

## Chapter Five

### TACKLE THROUGH BARRIERS ON THE WAY

#### Faith, the Core Factor to Win Your Crown of Life



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*Life is no brief candle to me, it is a sort of splendid torch which I've got a hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.*

George Bernard Shaw

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and you have to conquer them one by one with determination and perseverance. Those are external barriers.

A seed, no matter what kind, how big or small it is, requires an environment to grow such as soil in a pot, garden, yard, field or at roadside. Before it starts to sprout, the first process is to die to itself – die to its ego, die to fears, die to contentment and die to excuses and procrastination, those are internal barriers to grow. Suppose you have conquered all of them, you sprout and start growing, and you enter into the second stage of growing. However the victory over the battle from internal barriers is not sufficient to reach your fullness. The road ahead is not smooth and easier taken, there are all kinds of obstacles you may have never imaged on your way

#### 5.1 Barriers on the Way

*Don't let the barriers on the way stop you  
but rather break through them or find a new path*

The universe runs in paradox. The paradox principal can be found at anywhere anytime of every day. Sometimes we take it for granted; sometimes we do not sense it though we go through it. The tough times of life actually comes from good times; the darkest hour comes right before the sun breaks; the days full of sunshine come after rainy dark days, or rainy days follow the sunny days. In good times, we can easily indulge ourselves and forget to discipline, later on we reap the bitter fruits from troubles and adversities.

Life is both blooming roses with bright and shining beauty and falling pedals with faded color and ugliness - you have to go through failure in order to win; the way that leads you to the top is usually not the way to keep you there but instead it may become the way that drops you to the bottom; Life is unfair but just and we both experience unfairness and its justice.

Any rises and falls are guided by an underlining principle whether you know it or not, understand it or not. You can't change and control it but only follow it. The rise comes to you when you follow it wisely; and the falls is the fate of being against it.



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*The way that leads you to the top is usually not the way to keep there but instead it may become the way that brings you down.*

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That one exists depends on another, they counteract against each other but also support each other to make their being possible. It's a universal law in life that, in losing, we are gaining. The law sometimes is too obvious to be noticed;



sometimes it's too delusive to find it. But it controls our actions and penetrates our moments of life. The most important is we must believe that everything is a blessing, even a setback. Downhill is always easier to go, sometimes, a setback reminds you that you are climbing uphill, and great views are always found on the mountain top after uphill climbing, not downhill.

When facing a favorite tasty chocolate cake, we could not help get a piece of it and it stimulates our taste further, and we could not resist getting another piece or bite. We gain what we desire and it satisfies our taste and stomach and we also gain energy and finally weight. What we lose is the health and good shape of the body. One day, when we take out our clothes that made us shining before, we found that we could not fit the body in the clothes anymore. In the front of a mirror, we realize we lose our previous charisma. Now it's time to make a determination to shake off some extra pounds but it's hard as we still face the temptation of freshly baked tasty cake wafting its fragrance. I personally face the battle every day.

The environment where a seed grows within provides what it needs for its growth, right temperature, nutrition elements like all kinds of minerals and right humidity that work together to form a right environment for a seed to nurture and sprout. However there is negative side, the environments are also obstacles to resist a seed's growing, the hard soils around it form a wall and resists it to grow. When a life within a seed breaks out its first tender sprout, it needs space within the soils, it grows bigger, it needs more space to fit its body, it has to push the soil away around, usually the harder the soils, the more strength it takes to push the wall. The competition starts at the right time that a seed germinates a new life. What this tells us, the environment where a seed grows within is also an environment that resists it to grow; in the same way the environment where a person grows is also the environment that tries to stop him or her to grow.

If you are a runner or you have run in a sunny or windy day, you can feel the winds that resist you moving forward. The faster you run, the stronger you feel the wind against you. In physics, this is called relative movement. The object that is stable produces the force in the opposite direction you move forward. In life, there are so many people around remaining their average or mediocre and they do not want to grow for all kinds of reasons. When you grow, they try to do something against you.

The first external barrier to your growth is rejection or sufferings from people's jealousy because you want to grow and make a difference, but the people who do not want to grow also do not want you grow. If you grow greater and become more excellent, it will make them feel smaller and general. Those people will figure out ways to stop you – they may bad-mouth you behind, they may show rejection – criticize you for what you do or find fault about you, bully you or simply set aside of you, make you feel you are abnormal or not part of them. Whenever you see such a signal, you have to realize this is a good signal that you are growing and you are going out of the average cohort and be exceptional.

John Paul DeJoria, the co-founder of Paul Mitchell hair products, also known as a philanthropist and successful businessman, has ever shared his success secrets: you have to be prepared for rejection. People say, "I do not want to talk to you", "you do not look right", "you are not right", what it might be, be prepared for rejection. As long as you are, you'll be just as enthusiastic as the next time. In his career, three times he got fired not because of his poor performance but the opposite. As a sale man in a beauty product company, he almost doubled the digit of his sales but the company fired him and he did not understand it. He was told, because he has run around the whole nation, two full divisions of the company with only four people and two secretaries. They told him "you need more people. You have got to be more corporate." The second company fired him because he is not like any one of them in the company; the third company fired him after he tripled the sales. The owner said to him, "you were on commission only but you made more than I did. I have a guy that will do your job for one third the cost."

His story is kind of resonated with my own. I got layoff in 2008 during the process of filing two patent applications resulted from two research projects I dedicated. I worked so hard to develop innovative solutions for the company though I was paid lowest in a research group. The reason is that I was originally hired as a software engineer to develop prototyping for the research projects. However after one year, I stood out to be also a great researcher – not only do I have strong mathematics background to make me so capable but also my computer science knowledge and previous software engineer experience to make me do the work faster and do more than a pure researcher who does not own the comprehensive experience and knowledge. However my achievement made me an enemy to others who actually hold higher positions and earn much more. I was also told I was a person who was not easy to work with though I respected all of them and tried my best not to hurt their self-esteem. However, I was still laid off. Because the Lord knew all the things I have done and understood how I worked and treated others, the adversary later turned out to be a blessing – The Lord rescued me and I was bought back to work for the same company after one month. That's not enough. I also got extra five-month salary from the severance package.

