, your marriage, your parenting, your finances, and your impact on this world.

That kind of life may be a long way off from where you live and breathe right now. And it may take a little convincing before you believe this kind of life is even an option for you.

Maybe it will help if I introduce you to a man who experienced firsthand what happens when you live with audacity, believing God for the impossible. You're already a lot more like him than you think.