The first layer barriers in our growing process are the environments we grow. During the phase, we are not famous yet so we are usually not noticed by the world, it's just like a seed grows under the ground. If we do not give up and keep growing, we will win the battle for sure. We will grow out of the soil and expose to the world where there is sunshine, mild breeze, rains and storms; there are also honey bees or all kinds of bugs come to us for absorbing nutrition before we bud or after we bud before we bear fruit or we just get little tiny fruit. That's the second layer of barriers under the sun.

The process of growing to the fullness is a tedious, long and painful, sometimes lonely process. Anything is beneficial, it's also harmful – in one way, we rely on sunshine to grow, however the summer sun can burn a plant to death; we need rain, but the torrents can flood us. We do not know when those killing forces come, where they come and in which way. In history, there are many heroes who have won those battles and lived through and left a legacy; but also there are many people who perished anonymously. In facing those crucial wars, will we stop growing? Definitely not, we only have this one life and one time. We also believe that God has put something unique within us. We are born to bud, blossom and bear fruit. Do not give up and surrender to those forces, be bold, continue to build up our strength and decisively progress and we will win.

How can we do this? First of all we need to build up ourselves from inside, develop strong root, faith and character, learn to be perseverance, stay focused and stick to our vision, take risk to find new paths, and be obedience and flexible to new opportunities and solutions.

## **5.2 Develop the Root of Faith**

*Faith does not believe in there is a dead end*

The most powerful weapon to conquer the barriers on the way is *Faith*. Faith can move mountains and it rooted in our innermost heart. The inner strength drives the outer strength. When we are strong in heart, that means, we have faith, we are strong outside. Many stories in the bible are about faith: first Abraham showed his faith in sacrificing Isaac; David won the goliath by faith in calling upon the Lord's name; Caleb and Joshua by faith rejected the negative report from others about entering Canaan. *Without faith, it's impossible to please God (Hebrew 11:6)*. Without faith, we will not win God's partnership because he is not pleased with us.

If our vision comes from God, He will walk with us to the destination. There is no need to worry about and fear all the roadblocks on the way. The Lord, our maker is the creator of the universe and sower of our dreams – He has sown a dream in Joseph, through him the Israel was saved from famine; He has sown a dream in Moses, through him Israel was led out of Egypt and went to the promised land – flowing with honey and milk; He has sown dreams in Dr. Schuler's heart when he was four year old, later he built a world-class television church with tens of millions of people watching it, that has been changing people's life and sowing the seeds of possibilities. The Lord has sown a seed of Olympic Prize winner in a little Jesse Owen's heart, he won it in 1936. This is going on and going on. Now today, He has sown a dream in you and me. Do you think the sower, God, will forsake us on the way and leave the dreams to die? Definitely not!

On the way to chase our dreams, constantly put our trust in Him and no matter how difficult the journey is, you are not alone though you may feel God is not present. Sometimes He is purposely hiding

for a good reason that we do not know; sometimes, maybe we do not do things quite right in his way and he is trying to keep silent in reminding us that we are on the wrong way.

I remember one time, for something really urgent, I called my daughter, but she did not answer me then I called her several times, still no answers. I got really angry. When finally, I met her and we were driving home in a car, she asked me to plan her birthday party. On the way, she kept talking but I did not say a word. At some point, she asked if I could help her to throw a birthday party for her, I still kept silent. Then she called me in urgent, “Mom, are you listening?” again I kept silent. “Mom, can you help me?” she raised her voice and it became louder and louder. Finally she lost patient and pulled my arm, “Mom, please talk!” and I still kept silent. However, all of a sudden, I realized, have I made the Lord unhappy like my daughter made me unhappy? I was right beside her but I did not answer her purposely. However I remember well her birthday and I already decided to throw a birthday party for her before her request. Later on it hit me, how many times, the Lord is also right next to me, but He just keeps silent because I make him not happy? And He already prepares everything I want, even the things that I never think about.

When we do not hear His response, it does not mean He does know what I want. We need to present our request persistently before Him and learn constantly commit everything we do to Him and ask for His guide and believe He is our compass. Even if we get lost, if we ask him, he will bring us on the right track. He has said, *Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. (Jeremiah 33:3)*

When my daughter just turned to twelve year old, my mother-in-law got very sick and my husband had to leave for China immediately for a while. That left my daughter and me only in the house.

At that time, my daughter usually got off school at 2:45pm and was at home around 3:00PM but I was still at work in the office. Since her dad left, I told my daughter, “Call me once you get home from school.” In order not to forget to call me, she put a big sign on the wall right outside her bed room, CALL MOM! Sure enough she called me very day around 3:00pm. I also expected a phone call from her around the same time as that’s a promise! Whenever she called, I answered her immediately as I was waiting for her call to make sure she was safe.

How much our heavenly father desires our calling for Him? How many times He is waiting for our call to Him. But most of time, we are drawn in the world and forget to call on Him.

Having faith in Him means to call for Him and count on Him in our every daily walks as He desires to hear from us and loves to help us out and He is always waiting for us to come to Him any time. When we set our dreams on the stone of faith, we root our dreams in Him, we are strong enough to conquer any unexpected adversaries on the way just because we are not alone. Remember we have a mighty partner who backs us up any time.

It’s well said, when you are done to nothing, God is up to something. When you learn to call for him and count on him, you can always find a new oasis in a desert.

Our concerns and worries are usually based on the past experience and current situations – failure, stress, frustration and hurt. Be focused on the vision of tomorrow, the final goals ahead, the method to implement and act toward goals today, you will be immersed into the doing instead of worrying. It's possible that sometimes, especially in the darkest times and no hope is revealed, we lose the big vision; it is only later, when the light of hope shines through, that we can see the big picture ahead and comprehend the life's lesson.

It's a mild beautiful noon on September in 2004. I went out with friends to a restaurant for lunch. During the lunch, I physically felt something wrong and I got headache but it was not that worse so I kept finishing the lunch. Right after I walked out the restaurant, all of a sudden, I felt something disconnected or broken around my mouth. By the time I got back to the office, a series of terrible headache attacked me. I asked to leave for home. In the evening, when I woke up, I felt pains around my eyes but I did not know what's wrong. After struggled for a while, I found out in the mirror, my right eye could not blink and my mouth could not function properly. My whole right face paralyzed! I could not talk properly, I could not close my eyes and I lost my beautiful and shining smile! What's a shock! I was greatly terrified as I did not know what happened and what's going on.

In the early morning next day, nervously, my husband brought me to see a doctor and we were told that I got Bells Palsy from virus attack to my facial nerves, which led to my facial paralysis. All of a sudden, my life fell in a painful chaos. I lost my smile - the smile that I was so proud of for all my life. My eyes were sensitive to light. I could not work with computers and I had to stay at home.

However, after struggling for a while, I remembered the Lord's promise, *I have plans for you, plans to give you hope and tomorrow, plans to prosper you but not perish you (Jeremiah 29:11)* I believed someday, at His appointed time, He would heal me completely.

Now, at the time I writing, almost nine years have passed and the full functioning of my face has not yet completely recovered and people can tell there is malfunction on my right faces. My smile becomes brighter and prettier. During the long tedious recovery process, I came to realize that the incident actually is one of the brightest pieces in my whole life picture. I learned nothing belongs to me if it's not from God's grace, including my simple smile. I also believe God is going to use the incident to glorify His own name through me someday soon. By that time, I believe I will also get complete recovery and I believe my smile is much more shining and beautiful.

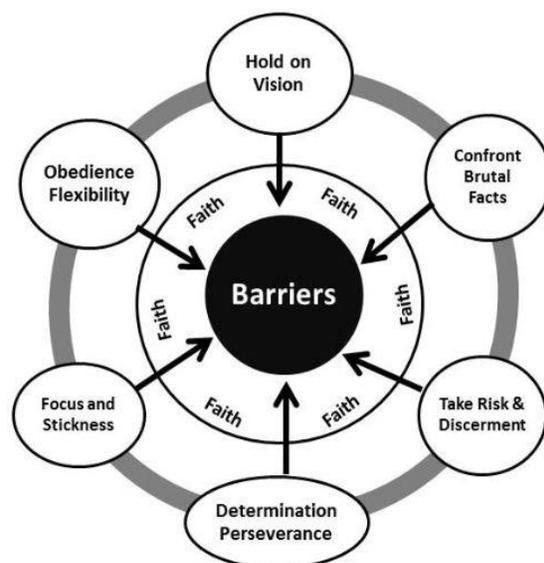


Figure 4. Faith Elements to Conquer Barriers

Faith plays a central and critical role for us to win over all the challenges, obstacles, chaos and frustration. Faith is to have partnership with God in life – act, risk, give, laugh and love! Faith factor is both necessary and sufficient to reach our vision; faith holds the six elements together to bring synergy to fight against the barriers in the center of our life, *Figure 4*.

### **5.3 Faith Is to Hold on the Vision**

*Faith is being sure of what we hope for and  
certain of what we do not see*

*Hebrews 11:1*

Many times, life is a magic puzzle that is full of massive pieces of events, busy activities, hectic chaos and accumulated mountains of facts where beauties are deeply hidden within each individual piece and they can be only revealed when each piece is put in the right place and the puzzle got resolved. Faith is about to see a beautiful picture hidden behind among those puzzles while battling over the endless life events one by one.

When my daughter was about eight years old, during Christmas, she received a gift, a Magic Puzzle with 1000 pieces and a beautiful picture drawn on the puzzle box and it's very attractive.

The picture foretells she will make a masterpiece if she can put all the pieces in the right place, the beauty of the messes is revealed in advance through a promise showed by the picture and the puzzles, that actually becomes my daughter's sole momentum to work on the puzzle and it ignites her burning desire and enthusiasm to get it done because she believes the beauty of the picture and it spurs great hope in working on the puzzle.

However, even with such an obvious beautiful promise, because solving the puzzle was so tedious, so boring, and there were so many pieces which demanded so much time to figure out which piece went which place, several times my young daughter just wanted to give up. Her father and I encouraged her to continue her work and not giving up half way. And we promised her to frame her masterpiece once completed. Not only so, my husband and I also joined her to work on the puzzle. With our encouragement and the revealed beauty of the magic puzzle came alive with each piece she placed in the right place, my little daughter got to finish her masterpiece.

However the process to complete the puzzle and make the picture come true is not smooth at all. The beginning was very hard and sometimes it took almost an hour to put a right piece in place. Whenever we lost patient and heart, we looked at the picture on the sheet and thought how great if we could hang the picture on the wall. Then we moved on. When the work was completed about three quarters, by accident, my husband stepped on the working sheet and messed up several pieces which means we had to put them

back in place. My daughter got so angry about her daddy and she lost her temper and tried blow away all the work and said she would not work on it anymore. While she reached out her hands and wanted to flip over the work-sheet and destroy the whole work, I run in front of her, with my whole body to cover the sheet so that she did not destroy the work. I cried out with angry, “you cannot do this!” and I hold out the picture on the puzzle box, yielded out “look at the picture! This is the promise to our work. If you tear down the work, you kill the promise. I cannot let you do that. Look at what finished, the picture is almost there. Look at the frame we bought, it’s waiting for the picture to put in. Stop your anger and continue to work on it as we count on you because you are the one who made the most contribution to the puzzle and you are good at doing the puzzles!” My daughter was shocked by me and stopped crying and later on she continued her work.

One day, finally we saw the whole picture! However, at the last step, we all amazed to find out we lost one piece of the puzzle and the piece is very critical as it sits right in the middle of a little bloomed flower. Without it, anyone can easily tell the picture is not a whole. Three of us searched out our whole house to find the missing piece. As it took about a month and a half for us to work on the puzzle and the worksheet has been lying on the floor of our family room for so long, most times, we left the remaining puzzle pieces on the floor beside the worksheet. Sometimes, friends or kids from neighbors come in, it’s really hard to know where the missing piece actually was. Though we searched hard, we were not able to find it. We all lost heart and I was so deeply concerned about the piece of puzzle. I could not help praying and expected to see the miracle. Two days has passed, we have not seen any clue that the miracle would happen. We decided to put the picture in its frame next day, on a Saturday. When the morning light was shining through in my bed room, I woke up and crying out for the missing pieces. Suddenly, I heard my husband yelled out with excitement, “I found it! I found it!” My daughter and I run down to the first floor, my husband rose up the tiny missing piece of puzzle in his hands. “See I found it!” We were all amazed! By accident, he found the piece, our lost treasure, right under our refrigerator door when he got some food out from refrigerator. Finally the picture is in a whole and the promise of the picture had come true and it’s put on the wall. Until now we still hang it on the wall.

Faith is about seeing the whole picture and holding on the vision. When we get trapped, the vision empowers us and brings us out of the trap; when we get lost, the vision is our compass to lead us to the



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*Faith is about seeing the whole picture and holding on the vision.*

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right track; when we are disappointed or frustrated, the vision fills us with hope and refreshes us with new sight. However so many times in life, we can easily lose the vision but only see things right before us. One day, a light shined through me in an earlier morning while I was contemplating what happened in the hectic of life: we people usually are short sighted in only focus on what we see and assume what we do not see does not exist so we take what we see as enteral fact and lose the hope for future, that's why God initially created Adam and Eve but He did not open their eyes and let them see because our eyes are only focus on things near.

Vision is our anchor of hope. With hope rooted in our deeper mindset, we know the struggles are temporal, by-pass, not the end. It propels us to move on forward to go to the vision, the final destination. Without a vision, or once we lose sight of our visions, we will battle around short term or immediate results. Gradually we got trapped.

Dr. Richard Mouw once illustrated the point well. One day, he picked up a novel about 450 pages long for relaxing. When he is on page 225, the hero in the novel is in the big trouble. He's in a house that's surrounded by the enemy and it isn't clear how he's going to get out alive. And the woman he loves is being held captive someplace. And he got somewhat tense with the story and he concerned how this is all going to turn out? It's on page 225 and what's going to happen? Here is what Dr. Mouw did. He went to the last page. But he did not read it very carefully because he still wants to be surprised by how the details work out in the end, he skimmed the last page to ascertain two things: One, is the hero still alive? Two, are they back together again? Then he went back to page 225 and read slowly and tensely through the kinds of agonies that you go through in reading a novel like that. He can slowly work his way through the plot up to page 450 because he has seen the last page and he knew that it will work out in the end.

Dr. Mouw's message is: We're headed to the last page. And we have to work our way slowly through the plot. There are going to be times of anxiety and worries, and a kind of surface setbacks, but if we put our trust in our vision and the Lord, we can make our way confidently toward the last page, toward the dream He gave us.

#### **5.4 Faith Is to Confront Brutal Facts**

*Faith is not logic neither illogic but theological*

*Mark Batterson*

In growing to the fullness, having a stubborn and unweaving faith to the vision we hold is a necessity. However we should not confuse with some brutal facts facing in life. We cannot simply make brutal facts disappear in our time table with bold actions though sometimes it showed this way. Sometimes it's so delusive for people to become a blind optimist.

Believing in a bright future and a winning end does not mean not to take decisive actions and conquer the reality lied in front of us but only dreaming; neither does it mean winning comes at a time we plan or expect. I have learned the lesson in my walk with faith but it would be better to say when I was a blind optimist, it almost crushed my faith in Jesus.

I have listened to a preaching from a pastor about mountain moving faith. At the end, it challenged the listeners to dream great things by setting a six months period goal and persistently pray what you ask for and God will grant you what you desire. I believed it because I believe God is a God who can

accomplish anything. At that time, I dreamed to be promoted in my career and I believed I deserved it with all my accomplishment – two patents were on their way to file plus I have worked so hard.

I have prayed and prayed during the six months, but instead being promoted, at the end of six months I got laid off – a cruel reality I and my family had to face! As the wishful dream was launched through online prayer community and it recorded online. When the opposite happened, I send email to the pastor and told him the truth but I have not received any response. The experience has challenged my faith. Is the GOD all possible? Is the GOD still faithful and good to his people? In painful struggles, I have experienced him more and deeper during the period. Even during the tough time I have gone through, His spirit has never left me alone, instead He faithfully guided me go through the process instead of crushing me utterly, he built me up in His own words.

I clearly remember the day that the laid-off were to be announced: It's a sunny, mild and pleasant day at the end of June but my inner heart was trembling violently and I was not sure if I could face the result. I was not able to sleep the whole night – my job is the only financial income to support my family. For all kinds of symptom I received from last two weeks, I would be among the layoffs. I drove to the office earlier in the morning and once I was there, I sensed deadly silence around and no one was there except for one coworker who was a very early bird. The dreadful aura drove me into a mad state and I could not stay there at all. And I said hello to my coworker and he seemed also in fear as I could sense it. Though sitting there, I would not be able to do any work. Immediately I decided to leave for home and at home I sent my manager an email and told him that I just came back from office because my daughter got sick - actually I lied in hiding my fear. The manager responded my email and wish I could come back to office around 11:30am. I knew what that mean.

However, after an hour, I had to go back to the office again when it was about 11:30am. At that time, I became a little bit calm. While I walked down on the campus to office, I remembered the conversation between Jesus and Pilate before Jesus was sent to cruxification (*John 19:8-11*)

*When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"*

*Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."*

The Lord response to the Pilate, *You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above*, repeated soundly in my ears. With those words, God consolidated my faith in him with a strong message: it's Him in control of everything even I was laid off. Until that moment, I calmly accepted the cruel reality – lay off. I went to the manager's office with a smiling face and the story actually ended in peace. My calmness and gentleness and polite to face the unfair treatment amazed the manager. I do not think he could understand where my calmness came from until now. Later on, the adversity turned out into a blessing.

The lesson told me our unshakable faith should not be confused with our wishful results and our ways to solve problems. The Lord said, *for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9)*

The lesson also taught me that we should not use our faith to set God's time table by using our wishful time table. The lesson is so profound that it propelled me to a new level of faith instead of shattering my faith – believing that you will prevail eventually at the end if you walk on the right path and let Him to guide your way and path, follow him with no doubt at all no matter how different the way you actually take from the way you imagined and do not set any limit on Him and do not use your own agenda.

One day, I have read another more powerful story to prove this in a much more profound way than my trivial story – a historical hero of American, Admiral Jim Stockdale, the first of three star officers in history, awarded Congressional Medal of Honor.

In his book *Good to Great*, Jame Collins wrote a chapter, *Confront the Brutal Facts*, where he told Mr. Stockdale's story. During Vietnam War in 1965, Stockdale was put in *Hoa Lo prison* for about eight years where he constantly been tortured severely and isolated with other prisoners. However with his unshakable faith, he was able to live out the shadow of death that actually was with little odds. When Jim read the book, *In Love and War*, written by Stockdale and his wife, the unending darkness cruel realities *Stockdale* faced deeply depressed Mr. Collins and he asked "*how on earth did he deal with it when he was actually there and did not know the end of the story?*" In searching for the answer, he interviewed Stockdale.



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*Faith is about getting prepared to cope with brutal facts but never lose heart; faith is to believe God is the final winner at His own time.*

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*"I never lost faith in the end of the story, I never doubted not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining event of my life, which, in retrospect, I would not trade."* <sup>[2]</sup>

When Collins asked who didn't make it out of Vietnam, Stockdale replied,

*"Oh, that's easy, the optimists. Oh, they were the ones who said, 'We're going to be out by Christmas.' And Christmas would come, and Christmas would go. Then they'd say, 'We're going to be out by Easter.' And Easter would come, and Easter would go. And then Thanksgiving, and then it would be Christmas again. And they died of a broken heart."*

*Stockdale then added, "This is a very important lesson. You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."*

The story declares *Faith Is Not Equal to Optimism*. However, we cannot say optimism is not faith at all! Faith is about getting prepared to cope with brutal facts but never lost heart; faith is to believe God is the final winner at His own time.

### **5.5 Faith Is to Take Risk and Be Discernment**

*And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight in bud  
became more painful than the risk it took to blossom*

*Anaïs Nin*

On the way to our big vision, there is a definite need to take adventures. Because the nature of your unique vision, your unique talents requires a unique path that no one else has ever traveled or rarely traveled, on the path, there is uncertainty; there are unpredictable and dire barriers. Not only does it take heroic actions but also it needs to invent a unique problem-killing solution; you have to be creative to break barriers. You are the pioneer to your dreamed land and you have to understand that pioneers are risk takers. You are making a difference to the people around the world, you are building a new road that lead followers to a new place they never dreamed but only you. You are opening new opportunities for others to take and new windows to see the richness of life. The risk you take today is worthy and that's the price you have to pay for a crowned reward and a hilarious applaud, that's the price you have to pay to gain a legacy for people behind.

You got the vision and you are excited about it and passionate to make it come true; that give tremendous boost for a stern faith in your vision. Now it's the time to embark on the way and jump off in the cliff to start your walk of faith, take actions and take the risk. It's well said, *faith without works is dead (James 2:20)*.

The size of your vision measures the size of your faith and it determines the degree of your risks to take. Usually the bigger the vision and the stronger the faith, the higher the risk to take and the higher the reward you will gain.

No one has ever taken the risk that Jesus has taken, to take the cross and died on the cross for saving each of us; no one has the faith He had that believed in the Father to raise him from the dead after three days, no one has the biggest vision He has – *I have come so that you may have the life and have it to the full (John 10:10)*. HE came so that we had the eternal life in believing in Him because He is the only way to the eternal life.

When Haman plotted to kill all the Jews in revenging against Mordecai because he did not show respect to him, Esther was requested to save the Jews by her uncle Mordecai in persuading the king to save his people. Esther understood well it's a life-taking risk for her. Though she was the queen, it's well

known that any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned, the king will put the person to death unless the king extends his gold scepter to them and spares their lives. However when Mordecai brought words to Esther, “*who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this*”, she realized her big mission in the position is to save the Jews and she responded,

*Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish. (Esther 4:16)*

Esther took the risk and put her life on the front line – *if I perish, I perish*, but for saving my people, my brothers and sisters, I would like to do that anyway.

*On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king’s hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. (Esther 5:1-2)*

Because of the risk Esther took, the history had been rewritten – instead Haman annihilated all Jews, his whole family was put to death. And Jews have been survived.

Faith is about taking risk – do not surrender your tomorrow to fate and forces but surrender it to God as He said he would work out wonders for your life just like He did for the Jews.

Today we live in an advanced well developed world that has brought by our ancestors. They believed their visions, put their faith in actions - the risks to make their dreams come true so that we enjoy the fruits they bear and enjoy a life of high quality and high civilization.

Have you even thought if Columbus would have not taken the risk to travel cross the ocean and explored the other side of the earth, how could we be able to live in the land of America?

Have you ever thought about how much risks the Wright Brothers took in inventing the first airplane when you travel around in the air without any fear? It’s all started with a bold vision – men can fly in the air around later nineteen century, in about next five years, the two brothers did intensive studies around flying and aviation and took all kinds of testing and experiments before they made the first successful, powered and piloted flight in December of 1903.

When taking risk, being discernment, but not taking risk in blindness. You have to examine the environment and analyze the situation around, set up wise strategies so that the risk you take can maximize the probability of success.

Dr. Benjamin Carson, the distinguished neurosurgeon, who took many risks in performing world-challenging surgeries, has suggested to calculate the risk in advance by asking four questions:

*What's the best thing that happens if I do this, what's the best thing that happens if I don't, what's the worst thing that happens if I do it, what's the worst thing that happens if I don't.*

The four questions are from his life experience in taking risk and he shared all his risk taking intelligence in his book, *Take the Risk*.

To minimize failure, I would suggest to always aligning your vision with any risk you take and perform analysis and measurement around your vision and mission. In this way, we do not lose anything even if we fail because our risk taken action is vision driven. In another word, our action is goal oriented and purpose driven, even if we fail, we can learn from the failure that the way does not work, we need to take another way to our vision. Remember you may lose nothing when you take a dream driven risk, but you will take the biggest risk when you risk nothing.

## **5.6 Faith Is Determination and Perseverance**

*For you have need of endurance,  
so that after you have done the will of God,  
you may receive the promise*

*Hebrews 10:36*

The fourth critical element for conquering barriers on our journey to our visions is determination and perseverance. Taking risk is a bold action. However it's the first step in the journey and it is not one time thing, it's usually a series of repeating, reoccurring and dynamic actions, or one risk follows another. We must have a spirit of determination to persist and perseverance to finish all the required tasks and break through all the barriers one by one until we arrive at the destination.

I love to boast of the glory of perseverance and I treasure the trait of determination and perseverance because it's usually the perseverance that leads to our dreamed destination and it's the persistence that makes people success, they are the keys for achieving goals. A quote says well "If at first you don't succeed, try again" and we also heard falling down seven times and standing up eight. Few people achieve anything great without first overcoming some obstacles. That's the power of unyielding spirit no matter what obstacles in the way, figure out a solution to overcome them and progress to the other side and move on forward to the dreamed land.

What if Thomas Edison gave up on his idea for a light bulb after it failed 2,000 times? We all know Disney World, a place many kids dream to go. Do you know how Walt Disney built the empire?

As a young man, Walt Disney was fired from the Kansas City Star Newspaper because his boss thought he lacked creativity. In 1921, he went on to form an animation company called Laugh-O-Gram Films. Using his natural salesmanship abilities, Disney was able to raise \$15,000 for the company (\$181,000 in 2008 dollars). However, he made a deal with a New York distributor, and when the distributor went out of business, Disney was forced to shut Laugh-O-Gram down. He could barely pay his rent and even resorted to eating dog food for keeping his breath.

Broke but not defeated, Disney spent his last few dollars to buy a train ticket and headed for Hollywood. Once he was there, what amazed him more was that the big trouble threw at him mercilessly and unexpected before his other troubles were over. In 1926, Disney invented a cartoon character named *Oswald the Rabbit*. When he attempted to negotiate a better deal with Universal Studios -- the cartoon's distributor -- Disney discovered that Universal had secretly patented the Oswald character. Universal even hired Disney's artists away from him, and continued the cartoon without Disney's input and without paying him.

That wasn't enough. Disney also struggled to release some of his now-classic films. He was told *Mickey Mouse* would fail because the mouse would "terrify women" and Distributors rejected *The Three Little Pigs*, saying it needed more characters. *Pinocchio* was shut down during production and Disney had to rewrite the entire storyline. Other films, like *Bambi*, *Pollyanna* and *Fantasia*, were misunderstood by audiences at the time of their release, only to become favorites later on.

Disney showed the greatest perseverance when he tried to make the book, *Mary Poppins* into a film. In 1944, at the suggestion of his daughter, Disney decided to adapt the Pamela Travers's novel into a screenplay. However, Travers had absolutely no interest in selling *Mary Poppins* to Hollywood. To win her over, Disney visited Travers at her England home repeatedly for the next sixteen years. After more than a decade-and-a-half of persuasion, Travers was overcome by Disney's charm and vision for the film, and finally gave him permission to bring *Mary Poppins* to the big screen. The result is a timeless classic.

In a twist of fate, Disney Company went on to purchase ABC in 1996. At the time, ABC was the owner of the Kansas City Star, it means the newspaper that once fired Disney had become part of the empire he created. And all thanks to his creativity and a lot of determination and perseverance.

Toastmasters may know *LaShunda Rundles*, the 2008 World Champion of public speaking. She demonstrated her unbelievable perseverance in combating chronic disease. She endured about 20 surgeries with eight toes amputated plus countless stays in hospitals. However she did not quit. Even before the night delivering her championship speech, she was too sick to sleep all night, but her perseverance won her the glory of champion.

Interesting enough, even the truth of that perseverance delivers the final success can be mathematically showed in probability. An article, *The Miracle of Persistence*, from Chinese Reader's Digest 2011, tells a true story in a college's class.

One day, a social science professor gave student a math problem: if an event has only 1% odds to succeed, what's the probability that the event succeeds at least one time if you try it 100 times? The professor provides four answers to students to choose: 10%, 23%, 38% and 63%.

The students in class have a heated discussion for several minutes, most of them choose the answer 10%, some students choose 23%, several choose 30%, and very few choose 63%. The professor looked at the answers and silenced for a while, he did not give any comments then he published his right answer in smile with an illustration. If the success rate is 1% for one experiment, that means the failure rate is 99%, if you repeat the experiment for 100 times and each of them has 99% failure, the rate for every experiment to fail in 100 times is  $0.99^{100}$ , that is about 37% and that also leaves us  $1 - 37\% = 63\%$  probability to succeed at least one time.

The students are amazed by the correct answer. It's hard to believe that an event has only 1% odds to succeed, but if you keep doing 100 times, the chance to succeed raises to 63%! Unbelievable but true!

It's well said, if you want to achieve to the biggest success worldly, you have to persistently work on it and you will not give it up until you die. Before any success, there are always frustrations and countless failures. If you choose to give up, you give up the opportunity of success. The distance to success becomes shorter and shorter as you try more and fail more. Any successful person in human history has no more luck than others but has only one difference than ordinary people – they have the spirit to be determination, persistence, perseverance and endurance. It's the four factors that truly separate people who have dreams from those who achieve their dreams.

### **5.7 Faith Is to Stay Focus and Stickiness**

*You are nuts and you should be proud of it.  
Stick with what you believe in*

*Trip Hawkins*

This is an age that demands much more intentional focus than any age before in order to deliver high value oriented goals. Why? There are so many interruptions and so much information to be pushed to our end – it's almost at anywhere, home, office, gyms, cars, you can easily access to the world through TVs, radios, videos and internet, you can access to the whole world even when you walk, when you run and when lie down or even when you are working on something because you have an iPod, notepad, iPhone, smart phones, or any modern portable electric devices in your hand or pocket and they are with you twenty four hours in seven days and they are just part of your body and non-separable. The marketers and business people is collecting your contact information through social websites, you get more to share also you are more invaded than any times before. There are tons of emails to read and endless videos to listen and watch and they are claimed as all top secrets to get you rich. In such a time how you can fulfill your

goals without being tempted and interrupted. You have to willfully constantly look at your roadmap and your vision and check your compass so that you can keep on the right track and reach your destination. You need to stay the laser focus and have a strong will to keep stickiness.

There was ever a group of frogs who decided to have a race and the race is to climb a high tower. The word got out that the frogs were racing and all the frogs of the whole world came to watch this amazing competition as they scaled this tower. As they started racing up the tower, everyone who are watching started saying, "It's impossible for anyone to reach the top of that tower," and others said, "Look at them, they can't possibly succeed; they are going to fail." One by one they would fall and the other frogs would shout, "Oh there goes another one! We knew it couldn't happen. It's impossible." One by one they all fell except for one frog that made it to the top. Having made it to the top they interviewed him. They came up to him and they said, "Where did you find the strength to get up to the top of the tower?" He said, "What? I'm sorry I can't hear you. I'm deaf."

The frog never heard that it was impossible. He never heard that others were failing. He never heard anything except he saw his goal and he knew that he was in a race to the top! He didn't hear the negative; he just saw his goal and he is not distracted instead he got full focus to move to the top of the tower and he reached for his goal. He succeeded because his disadvantage in hearing and that is transformed into his advantage – fully focus on top oriented dedication and commitment.

How about us? We lack nothing because we have fully functional audial, visual and sense system. So many times, we do not reach to anywhere or achieve anything not because we have no ability or there is no way but instead more often than not because we are so capable to many things and there are so many ways ahead us such that we lose the ability to pick up the right choices and we lose focus to reach one place. Our advantages become the distractions and disadvantages. This is an age we can shine with so many channels; it's also an age that we have to shy away all the distractions with sharp discernment.

John Maxwell has said, "*The brilliant people are not the ones that are successful, but it's the ones who had the ability to stay on a thought and focused there long enough to marinate it and make it bigger*"

When we focus on our goals, peripheral scenes are blurred and ignored, their existing become null to our conscious mind. So many times we lose our focus because we are looking at the obstacles instead of focusing on the object. When Peter stepped out of the boat into the storm he was fine as long as he was focused on Jesus, but when he turned his eyes to the surrounding waters, he began to sink, he lost focus, he saw the storm instead of the Savior.

Focus is to commit the heart, mind, soul, wisdom and strength fully to reach one single goal until you step on the dreamed land.

On June 15, Friday night, Nick Wallenda made a history – he fulfilled his life dream and became the first person who walked through Niagara Falls on a two-inch wide wire strung over raging waters of

Horseshoe Falls, the largest of the three falls of Nigagra Falls. He walked about 200 feet over 184 feet high during 30 minutes, from 10:30 to 11:00 PM. While he was crossing the fall in the air, tens of thousands of people gathered at the fall and watching him except for the millions of people were watching on live television.

Here is the brutal surrounding environment Nick was in and it's physically challenging, he was walking step by step on narrow wire in the air, the falls are soaring and the sprays of heavy mist from force of falling water are penetrating all around and blinding all the scenes, the big winds was wailing, in the same time, people who were watching have kept yelling and shouting to him and applauding; the news reporters were recording and asking questions and commenting lively. What a challenging and distracting environment Nick was in!

When Nick was asked what his biggest challenge, he answered, "Everything from the media to everything else – it's very distracting, very draining, at times I physically and mentally drained. The mist goes one way and winds goes another and it's really hard to keep focus – it's need both mental and physical strength to fight against the challenges." He also commented, "It's all about the concentration, the focus, and it all goes back to the training" and he further stressed "In that sort of situation, you have no choice but to focus."

In that night, I also watched the live broadcast, I could tell from his face that he willfully concentrated his mind on his steps and he even prayed while he was walking in calling 'Jesus'.

After he crossed the fall and arrived at Canada, when customs agent asked him, what is the purpose of your trip sir?

Nick answered, "To inspire people around the world," then he added, "I'm grinning from ear to ear because I can see I'm here. I made it!"

Yes, Nick made it despite all the distractions around, but with his determination and sharp concentration on his dream, he made the impossible become possible.

From his story, we can learn the power of the focus, which has been proved by thousands of great achievers in the world and the law of nature from so many perspectives. If we examine any tools used for piercing a hole, we can find that they all have sharp tips with little areas, a needle, a nail, a scissor, a knife, or any garden hole diggers like augers. The sharp and narrow tips aim to reduce the area of contact so that all energies pushed on the tool are released to the focused small area and it can pierce through a surface, even a very hard one. That's the law of focus. Now the right question is how we can have such a focus as Nick has?

First, we have to have a crystal clear vision and we must be passionate about it. Nick got the dream from his family legacy – the purpose of his walking on wire is to inspire people to achieve the impossible and he is passionate about it since he was two years old. That means his life and action is purpose driven. As what I wrote in chapter 3, we all need a vision about life. It's similar to driving to somewhere. We

have to know the destination and the purpose of the travel that will help us to set up a steady pace moving forward and overcome all the obstacles on the way like distractions.

Second, we need both a roadmap and a compass on our journey. Before Nick's landmark, walking across Niagara Falls on June 15, he developed the roadmap and got trained long and hard in simulating all kinds of possible situations. He has been trained in a number of venues, including Seneca Niagara Casino in the city of Niagara Falls, in conditions that was simulated those of Niagara Falls. He's endured sprays of heavy mist from a fire hose and wind gusts of up to 44 miles per hour, courses of a wind machine. Not only so, Nick also followed his compass in the training, his dream, his value and suggestions from his experienced family members, his grandfather.

In conquering all of the challenges we are facing and also wisely taking advantage of all the great opportunities laying in front of us, we should not only follow Nick, developing a concrete roadmap – a roadmap to our unique destination, but also we should have a compass to correct us on the way in case we get lost in traffic and wander away on the wrong way but that seems a right way. The compass can remind and warn us and bring us back to the right road and lead us to our planned destination.

Third, we have to learn to train our minds with great discipline and endurance. Nick said his biggest challenge during his training sessions is just keeping his focus and he practiced his endurance. The training wire at the Seneca Falls Casino was some 1,200 feet long and 60 feet high at its high end. He often would walk up, walk down, turn around and walk back up for a total walk of 2,400 feet. The length of his walk across Niagara Falls is 1,500 feet.

“I spent 10 days walking on a cable that would duplicate the incline that I would walk up during the second half of the walk, as well as the decline I would walk down during the first half of the walk,” he said.

Nick told the world, we all can reach the impossible if we have the vision, endurance in training and practices and stay focus on implementing the dreams and be stick to the goal. He is an inspiration to me, also to you. Please stay focus and make your dream come true and write the history with your own actions.

### **5.8 Faith Is Obedience and Flexibility for Changes**

*If they obey and serve him,  
they shall spend their days in prosperity,  
and their years in pleasures*

*Job 36:11*

The last element in tackling through obstacles on vision oriented journey is obedience. It's the last element in the book, but it's not the least important one. It's equally important with all the other elements though usually obedience is rarely mentioned in the world especially for people to teach lesson of success

in life. It seems the word, obedience, is most likely in a bible or reserved for a religious community. However, the obedience is as essential as others. Without obedience, you cannot hold on your vision, you cannot be determined and perseverance, you cannot have the laser focus.

Why? Obedience comes from trust and faith. If you trust your dream and believe in your vision, you are obedience to it. The first story in bible is a story failing obedience - Eve listened to the serpent (*Genesis 3:1-5*)

*"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"*

*The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"*

*"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman, "for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

Eve listened to the serpent instead of God – ever since her eyes were opened and sin came into the world.

*God said to Abraham, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love--Isaac--and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." (Genesis 22:2)*

*Then Abraham listened to God, Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. (Genesis 22:3)*

The story that Abraham sacrificed his precious beloved only son Isaac in obeying God's command shows Abraham's trust in the Lord and his faith in Him too. Though the journey is tough and painful, Abraham still obeyed God.

This is the story from the old. Many stories are happening right now. Kids are rebellious because they do not trust the love of parents and their words for their goodness; many missionaries have set off faraway land to preach the good news about Jesus to the people they have never met in obeying the commands of the Lord. Many died in foreign lands.

Now let's talk about reaching your vision, before you do any of them, you have to submit all your minds, actions, efforts and times to your single vision – that's actually obedience in one way. Second, during a journey to the vision, you have to learn to adjust your priority, plan to meet the needs of the vision, that's also obedience. Obedience is also showed in flexibility for changes – in case of unexpected accident and obstacles, you have to willing to yield temporarily, willing to get around on the way or

detour to a different way. It may have some delay, but you will keep moving forward to the vision that's also obedience.

Obedience is the hardest thing to do when what we have and see is so attractive and important to us right now and we do not see the big gains or we do not understand the values of a bigger vision laying forehand in front of us. When Jesus, in *Mark 10:17:27*, ask the young man to give up all his possessions then follow him, the young man was deeply saddened and left Jesus in grief because he did not understand the value of following Jesus and the meaning of eternal life. Comparing all his rich possessions he owned on earth, that made him so honorable in front of men, with the value of eternal life after many years, he thought giving up his possessions was a tremendous lose. He could not obey what Jesus has told him. Many of us in life also walk on a similar path like the young man in the world.

In America, one of the biggest health problems we are facing is overweight and obesity. It's estimated about 68.8 % adults overweight and 35.7% obese by 2013. I think the prevalence of obesity is a result of lack obedience. Because obedience is kind of discipline. The reason that so many people have the problem is not because they do not know the problem but rather because they cannot obey doctor's suggestion and they cannot control their diet. They lose their vision about good health and quality life when facing the temptation of delicious foods. They also have no time to excises because of focus on short sighted goals and temporary gains.

On the way to our dreams, we have to focus on a bigger vision and long term big gains so that we are willing to be obedience, become disciplined, dedicated and focused, submit the temporary attractions and comfort to the long term returns. The obedience to a big vision is a great investment to an abundant future. Obedience is not to give up the big vision instead it tries to optimize a long term solution in front of tough situations in order to reach the big vision.